

Week 2

Conversation Starter

Have you ever received an invitation to a party that you were surprised to be invited to? Tell us about your experience.

Opening Prayer and Scripture Reading

Open with prayer. Read the passage silently. When everyone is done, have one person read the passage out loud to the group.

Matthew

9:9-13

⁹As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth; and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he got up and followed him. ¹⁰And as he sat at dinner in the house, many tax collectors and sinners came and were sitting with him and his disciples. ¹¹When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” ¹²But when he heard this, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.¹³Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’ For I have come to call not the righteous but sinners.”

Discussion

Setting the scene

- What are the two settings for this story?
- Who are the people in each setting?

What's at stake

- Why were tax collectors despised by the Israelite community?
- Why do you think the Pharisees objected to Jesus eating dinner with “tax collectors and sinners”?
- Do you think Jesus takes a risk by eating with these people? What's at stake for him?

Find yourself in the story

- What character do you most identify with in the story?
- What can the Pharisees learn from Jesus' response in verses 12 and 13?
- What lessons can the “sinners and tax collectors” take away?

Decision time

- Do you see yourself at the table eating with Jesus as a sinner? Or, is it easier for you to stand with the Pharisees looking in? How would you like to change your perspective in order to experience Jesus in a new way?

- In verse 12, Jesus compares his ministry to that of a physician. If he's the physician, how can the church be a hospital for those who are sick, both physically and spiritually?
- This week, set a goal to eat, have coffee, or engage in conversation with someone others would be surprised to see you spending time with. Be open to how God might work through your simple act in surprising ways.

Close

Share celebrations and concerns with the group and have someone close in prayer.