

Command #18: Learn Jesus' Compassion for Sinners

Matthew 9:9-13 // Scott Torres & Greg Singerle

9 As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector's booth; and He said to him, "Follow Me!" And he got up and followed Him.

10 Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?" 12 But when Jesus heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. 13 "But go and learn what this means: 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Condensed Version

Read Matthew 9:9-13 and discuss these questions with your disciple(s):

1. Describe Jesus's calling of Matthew? Why might this be significant?
2. After Jesus calls Matthew to follow him, the story takes a turn. Describe the setting.
3. Who all attends the Banquet for Jesus?
4. What question did the Pharisees ask Jesus's disciples? What did this reveal about them?
5. What metaphor does Jesus use to describe who He is and what his mission involves? What does his mission involve?
6. What does Jesus tell the Pharisees to do? What do you think He means?

Study: (answers follow below)

1. Meditate on Matthew 9:9-13 and make several observations about the passage. The story is also recorded in Mark 2:13-17 and Luke 5:27-32.
2. Where was Jesus coming from?
3. Describe Jesus's calling of Matthew? Why might this be significant?
4. After Jesus calls Matthew to follow him, the story takes a turn. Describe the setting.
5. Who all attends the Banquet for Jesus?
6. What question did the Pharisees ask Jesus's disciples? What did this reveal about them?
7. What metaphor does Jesus use to describe who He is and what his mission involves? What does his mission involve?
8. What does Jesus tell the Pharisees to do? What do you think He means?

Answers:

1. Answers will vary.
2. Capernaum. This was his home town and the base of his current ministry operations. It was a popular town that hosted Romans soldiers and had a booming business community.

3. Matthew was sitting in a tax collector's booth. Jesus spoke to Matthew saying "Follow Me." Matthew got up and followed Jesus. Matthew was appointed by Rome to be the areas Tax Collector. His job was to collect taxes from locals and any merchants passing through town. Matthew made a living by taking a commission off the taxes he collected. Tax collectors like Matthew were despised in Israel because they were seen as traitors because they worked for Rome and often overcharged and kept the profits. Matthew was an obvious sinner and the least likely and deserving of being chosen to follow Jesus.
4. The story moves to Jesus reclining at a supper table in a house. The text doesn't say whose house, but according to Mark 2 and Luke 5, Matthew was the host.
5. Jesus, His disciples, tax collectors, sinners, and from afar stood the Pharisees.
6. "Why is your Teacher eating with tax collectors and sinners?" This revealed that they viewed the people attending the banquet as defiled and ones who didn't obey God's laws. Subsequently they also viewed themselves as clean or righteous. "In the minds of the Pharisees, for Jesus to share a meal with these types of persons indicates that he includes them within his own fellowship; it also suggests to them that he condones their behavior."
7. A Doctor. His mission involves the saving of sinners.
8. He tells them "Go and learn what this means: 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners." This verse was quoted by Jesus from Hosea 6:6. The Pharisees considered themselves to be healthy or righteous and believed that they obtained salvation through their obedience to the law or their "sacrifice". They were blind to their own sin and separation from God. Jesus was offering salvation through "mercy". Matthew and the other tax collectors and sinners were obviously not obeying the Jewish law and needed Jesus to have mercy on them in order to restore them to right relationship with God the Father.

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Worship:

Have you ever not forgiven someone for a long time – years, maybe decades? I have. Before I was a Christian, I held forgiveness from a person for about 20 years. After Christ saved me, His indwelling Spirit made me deal with this issue. I sat the person down and explained the situation in detail and told him how I was hurt by it. After I was done, he looked me in the eyes and said, “I have no idea what you are talking about.” I was stunned! He then went on to say that if he did this thing that had hurt me, he was sorry. But I could not get past the thought that I was the one who was imprisoned by unforgiveness for all those years while he did not even remember the incident. Indeed in the parable Jesus used to explain forgiveness, we see the person who refuses to forgive is the one imprisoned until he or she does so. And the moment I forgave this person, God immediately changed my perspective. I loved him, I saw him differently, and our remaining years together were our best.

How many times have we sinned against God since becoming Christians? And how many times has Jesus not forgiven you? Of all the perfect qualities that God possesses, I believe forgiveness is the one He wants us to understand first. Yes, the angels never cease saying *holy, holy, holy*. But when Jesus came to earth, the first command we were given regarding Christ was to “behold the Lamb of God Who takes away the sins of the world.” Jesus taught much about forgiveness. But more than just teaching, He modeled it perfectly. Let’s look at a Jesus’ forgiveness in Scripture.

Luke 23:33–34 And when they came to the place that is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals, one on his right and one on his left. And Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And they cast lots to divide his garments.

Questions:

1. When did Jesus’ forgiveness come?
2. Why was Jesus able to forgive so easily?
3. What was Jesus’ motivation for forgiving others?
4. What should our motivation be in forgiving others?
5. What do you admire about Jesus from these verses or His quality of forgiveness?

Answers:

1. Immediately, as the offense was taking place.
2. Jesus’ nature or character is to forgive, and He came as the Lamb to forgive. He was the means by which the world would understand forgiveness.
3. We have to be careful that we do not elevate ourselves too high. Yes, Jesus forgives us and desires for us to be with Him for all eternity. But we are mere recipients of Jesus’ forgiveness and not His motivation. Jesus’ overriding motivation was to please the Father, and the Father sent Him as the sacrifice that purchased our forgiveness. As we learned in Gethsemane, Jesus’ desire was to do the Father’s will.
4. Jesus is our example and we should have the same motivation in forgiving others—to please God. God asks us to forgive, so forgiveness is a response to Him and is therefore completely independent of the offending person and the offense.
5. I admire
 - that He gave everything for my salvation;
 - that forgiveness was easy for Him;
 - how He forgives His enemies;
 - His desire to always do the Father’s will;
 - that He forgives me in my ignorance when I don’t understand the outcome of my wrong decisions.

Obey:

1. Jesus desires that we follow him. Is there anything that is keeping you from following him as His disciple? He offers his mercy and righteous life to even the worst of sinners. Jesus paid the penalty for our sin debt by dying a substitutionary death on the cross. By this act of mercy, we can be forgiven by God and restored spiritually to Him. Will you place your faith in what Jesus did to restore you to the Father versus rely in your sacrifices and obedience?
2. Matthew responded naturally after agreeing to follow Jesus. He held a banquet inviting his friends to meet Jesus and hear about his new calling in life. He wanted others to know the impact Jesus was having on his life. How about you? In what ways have and are you telling others about the impact Jesus is making on your life? This week, I encourage you to ask God to open doors to tell those closest to you about Jesus and the impact he is having on you.

Train:

1. Modeling is very powerful. Can you recall anyone in your life who modeled telling others about the impact Jesus was having on them? Take a moment to thank God and possibly send them a note of encouragement. Also, think about how you can intentionally bring someone you are discipling with you as you tell others about the impact Jesus is having on your life. Pray and ask God for ideas and opportunities. It will be priceless to those you are training.
2. Take a few moments to ask those you are training if they understand the prerequisites to salvation. See if they understand that salvation comes by "Grace through faith, and not of ourselves." We can never earn a right standing before God by obeying His commands. It is a gift that we must receive.