

Small Group Questions | March 10, 2019

Anyone leading the group this week may find additional Small Group Leader Resources at <http://www.wcchapel.org/resources-for-small-group-leaders/>

The Great Explorers — Jesus at a Table with Sinners

Focus Passage: Luke 5:27–39

Context: Luke 5:1–39; Matt 9:9–17

Other Passages Referenced: Acts 1:8; Luke 10:33; John 11:66;

Sermon Recap: Lent is a season of less in a culture of more. Jesus does not obsess over adding more to the docket of his ministry; rather he aligns every aspect of his life with God’s mission for his life. Jesus’ feasting at a table with Matthew Levi, other tax collectors, and ‘sinners’ shows his ‘table manners;’ he is both available and approachable for questions and questionable people. This Lenten season, let’s focus on aligning ourselves with Jesus and his ways—alignment before addition. Rather than rushing to add more possessions, activities, or ministries, let’s be available and approachable to questions and questionable people.

Background Helps

Levi – In the parallel passage of Matthew 9:9, the tax collector was named Matthew, and the name Matthew appears in all four lists of the twelve disciples. “Although Mark and Luke did not equate Levi with Matthew, Matthew clearly did. Since first-century Jews often had two names (usually one in Hebrew or Aramaic and the other in Greek or Latin), there is no reason why this tax collector could not have been called Levi Matthew.”¹

Pharisees – The term “Pharisee” means “separated one.” Perhaps it means that they separated themselves from the masses or that they separated themselves to the study and interpretation of the law. During the years of exile in Babylonia, where the Jews did not have their designated temple at which to offer sacrifices, the Pharisees were instrumental in transforming Judaism from a religion of sacrifice to a religion of the law. Pharisees accepted all the OT as authoritative and saw themselves as the preservers of God’s word and traditions by adding their interpretation/commentary as ‘the oral law’. They often opposed Jesus because He challenged their interpretations of the oral law.²

Tax Collectors (sometimes called Publicans) – Jesus mentions tax collectors in the same category with harlots in Matt 21:32. Tax collectors usually charged more than the taxes they were required to send to Rome and held back the excess as profit for themselves. Although most tax collectors were Romans, Jewish tax collectors were doubly despised, being viewed as disloyal Israelites aiding and abetting the foreign occupying power as well as extortionists of their own people.

The Significance of Eating and Drinking with Others – “This shared activity implied acceptance of such people as one’s ‘brothers and sisters’ (cf. Acts 11:3 and the explanation in 11:4–18, esp. 11:18; cf. also Gal 2:12–13). To ‘break bread’ with someone had important consequences. Even as contact with lepers (Luke 5:12–16) brought ritual uncleanness, so in the minds of the Pharisees contact with tax collectors and sinners brought moral (as well as ritual) uncleanness.”³

Hook: Pick a Question to Help Ignite Conversation

What kinds of manners were expected at your childhood dinner table?

Do you have a policy about phones at the table?

¹ Ibid.

² Charles W. Draper with Harrop Clayton, “[Jewish Parties in the New Testament](#),” ed. Chad Brand et al., *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2003), 917.

³ Stein, 182.

Look—Observing and Interpreting:

READ Luke 5:27–39

1. What does the “after this” in verse 27 refer to? (Scan Luke 5:17–26).
2. In 5:28–29, how did Levi/Matthew respond to Jesus’ call to follow Him?
3. What do you think Jesus meant when He said He did not come to call the righteous but to call sinners to repentance?

Illustrations:

Illustrations and quotes can be found on the “Sermon Slides” link at the bottom of www.wcchapel.org

Took: *Applying the message to our lives.*

1. How do your “table manners” align with Jesus’? —seeking alignment with God’s mission before adding on other activities ... being available ... being approachable for questions ... being approachable for questionable people? The sermon asked, “Who is not at your table?”
2. The Pharisees had a hard time fitting Jesus into their religious system. Do you have questions about how Jesus fits into your preconceived beliefs? ... About how the New Testament fits with the Old Testament? ... In terms of following Jesus in a changing culture? If so, write down your top two. Who can you think of who might be able to help you answer those questions? Will you set up a time with them to ask and seek a response for your questions?
3. Many of us were taught to believe in Jesus from early childhood, often having a fuzzy understanding of what it means to repent. I encourage *you to* read the article, “All of Life is Repentance,” that can be found on the wcchapel.org site. Click on the “Find a Group” button on the home page. After you log-in on that groups page, click on your small group and then click on the “Resources” tab. You should find the article there.
4. How would you like the group to pray for you specifically as you aim to align yourself more with God’s priorities in light of the above questions?

Prayer: Please spend time praying for one another.