

Matthew, the Half-hearted— March 10-16

GAMECHANGERS

To prepare for discussion each week, group members should use the **Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD’S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scriptures at the bottom of this page. You will notice that we are continuing the pattern of your discussing scripture *after* the Sunday message on that passage.

Background for Matthew 9:9-13

Little is known about Matthew even though he authors his own gospel account. Matthew, also known by his Jewish name Levi, is only mentioned twice by name in the gospel. As with many of the other disciples, we learn some significant details concerning his character and personality simply from his call in Matthew 9:9-13.

What we do learn about Matthew in his call is not very flattering. Sitting at his “tax booth”, Matthew is a Jewish tax collector. Tax collectors in this time period were seen as some of the most hated people in society as they collected taxes for Rome. Many of them were despicable, vile, and unprincipled. They often skimmed more taxes from people than what was required by law in order to line their own pockets.

Matthew, a Jew himself, would have had to turn on his own people in order to collect money for Rome. Thus, Jewish people would have seen him as a traitor to other Jews and to God. However, Jesus sees something different in him.

Luke 5:29-32 is a parallel account of Matthew’s call which tells us that he was actually responsible for the banquet where Jesus speaks and eats with other tax collectors and sinners. Once half-heartedly divided between two worlds (Rome and his Jewish culture), Matthew begins wholeheartedly pursuing Jesus. When God changes the world, He uses those who are eager to become whole-heartedly devoted before those who feel they already have it all together.

Possible Confusions:

V13 “I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.” Jesus is quoting from the Jewish Scriptures (Old Testament). The Pharisees were faithful in observing God’s laws even though they were just going through to motions. In doing so, they became harsh, judgmental, and self-righteously scornful of others. Jesus is reminding them he cares more about the heart than religious observances.

Scriptures for the upcoming weeks:

March 17	Simon the Zealot, Thaddaeus, James the Less – <i>The Unseen</i>	Mark 3:13-19, 31-35
March 24	Thomas – <i>The Doubter</i>	John 20:24-29
March 31	Judas – <i>The Traitor</i>	John 12:1-6; Matthew 26:14-16
April 7	Peter – <i>The Performer</i>	Matthew 16:13-18, 21-23