



Discussion Guide

Sermon Synopsis

Have you ever wrestled with a situation that constantly captured your attention and grabbed hold of your mind? Have you ever heard a statement that you couldn't let go of? You continually wondered, "What did this mean? Why did He say that? Is there something more there?" If so, you can relate to the words of Jesus in Matthew 9:13 where He instructs us to "Go and learn what this means: I desire compassion, and not sacrifice." We invite you to listen to this message and to intently consider what the Lord is saying about our care for others and how it applies to our lives today.

April 21, 2024

Matthew 9:9-13

One Liner of the Week

What about you today, as you go throughout your day, are you being burdened for people the way that Jesus was?

Food for the Soul

M: Matthew 12:1-21

T: Luke 7:36-50

W: Luke 15:1-7

T: Luke 15:11-32

F: John 4:1-18

S: John 4:19-45

S: John 8:1-11

This week, considering Pastor Matthews recent sermon, we turn our attention to 1 Corinthians 9:17-23.

Question #1

In verse 19, Paul says "*Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ.*" The effectiveness of our evangelism is heavily impacted by our heart posture towards other people and by seeing ourselves as servants of others as we serve the Lord Jesus, we open the door to new relationships that lead to Gospel conversations. **What kinds of things stop Christians from having this "servant heart posture"?** Talk about practical steps to change that!

Question #2

Read verses 20 and 21 again, as a group. It sounds as if Paul is trying to straddle two incompatible worlds. The world of the Jew and the world of the Christian. Dear friends, there's a difference between those two worlds! When we build relationships with the lost, we are stepping into some potentially messy situations where we are tasked with loving someone while remaining obedient to Biblical authority. **How can a Christian be with and love the lost without compromising God's way of living?** What steps can we take to protect our moral bearing as we do life with people who probably don't share our convictions about holy living?

Question #3

Now, read verses 22 and 23 again. Here we begin to see what Paul means and what he's all about. Friends, Paul's charge and motivation should be our motivation as well. His Great Commission is our Great Commission too! Our world is polarized on every front, today, and Christians are not exempt from the guilt of participating in that polarization. We do not seek to be "like the lost", but we should be seeking whatever *common ground* we can find with them so that, as Paul said, we do everything we can "to save some". An evangelist seeks to do whatever he or she can, whenever he or she can to share the good news about Jesus. **This means that personal evangelism IS central to how Christians live their lives! It isn't optional! If we love Christ, we will desire to win the lost to Him!** What is it that stops you from sharing your faith in the Messiah? Talk about these things as a group, encourage one another, PRAY for one another about those things. Resolve yourselves, together as a group, to take part in the advancement of God's Kingdom on earth as you build relationships and shine the light of Christ on everyone you encounter!

Leader Guide

Relationship is a wide-open, inviting door through which the Gospel walks more easily into the hearts of people!

Scripture: As a group, read 1 Corinthians 9:17-23.

As people, we often guard our inner lives from everyone except for those in our closest circles of friends and family. When we need advice, those are the people we go to. Those also happen to be the people who, usually, have the greatest opportunity of reaching us and getting through to us if they notice some aspect of our life that needs a major change or adjustment. The fact is, most of us (maybe even none of us) do not like receiving these types of “talks” or “advice” from people who know very little about us and aren’t on the “inside” of our lives to some degree. When it comes to being confronted about important things, we are naturally more inclined to listen and take things seriously when the one doing the confronting has an established *relationship* with us.

When we think of major life changes, nothing is more necessary, more major, and more important for a person than to have a real, deep, and lively relationship with Jesus of Nazareth! It’s like a person who has fallen asleep at the wheel of their car on the interstate at night: They are mere moments from crashing horribly and their greatest need is to wake up. That’s how it is with the lost who walk in this world without the assurance and hope that Jesus rose from the dead to give. They’re asleep at the wheel and heading to their eternal doom. Praise God, though, if they draw breath, there is still time to reach them for Jesus! We must proclaim this glorious Gospel, this message concerning who Jesus is and what He has done, is doing, and will do in the future. We must plead with lost sinners to repent and come to Jesus for salvation.

Remember, though, just as we tend to revolt against those who barge into our lives with unsolicited advice without having real relationship with us, we must not expect to be welcomed with open arms by the lost when we approach them with the Gospel but have no real concern for them as people who are made in the image of God, Himself. *Relationship is a key ingredient in the recipe of effective personal evangelism!* Now that makes us uncomfortable! That means we must have some skin in the game, become vulnerable, become knowable to the people we seek to reach for Christ! There can be no relationship without vulnerability on our part. That’s scary! That’s hard. But why is it so hard?

It’s hard because that may mean we develop relationships with people we would otherwise avoid: The homeless, the poor, the handicapped, the unstable, the mean, the greedy, etc... It takes courage, dear friend, to do such a thing, to step out of our comfort zone. I plead with you, though... Remember Matthew the tax collector. Remember how Christ left His lofty throne on high. How He stooped down to be where Matthew was. How He, the King of Glory, opened Himself up to Matthew and, in the context of real relationship, redeemed this sinful tax collector *mightily*. That’s the example Jesus shows in the four Gospels. It’s the example and command of the Apostles as well. Be about forming relationships with the lost. Don’t avoid them. Care for them. Invite them in. And love them to Jesus as you proclaim His strong name to them in word and deed. Their soul’s destiny depends upon who Christ is to them! You, dear Christian, are the vehicle God has called to carry Him to them in God’s love. Remember Paul’s words in our text of Scripture, tonight: “When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.”