

WORD

⁹As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. ¹⁰While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and "sinners" came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and `sinners'?" ¹²On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³But go and learn what this means: `I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." MATTHEW 9:9-13

WHAT

Jesus' display of compassion, grace, and love to those who need Him defied the customs in society. This, in turn, has inspired Matthew to reach out to his fellow tax collectors and friends who were called 'sinners' by the teachers of the law. These three points tell us how we are to share and reach out just as Christ did.

1 See people with eyes of compassion.

When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. MATTHEW 9:36

Matthew, being a tax collector, was looked down upon by society as an outcast. Yet Jesus saw him as a man in need of God's saving grace and compassion so He reached out to him, even dined with his friends who are also labeled by people as sinners. Why did Jesus have such a compassion for these so-called "outcasts" of society (Matthew 9:12,13)? How should this affect the way we look at people and reach out to them?

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2 Spend time in befriending them.

⁸"When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. ⁹Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you.'" LUKE 10:8,9

Jesus made a strong statement of friendship, grace, and forgiveness when He ate with the tax collectors and 'sinners.' To eat with sinners meant accepting them as they were. From the perspective of the Pharisees, this meant becoming a sinner yourself by not denouncing the sinners and their sins. Notice how Jesus reached out to the tax collectors and 'sinners' (Matthew 9:10,11; 11:19). How does this change the way you win friends?

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3 Share the gospel and challenge them to follow Christ.

"I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." LUKE 5:32

Jesus' most important mission is to repair lives broken by sin (Matthew 9:12). To be right with God, people must do two things: repent and put our faith in God or in other words, to turn away from sin and follow Jesus (Mark 1:15, Acts 3:16,19; 20:21; Luke 13:5). There must be a change in direction and a change in leadership. Share how you first made a decision to follow God.

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