

THROW A PARTY

MATTHEW

Luke 5v27-32

When Matthew came to faith in Jesus, he threw a party. Parties are a great place to share a story about yourself in casual conversation.

To recap a little on the previous study, have some people share their testimony who didn't get a chance last meeting.

The Romans had built a series of custom houses throughout the nation of Israel. Tax collectors, who were local Jewish people, would work in the custom houses alongside Roman officials. The custom houses were made up of a series of offices, such as Matthew Levi's tax booth (5v27). Tax collectors were wealthy before they joined that profession because they had to buy their way into it and the position usually went to the highest bidder. Levi had bought the rights to collect taxes in Capernaum.

Read **Luke 5:27-32**

1. What do you think Matthew was like as a person?

Tax collectors were considered traitors to their own country, not only as they were employed by Rome, but because they would often collect greater tax duties than the Roman Government required, to line their own pockets. They were so despised by the religious leaders that they were not permitted to attend the synagogue.

2. How do you think Matthew Levi felt when the famous prophet Jesus asked him to follow Him? **(5v27-28)**

3. Why do you think Matthew threw a party not only inviting Jesus and His disciples, but also his old friends, some of whom were fellow tax collectors and notorious sinners? **(5v29)**

4. What sort of conversations do you think took place around Matthew's house? For example "I've never heard of a prophet calling a tax collector before, what's different about this Jesus?"

5. Why do you think the Pharisees were so critical of Jesus and His disciples going to the house of a tax collector? **(5v30)**

6. How much of a priority was mixing with the lost to Jesus? **(5v31-32)**

7. Who do you identify with most?

- Matthew, the new convert?
- Jesus, who was comfortable with believers and the lost?
- The disciples, who may have been a little uncomfortable but willing to go to the party?
- The Pharisees, who could not understand how true believers in God could mix with people who were not believers and even mix with infamous sinners?

Explain your answer.

As a Bible study group why not plan a “Matthew meal” tonight?

Bill Hybels' church, Willow Creek, uses this approach throughout their community. A few believers throw a party or host a meal. They invite a mixture of both non-believers and Christians. They aim to always make sure there are plenty of the unchurched at such get-togethers, if anything they are to outnumber the Christians just to help them feel comfortable. There is no real plan, rather the hope and prayer is that as people casually chat over a meal, some spiritual conversation will take place. The goal is not to convert people on that first night, but rather build a relationship with unchurched friends and start them on a journey toward spiritual faith. After several of these meals the visitors may be at a place where they are willing to come along to an ALPHA course, listen to you casually share your testimony or be invited to a church outreach service.

- The best person to host such a meal is the one most likely to get a few unchurched to come. Matthew was a new convert so he still had lots of non-believing friends.
- Make a list of people you wish to invite and as a group pray for them to be open to come and open to Christ.

- Make a date, preferably not your normal midweek night, but rather a Friday night or Saturday.
- It can be helpful to base the event around something else, such as a birthday party, graduation, new baby, housewarming party, meet the new neighbours etc.
- If not a special event, it can be helpful to add a bit of extra interest to the evening on top of the food such a games night, kids sleep over, X-box night, pool night etc.
- If it goes well, plan to hold the event each term.
- Make it a priority to go to your unchurched friends' events if they ask you. You can't expect them to come to your events if you don't go to theirs.

PLAN YOUR FIRST MATTHEW MEAL TONIGHT!

DATE:

TIME:

HOSTS' NAME/S:

WHO WILL PROVIDE THE FOOD?:

WHO IN THE GROUP IS COMING?:

WHO DO YOU PLAN TO INVITE THAT ARE UNCHURCHED?:

ARE THERE ANY EXTRA ACTIVITIES?:
