

If we were to ask individuals to list the 12 apostles of Jesus. Many would begin with Peter, James, and John. Among the next few listed, Matthew would probably be included- even though relatively little is written about him. It is probably because that he wrote the first Gospel in the New Testament.

Matthew is identified by the name Levi in the Gospels as well. In total his name is named less than a dozen times in all the Bible.

He is first and foremost known as a one-time tax collector. Interestingly it is only in His gospel, that he is thus identified in the lists of Jesus disciples. (Matthew 10:3). It is sort of a confession as to “this is what I was, but Jesus changed my life.”

How would you describe yourself before you met Jesus?

*1 Cor. 6:9-11*

Jesus is about changing lives! Perhaps the most powerful testimony about who Jesus is, is what you were before you received Him and what you are now.

So let us read of Matthew’s calling and his response to Jesus. Which is described in 3 of the 4 Gospels.

Luke 5:27-32; Mark 2:13-17; Matt. 9:9-13

**This event happens in Capernaum.** *“On the NW shore of the Sea of Galilee where Jesus made his headquarters during his ministry in the Galilee region. In Scripture it is only mentioned in the Gospels, and perhaps did not arise until after the exile. That it was a town of considerable size in the days of Christ is shown by a number of facts: a tax collector had his office there (LK 2:1-4); a high official of King Herod Antipas had his residence in Capernaum and built a synagogue for the people there. Jesus performed many striking miracles in this town, among them the healing of the centurion’s paralyzed son (Matt. 8:5-13), the paralytic was lowered down through a roof by four friends. (Mk 2:1-12); and a nobleman’s son (John 4:46-54)... Capernaum was also the setting of the Bread of Life Sermon and feeding the 5000 in John 6. In spite of Jesus’ remarkable works and teachings, the people did not repent, and Jesus predicted the complete ruin of the place. (Matthew 11:23-24; Luke 10:15). This prophecy was so completely fulfilled that the town has disappeared and its exact location is subject to debate.”* ZONDRVAN ILLUSTRATED BIBLE DICTIONARY

Surely, with the connections and high profile Matthew had in that town, he would have heard of or even perhaps witnessed the miracles of Jesus accompanied with teachings.

**Matthew 9:9** Tax collectors, as to a degree they have been at all times were hated by the people. There were two types of Roman Tax collectors in Jesus’ time. Matthew was a “*Miksha*” or custom house official. They could stop and search people. Pierce bags with long sharp rods, looking for contraband. Being in Capernaum he had a very profitable location because many caravans travelled through there from Damascus to Jerusalem. He would have also taxed fishermen. Most of them were dishonest. They paid a fixed amount to Rome and then could pocket any excess they collected for themselves. With the force of Roman authority they could threaten people to pay exorbitant taxes. In addition they were considered traitors to their own people. Classified with whores and heathens.

It is very likely Peter, John, Andrew and James knew him before Jesus came on the scene.

**“Follow me he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.” Matt 9:9**

Follow me is in the present imperative tense and seems to indicate a continuing following, and there is no doubt that Matthew is describing a call to discipleship with all that means. And Matthew obeyed: “He got up and followed him.”

Luke 5:28 tells us that Matthew left everything behind. WOW!! **This is complete trust in Jesus.**

What did you have to leave behind when you chose to follow Jesus?

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**Matthew opens his heart and home to Jesus and his friends. Matthew 9:10**

To truly follow Jesus you must open all that you are to the LORD. Rev. 3:20. A follower of Jesus will want their friends to know him as well. Who knows how many of Matthew’s Friends came to believe? We don’t know, but we do know that they got an opportunity to meet him and hear him. That’s all we as Christians are to do- Let them see what Jesus is about. 1 Peter 3:15-16

In what ways are sharing the hope you have in Christ with others?

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**The Religious people criticize- of course. Matthew 9:11-12**

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In God’s view, it is good to eat with wicked people in order to win them to Christ, but it is wrong to eat with people who live wickedly yet claim to be believers. 1 Corinthians 5:9-13

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**Jesus responds Matthew 9:12**

**Only the sick need a doctor.**

THE Pharisees did need Jesus to change their lives too, yet they did not see their need. Only those who acknowledge their need of a doctor get the benefit of healing. Jesus is the great physician!

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**Mercy is what is desired, not sacrifice. Matt 9:13**

The Pharisees lacked a heart of mercy and grace to those who were burdened with sin. They had not desire to evangelize the lost- for in fact they were lost. They were merely interested in the outward appearance- but Jesus looked on the heart- and in his mercy associated with sinners, that they might be saved from their sins. (Matthew 23:15)

May we never forget how great our need was for Jesus, and show mercy to those who are still lost. (1 Tim 1:15-16). How does one balance the requirement to show mercy with the requirement to be holy?

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