

SUNDAY HANDOUT FOR DISCUSSION AND APPLICATION

The Depth of Jesus' Authority (Matthew 9:1-13)

There was a life of isolation, shame and fear. One man was paralyzed and labeled as having done something to deserve it; the other was wealthy but written off as a sell-out and traitor. Matthew 9:1-13 is the story of how Jesus meets both of them in their desperation and provides a way out. By doing this, Jesus reveals the depth of his authority to meet *you* in your greatest need and call you to follow him. It's the reason why he came.

1. A paralytic's desperation (Matthew 9:1-8)

2. A tax-collector's shame (Matthew 9:9-12)

3. The depth of Jesus' authority (Matthew 9:13)

QUESTIONS (Pray, read the passage and pick 4-5 questions to discuss. Trust the Holy Spirit to guide.)

1. Read Matthew 9:1-8. What immediate observations stand out to you?
2. In verse 2 it says Jesus "*saw their faith.*" What tangible actions demonstrate this faith and what does this teach us about the kind of faith we're called to walk in?
3. Why do you think Jesus addressed the man's spiritual state ("Your sins are forgiven") before his physical paralysis? What does this tell us about our greatest need?
4. In verse 6 Jesus uses the title "Son of Man" (a reference to Daniel 7:14-15) and claims authority to forgive sins. How does Jesus demonstrate his authority to forgive sin?
5. Read Matthew 9:9-13. As a tax collector, Matthew was viewed as a social and religious traitor. When Jesus said, "*Follow me,*" what was he inviting Matthew *out of*? What was he inviting him *into*?
6. Why do you think Matthew's first act after being called to follow Jesus was to host a dinner party with Jesus as the guest of honor? Why did the religious leaders have such a hard time with it?
7. How does Jesus respond to the religious leaders?
8. In verse 13 Jesus quotes Hosea 6:6: "*I desire mercy, and not sacrifice.*" There was a dangerous trend in Israel's history of a faith that was all externals, where ritual demands (outward ceremony) took the place of love (*mercy*). It's a dangerous trend still today. What are some signs this may be happening in your own life? Where might you be holding back forgiveness, mercy or love towards others? Have you given yourself permission to do that? What is Jesus calling you to do?
9. In verse 13 Jesus tells us the very reason why he came. What is your response?

Take some time to celebrate the depth of Jesus' authority to meet you in your greatest need (forgive your sins) and then call you to follow him. Thank him for the mercy he's shown you. Ask God to give you a compassionate and merciful heart towards those you're tempted to write off.