

# MATTHEW 9:9-17 YOU CAN'T PATCH A MAY-POP!

So far in our study we have heard Jesus teach and we have seen that He has performed miracles and exorcisms. All of this has been done in order to show that He has authority over every facet of life both in this world and the world of the unseen. While Jesus has seen some resistance from the enemy, He hasn't yet faced a great deal of resistance from the religious community. We know the naysayers are out there, but up to this point they haven't really confronted Him, at least in a very hostile way. All that is about to change with the call to Matthew.

Please pay attention how Jesus does things. I believe that if we implement His way of doing things, ministry will become much easier. Look at the social engagement of Jesus, as well as the paradigm He brings to the picture. We have already seen Him break down all sorts of social constructs in order to reach out to those who were seen as undesirable or even outside the love/ influence of God. We can see similar things today among certain people groups and sub-cultures. It can be easy to write people off because we can't relate to them or find them repulsive in some way. But Jesus didn't let that stop Him.

We will read today of a principle we need to adopt - a principle that can change the heart, nature and even quality of our personal ministries.

*9 As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.*

- Tax collector defined. Matthew most likely sat at the port collecting taxes on goods coming off the water.
- Was this a "stranger to stranger" encounter? No.
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*10 Now it happened, as Jesus sat at the table in the house, that behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Him and His disciples. 11 And when the Pharisees saw it, they said to His disciples, "Why does your Teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" 12 When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 13 But*

*go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."*

- What is Jesus doing? This was scandalous. Matthew brought His friends to meet Jesus and vice versa. Eating meals together was somewhat intimate, meaning that if you ate with someone, especially at their home, then you were seen to condone their lifestyle.
- But Jesus wasn't just "shooting the bull." He was ministering.
- Hanging out is not necessarily ministry.
- Sinners as defined by the Pharisees. Somewhat of an idiom... People of the land and Gentiles. Those not following the Law as interpreted by the Pharisees.
- Sinners as defined by Jesus. Anyone who remains opposed to God's will.
- Christianity as a hospital. "Learn what this means." A challenge as well as an insult to the Pharisees. They were more like students than teachers.
- Mercy and not sacrifice? Grace is required, not the rudimentary checking off of boxes, combined with an attitude of disdain.

*14 Then the disciples of John came to Him, saying, "Why do we and the Pharisees fast often, but Your disciples do not fast?"*

*15 And Jesus said to them, "Can the friends of the bridegroom mourn as long as the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them, and then they will fast. 16 No one puts a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; for the patch pulls away from the garment, and the tear is made worse. 17 Nor do they put new wine into old wineskins, or else the wineskins break, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But they put new wine into new wineskins, and both are preserved."*

- John's disciples also have a problem with Jesus' type of ministry/discipleship.
- Jesus didn't sit back and wait, He engaged people.
- You can't catch fish if you don't get in the boat.
- You can't catch fish if you don't break the surface of the water.
- What's up with the darning lesson? New patches on old jeans.
- What's up with the wineskins? New wine ferments and expands.
- Jesus didn't come to patch up the old system. He came to pour new wine into new wine skins.
- What does all this mean for us?

If we look at ourselves as well as church movements, revivals and overall church history, we can see a pattern emerge. And its not a good pattern, either. The pattern is one of being welcomed into the family of God, that is, salvation, which is a good thing. Then we begin, or at least we should begin to grow. With growth comes change. This is also a good thing. But eventually, our growth or at least the place to which our growth brings us can become a self-appointed pinnacle to which we can require other to reach. What I mean by this is at some point we package our worldview into a nice package. And anyone who doesn't comply with/ agree with what seems to us to be the obvious conclusion/ answers to life and all that it entails, can then be seen as an enemy not only to our worldview, but to "ultimate truth."

Now please understand me. I'm not saying that there is no ultimate truth or that we shouldn't arrive at certain conclusions as we grow. I do believe that as we grow in the Word, that we get more conservative, morally speaking. There is a reason we settle down, as we get older, and it isn't just due to the fact that we move slower. We come to see the folly of things we did, as we were younger or unbelievers. That is to be expected. What cannot happen is what often happens, meaning that we develop a "we/they" attitude and look down upon the unbeliever with the disdain of the Pharisees. Once again, the church is a hospital.

- We may need to take inventory to see if our methods are compatible with reaching the new/ next generation. The Pharisees as well as the others in the Jewish world of faith had, over time, developed traditions that had become obstacles to ministry. They had built themselves a culture, making them distinct. That is a good thing. But inadvertently, their culture had increasingly alienated those who needed to be reached. And the pious attitudes of those within the faith, held up a stop sign to the sinner rather than an opening of their arms.

Jesus engaged the people that, in some ways, needed it most. And notice that though He challenged the status quo, He didn't compromise the Word, though He was accused of it constantly.

How do we fit into this scenario? Are we pharisaic? Are we willing to change the way we do things in order to reach the unreached and alienated? How do we do this without compromising the Word of God? These are hard questions but they have to be asked. Otherwise we too will become old, tattered jeans with patches or worse yet we will become dry, brittle wine skins, fit only for old wine and the eventual trash heap.