

## College Lesson

### Focal Passage Read Matthew 9:9-13

I had someone ask me, “Mitch, is there someone who is far from God and who would call you at 2:00 AM and get help from you?” I thought deeply, but I had no one. I had plenty of friends who were Christians, but no close friends who were not Christians. I knew I needed to make becoming friends with people who separated from God a priority in my life. But in that, I knew some things had to change. Perhaps things need to change with you as well.

In Mark 9 we meet Matthew. He was a tax collector, a Jewish traitor and an outcast, seen as selfish and out for himself. He doesn't seem like the guy you want to be your disciple. So, what does Jesus do? He tells him, “Follow me.” Jesus doesn't treat Matthew like a charity project, but he allowed him to belong to his community of friends. Jesus knew that people would see him with Matthew. It would cost Jesus popularity and legitimacy among some, especially the religious elite. But, Jesus doesn't seem to care. He still asks Matthew to come close to him.

The religious leaders, too cowardly to approach Jesus, perhaps within his ear shot, barked to Jesus's disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with the tax collectors and sinners?” This is a legitimate question. Jesus was eating, which was an intimate act in Jesus' day. And he was with those who were far from God. So Jesus was intimately hanging out with unclean people who had no reverence for God. In the minds of the religious elite, there was so much wrong with this situation, so much uncleanness. Jesus hears their question and then he drops this one-liner: I desire mercy and not sacrifice (Mt. 9:13).

What Jesus desires most is mercy, which means to show kindness or concern for someone in need. When Jesus saw Matthew and his friends he simply saw people in need of a Savior. He was moved with compassion. But I believe he saw so much more in Matthew. Matthew would go on to write one of the four testaments to the life of Jesus. His work has had a paramount effect on millions of people for the last 2,000 years. Why? Jesus became his friend. Matthew turned into a faithful disciple and an author that continues to turn the world upside down with the truth of the good news of Jesus Christ.

### Questions to Consider

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1. Is there someone who is far from God and who would call you at 2:00 AM and get help from you? If so, identify someone in close proximity to you that you can approach.
2. How can you show that person mercy and share the hope of Jesus Christ?
3. What fears do you have in becoming this person's friend?