

Small group study guide

Matthew 9:9–17 It's all about Jesus pt.4 – Friend of Sinners

Big idea: Jesus came to “seek and save what was lost” — that means us, and the people we know and love.



Read: Matthew 9:9–17 (also consider John 3:17 and Romans 5:8)

1. What does it mean to be “lost”?

The talk suggested that being lost doesn't necessarily mean being obviously unhappy or in crisis. We can be **busy, distracted, comfortable or simply unaware** that we have lost our way.

- What do you think it means spiritually to be “lost”?
- Why might it be difficult for someone to recognise that they are lost?
- Are there things in modern life that make it difficult for us to stop, reflect and ask where we are going?

2. Jesus – friend of sinners

Jesus deliberately went towards people who were regarded as outsiders. He didn't condemn them, but neither did he leave them unchanged: “**Jesus loves us as we are, no condemnation, but he loves us enough not to let us stay as we are.**”

- What do you notice about the way Jesus treats Matthew and his friends?
- What is the difference between **accepting people** and **approving everything they do**?
- How does John 3:17 change the way we think about Jesus – judge, healer or saviour?

3. The danger of comparison

The Pharisees judged people by outward appearance and comparison. The talk suggested that **comparison is toxic** because we can always find someone who appears worse and better than ourselves.

- Where do you see the temptation to compare ourselves with others?
- How can comparison, reputation and fear affect our relationships?
- What would it look like to live more freely from God's grace and mercy?

4. Becoming “invitational”

Matthew's natural response was to introduce his friends to Jesus. The talk described this as **building bridges of relationship with a view to crossing them**, while making our friendship unconditional.

- Who are the people God has already placed around you?
- How could you be more intentional about being interested in them, listening to them and building friendship?
- What might it look like to invite someone to **meet Jesus**, in your day to day life?

This week

Who is one person you could pray for, listen to, encourage or invite to take one step closer to Jesus?

Prayer

Pray for:

- **ourselves** – that we would know God's mercy and grace;
- **our relationships** – that we would be welcoming and genuinely interested in others;
- **those who are “lost”** – that they would encounter Jesus;
- **courage** – to share humbly and honestly that we have found the Way, and that the Way is a person: Jesus.