



Growth Group Questions

January 12, 2025

“A New Life”

Context:

Large crowds will be a theme throughout the gospel of Mark. Large crowds are seen following Jesus, but notice how the crowds often get in the way of Jesus. We saw this earlier in Mark 2 where the paralytic’s friends are unable to get him to Jesus because of the crowd. As you read through Mark notice how many times the crowds are mentioned, and also how often they obstruct people from getting to Jesus.

Jesus is the focus of the calling of Levi. Jesus’ words and his actions matter. He does not “ask” Levi to follow him or wait for Levi to ask if he can follow him. He simply calls him. This is so different than other rabbis of Jesus’ day who would never have called disciples to follow them. Jesus simply meets Levi where he is at his tax collector’s booth and calls him to follow. Jesus is forming a fellowship or community where people walk and live with him.

There is debate around whether the “Levi” of Mark 2 is the “Matthew” of Matthew 9 and also the Matthew who is one of the apostles. In Matthew 9:9 the person is called Matthew, and the traditional view is that Levi and Matthew are different names of the same person. In the four lists of the apostles, including Mark’s, the “son of Alphaeus” is identified as James. The circumstances of the call and the relationship of the present passage to Mark 1:16–20 and 3:13–19 would seem to indicate that Mark considered Levi to be an apostle. Yet his name does not appear in the names of the apostles in Mark 3.

The word “follow” is only used in talking about the disciples or apostles or followers of Jesus. Mark never uses this word to describe the Pharisees or teachers of the law. It is his way of saying that these religious leaders wanted nothing to do with Jesus.

Jesus mission was to call sinners and those who would never have been invited to the table of the Pharisees. The word Pharisee literally has to do with the idea of separation. Jesus now eats with sinners...after having forgiven sins. Jesus calls the unrighteous and underserving, not the deserving and righteous. He is building bridges, not barriers. As this incredible image of grace is being played out we discover that Jesus, not Levi, is the real host of this meal at Levi's home.

Scripture:

Mark 2:13-17

¹³ Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them. ¹⁴ As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him. ¹⁵ While Jesus was having dinner at Levi's house, many tax collectors and sinners were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. ¹⁶ When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: "Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?" ¹⁷ On hearing this, Jesus said to them, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Mark 1:16-20

¹⁶ As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. ¹⁷ "Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people." ¹⁸ At once they left their nets and followed him. ¹⁹ When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰ Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him.

Hosea 6:6

⁶ For I desire mercy, not sacrifice,
and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.

Romans 9:30-33

³⁰ What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but the people of Israel, who pursued the law as the way of righteousness, have not attained their goal. ³² Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone. ³³ As it is written:

"See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes people to stumble
and a rock that makes them fall,
and the one who believes in him will never be put to shame."^[a]

Matthew 8:11

¹¹ I say to you that many will come from the east and the west and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven.

Questions:

1. In both Mark 1:16-20 and Mark 2:13-17, we hear Jesus use the command “Follow me.” Where else in the Bible did Jesus say: “Follow me”? What were the results?
2. What do you think it means when Jesus says: “Follow me”?
3. How can we obey Jesus’ command to “follow me”?
4. When Jesus said “follow me,” the early disciples immediately left everything behind and trusted Him. They let nothing stand in the way of their following Him. What are some of the things that can keep us from following Jesus?
5. Pastor Paul told us that the lives of the early disciples didn’t have to change in order for Jesus to extend His mercy to them. He said that their lives were changed because Jesus extended His mercy to them. What does that say to you about your own life?
6. In Hosea 6:6, we read: “For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings.” This was spoken by the prophet Hosea to the people of Israel. What are the implications of this verse for us today?
7. Pastor Paul said that getting close to Jesus is what discipleship is all about. What does that statement mean to you? What we intentionally do to get closer to Jesus?
8. Pastor Paul’s sermon focused on the calling of Levi in Mark 2:13-17. As you read through the entire chapter during the week, was there anything else in Chapter 2 that particularly spoke to you?

Pastor Paul’s Sermon Questions:

1. Are you sitting at the wrong table and if so, what is keeping you from pushing back and leaving?
2. Is there someone you need to be inviting to come and sit at the table where they can meet Jesus?