

JESUS TRANSFORMS MATTHEW

All Activity Sheets

KEY WORDS

FOLLOW FORGIVE CREATION FOLLOWER OLD NEW

BIBLICAL REFERENCE

Mark 2:13-17

LESSON OBJECTIVE

To help elementary students know that people can be followers of Jesus no matter what they have done in the past. Jesus is always willing to forgive whoever asks.

MEMORY VERSE

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV*).

PREPARE YOURSELF TO TEACH

When is it the appropriate time to stop treating children as babies and begin to place our trust in them? The answer is: as soon as possible. But in the case of elementary-aged students, we need to remember that their ability to think in the concrete surpasses the domain of the abstract. We must be sure to speak to them in a way that’s understandable to them.

This lesson is about forgiveness and salvation. It may seem like a very high concept for first and second grade children, but it is not. Love is the basis of Jesus’ forgiveness, and these children understand what love is, whether they receive it regularly or not. However, it is more difficult to convey to them the idea of sin. At this age, it is easier to see faults and sins in others than to recognize them personally. This lesson will introduce the fact that we are all sinners and need to be forgiven by Jesus. This will offer an opportunity for children to pray and ask Jesus for forgiveness for their sins.

It is in this age of concrete concepts when children can come to know Jesus as their personal Savior. They trust what adults say and feel love when their parents, relatives, teachers or other people offer it to them. During the preparation of your session, pray that the children will be sensitive to the message and that they become followers of the Master.

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

Why does Jesus eat with sinners?

What an interesting question! Those who asked it were teachers of the law. They were men with many years of study and contemplation. Their lives involved learning the law of God and their task was to impart that knowledge to others. It was appropriate for those teachers to ask a deep theological question. If they believed that Jesus was the Son of God, as he claimed to be, they should have been eager to ask and also absorb his teachings. But if they did not believe, they had the right to ask deep questions to expose Jesus as a fake.

For that reason, they wanted to know why Jesus ate with sinners. It was a fact that went beyond their comprehension. If Jesus was the Son of God, could he associate with such people? And if he was a fraud, why would he risk everything for such an obvious mistake?

So, “why does he eat with sinners?” was the big question, and it seemed that no one could give an appropriate answer. Last week, we learned how Jesus showed compassion for an “unclean” leper and healed him. These “sinners” were not physically ill, but they were as unclean as the leper. They were “good” Jews and were warned to stay away from tax collectors, adulterers, thieves and those who refused to follow the law. Good people did not eat with sinners, because eating together meant they were friends or “equal to them”.

So, why did Jesus eat with sinners? First, this group of “sinners” included a former sinner named Levi (or Matthew). Previously, Jesus had asked Levi to follow him. Immediately, Levi left his job of collecting taxes and his disordered lifestyle to follow Jesus. His life changed. Jesus was at the party celebrating that new life!

Second, as a former sinner, Levi had many friends who were still in “that category”. When he prepared a party to celebrate his new life, Levi invited the people he knew, that is, other sinners. Levi had not been a “good boy” long enough to know that he should not continue to join them.

Third, and very important, this was the kind of people that Jesus had come to seek and save. Jesus did not come to “heal the healthy”, he came to reach those who needed help, the sinners. When the Pharisees looked through the windows at Levi’s party, they saw a vile and unpleasant scene. Someone who claimed to be the Son of God was associating with the unclean and sinful! They were shocked by Jesus’ actions.

When Jesus looked around the room, he saw sick people. They were not physically sick, but they were spiritually sick, and Jesus was the Great Doctor. That is the reason why he came to heal all those who asked him.

Ironically, the Pharisees were sick, but they did not recognize him. Their very righteousness did not let them see Jesus, nor experience the spiritual healing that only he could offer. Instead of wondering why Jesus ate with sinners, we should thank him for doing so. Let’s give thanks to God because Jesus spent time with sinners, because that includes us too, and he did it to give us a new life.

INTRODUCE THE LESSON

You can repeat the construction game of the pyramid that was done the previous session. Now is a good time to remember the previous lesson. Ask some questions about what happened in that session. “Who did Jesus heal?” (A leper). “What kind of illness did that man have?” (Leprosy) “What was the man shouting about himself?” (Unclean, unclean). “Did Jesus heal the man?” (Yes), etc.

When the children arrive to the session, they can begin to practice the memory verse with the stones, blocks or bricks. In advance, place the cards or bricks with the words upside down. Children can start by assembling the pyramid by placing the words in the right place.

Important word

Before the session, prepare a card with the word “forgiveness” and print the definition on the back. Cover the card with packing tape or paper to laminate it.

In the group, present the word “forgiveness.” Say: “Today we have a fun game to help you understand a new word: ‘forgiveness’. Forgiveness is a gift from God. When we are guilty of disobeying God, Jesus takes our sins on himself and takes our punishment. God’s forgiveness unites us to him again.

Come! Follow Me!

Before the session, prepare a sample of the activity in Student Activity Sheet #216-A and #216-B. Give Student Activity Sheet #216-A and #216-B to the students. Then, guide them in following the instructions on Student Activity Sheet #216-B.

Tell the children that in today's lesson we will learn about Matthew deciding to follow Jesus. Then say: "We can decide to follow Jesus too."

TEACH THE LESSON

Matthew finds a Savior

It was a beautiful day and Jesus was walking near the lake, teaching people about the love of God. "Jesus, tell us more!" they exclaimed. Jesus spoke to them for a long time. A lot of people followed him wherever he went.

One day, Jesus and the people walked near a city. Levi, later called Matthew, was sitting collecting taxes. The tax collector looked at those who passed by without a smile ... he knew very well that he did not like any of them. It was a very hectic day and there were many who traveled from one place to another. Matthew's job was to collect the tax money from those who traveled outside the city or from those who entered it. Many disliked Levi because his work was for the Roman government.

Generally, the tax people collected a little extra money for themselves. For that reason, nobody said anything good about Levi. It was surprising when someone expressed something kind about this Jew, since money was probably his only friend. "Come, follow me," said a voice. Matthew fixed his eyes on the face of the one who had spoken to him. It was Jesus! The Master's hand was extended toward Matthew. Matthew lost his breath!

He immediately got up from his desk and followed Jesus. He did not look back; Nor did he wonder if he had made a good decision. He did not ask himself, "And what about my money and my earnings?" He also did not ask Jesus where he wanted him to follow him. He only heard the Master's voice and did what Jesus said: he followed him!

The next day, Matthew decided to have a big party at his house. How could he not have a party if Jesus was there and had totally changed his life? It was the perfect time to introduce Jesus to his friends. Jesus and his disciples went to Matthew's house to eat with him. Many of his friends - tax collectors - came to the party. Some were not honest and had cheated people. There were also other sinners around the table who did not know Jesus. Matthew thought: "If all these people come to my house to eat, they will listen to what Jesus has to say to them, and it is possible that they will become his followers too."

During the meal, Jesus sat in the midst of all the tax collectors and sinners. He smiled and talked with them while they ate. It must have been a very interesting conversation. The men heard about how they could receive God's forgiveness and follow Jesus. Everyone had a great time at the party. They talked and listened to the wonderful message that Jesus had to give them. It was then that someone warned that a group of Pharisees was nearby ... observing them. They were the men who enforced the laws, and they did not like Jesus. They did not trust or believe in Jesus as the Savior. The Pharisees complained and were angry.

Jesus heard one of them ask, "Why does that Jesus eat with tax collectors and sinners? If he is who he says he is, then he must get away from them!" Jesus did not get angry with the Pharisees or tell them to go away. Instead, he looked at them and showed them something important. He said, "The healthy have no need of a doctor, but the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners."

The Pharisees did not understand what Jesus had told them. They continued being angry. But Matthew understood very well. He could love Jesus because Jesus loved him and loved all his friends. Jesus the Nazarene knew that tax collectors and sinners did not act righteously. He knew that they did not live correctly, but he wanted to help them learn about God and know that their sins could be forgiven. Jesus took advantage of this excellent opportunity to communicate the Father's message. All the people around that table in Levi's house needed forgiveness, restoration and a new life. That was the reason why he went to the party with all of them. His love and forgiveness is for all people! His love and forgiveness was and is much more important than the sins that all of them had committed.

Ask: "What did Jesus say to Levi?" (Follow me.) "What did Levi do?" (He left everything and followed Jesus.) "Why do you think he invited his friends to the party in his house?" (He wanted them to listen to Jesus.) "What does it mean when Jesus said that the healthy do not need a doctor, but the sick do?" (Jesus calls those who are sick with sin to follow him and stop sinning.)

Say: "Matthew really needed a Savior and did the right thing by following Jesus. He understood the meaning of what Jesus had said, that the healthy do not need a doctor, but the one who is sick does." Let the children comment, and guide their thinking to the idea that Jesus loves everyone and wants to forgive them.

FOLLOW ME!

CONNECT THE LESSON

Say: "Jesus paid attention to Matthew and also to you. He wants your life to be different. Give each child the activity page for this session from the students' resources. Guide the children to follow the instructions. When they complete their project, talk about

how Jesus takes care of us.

Say: "We have learned that when Jesus asked Matthew to follow him, Matthew obeyed. We also can follow Jesus. Likewise, we must not lie, or steal, or cheat others, like Matthew and his friends did. We have all been sinners because we've disobeyed God. We can ask Jesus for forgiveness and then we can be his followers. Levi decided to follow Jesus. You can also make that decision.

Encourage the children to tell the Bible story to others.

PRACTICE THE MEMORY VERSE

[Download Additional Memory Verse Activities PDF](#)

[Download Suggestions for Bible Memorization PDF](#)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Repeat the memory verse several times with the group.

Say: "This verse is one of the happiest in the Bible. It means that Jesus loves you very much and that if you ask him, he can change your life. He helps you and can be your Savior. In the same way that Jesus forgave Matthew in our story, Jesus can cleanse you and forgive you of your sins.

WRAP-UP

Pray

Take the opportunity to invite the children to accept Jesus as their personal Savior. Make this a special moment, so that the children really understand that they are sinners and that Jesus is willing to forgive them, if they ask him to do so.

Encourage

Tell the children you will continue to pray for them. To celebrate the "new birth" of the children during the week engage in a conversation with the parents of those who accepted Jesus and their pastor.

Invite

Before the children depart, tell them something interesting about the next session to encourage them to attend with friends.