

Connecting with Others Like Jesus Did
Session 1
June 7, 2026

Meeting Needs

The Point: Meeting needs is an opportunity to introduce others to Jesus.

Session Passages: Luke 5:12-16, 27-32

Luke 5:12-16

Connection to the Point: Jesus was willing to meet the need of a leper.

Context. This passage includes two stories of miraculous healing Jesus performed at the beginning of His earthly ministry. Jesus filled these early months of His ministry with teaching, healing, casting out demons, and selecting His disciples. These two stories are a sample of the healing that took place. While the healing ministry of Jesus was not the primary reason for His coming, it was an essential part of His ministry that demonstrated Jesus's love, compassion, and care for people. It was also a sign of Jesus's willingness to identify with humanity's suffering and validated His claim that He was from God and the Messiah.

Leprosy (v. 12) is used to describe several different skin diseases, including what is now known as Hansen's disease. Depending on the severity of the disease, this can range from simple scaling of the skin, such as in psoriasis, to open sores and numbness of the nerve endings in the extremities. The occurrence of this disease among the Israelites led Moses to provide detailed guidance for its identification and management (Lev. 13–14). Based on Luke's description, this man had a severe skin disease that often led to disfigurement of the face, arms, and legs.

He saw Jesus (v. 12). This man had heard of Jesus's healing power, which brought him hope. He was willing to violate Jewish law by approaching Jesus (Lev. 13:45-46). Since the most serious form of leprosy was contagious, lepers were separated from society and were to associate only with other lepers. Because this man's situation was desperate, he was willing to risk the wrath of public opinion.

Fell facedown (v. 12). This phrase signifies an act of reverence. What little the man knew of Jesus had convinced him that Jesus was from God, so he prostrated himself. In desperation, the man asked Jesus to heal Him.

If you are willing (v. 12). There was no doubt in this man's mind of Jesus's ability to heal. What he doubted was Jesus's willingness to heal him. With this phrase, the leprous man was seeking the compassion of Jesus.

I am willing (v. 13). Jesus's response confirmed the leper's faith that Jesus had the authority to heal. Jesus responded with compassion and healing.

Jesus touched him (v. 13). Mark's account of this story states that Jesus was moved with compassion, which led to His healing touch of the man (Mark 1:41). Jesus employed two different means to bring about this healing—His touch and His command: “Be made clean.” Touch was often a means Jesus used to heal. The astonishing thing here is that Jesus reached out and touched a leper, a ceremonially unclean and contagious man. No rabbi would ever defile himself by touching a leper. Jesus, however, did not respond out of conventional wisdom; instead, He responded out of love and compassion for the man in his seemingly hopeless situation. Jesus was not made unclean by touching the leper; instead, Jesus cleansed the leper with His touch. A human hand may not have touched this man for years.

Immediately (v. 13). Three Gospel accounts use the word immediately to describe the instantaneous healing of this leper (Matt. 8:3; Mark 1:42; and Luke 5:13). This was not a miracle that occurred over time, which some might explain through the body's natural healing process. Instead, this healing happened instantly!

Tell no one (v. 14). Jesus drew crowds for a variety of reasons. Some were fascinated by the authority with which He taught. The most prominent reason Jesus drew groups of people was His ministry of healing. Many wanted healing, but only a small group wanted to hear and heed His teachings. To combat this, Jesus instructed those He healed not to spread word of their healing so that people would not come to Him solely for healing. Jesus wanted people to hear His message and respond in faith.

Go . . . to the priest (v. 14). The Mosaic law gave the priests the responsibility of identifying leprosy and also of declaring a person clean or unclean (Lev. 13–14). Interestingly, the Jewish religious leaders did not believe in Jesus, yet for one of them to declare this man clean was an admission that the healing by Jesus was legitimate. The healed man was required to give a sin offering and a burnt offering to the Lord for his cleansing (Lev. 14:12-32).

Large crowds (v. 15). The leper who Jesus had healed seemed to have disobeyed Jesus and told everyone about his healing. The story of the healing spread quickly and widely because of the large crowds present wherever Jesus taught.

Often withdrew (v. 16). The Gospels highlighted Jesus withdrawing often for prayer and time with His Father. The Greek construction of the verse suggests this was an ongoing practice of Jesus. Prayer with His Father and solitude were essential for Jesus because of the constant demands the crowds He encountered placed on Him. Jesus spent time in prayer even with unceasing demands on His time.

Luke 5:27-28

Connection to the Point: Jesus invited a tax collector to follow Him.

After this (v. 27). This transition statement bridges the gap between the healing of the leper and the call of Levi (Matthew) in this section. During that gap, Jesus healed a paralyzed man who

was brought to Him by friends (vv. 17-26). While healing this man, Jesus had a confrontation with the Jewish religious leaders.

Tax collector/Tax office (v. 27). Capernaum was along the road leading from the Mediterranean Sea to Damascus. This road was a significant trade route, presenting the Romans with a strategic opportunity to impose taxes on all the goods that traveled along it. Along that route, there would be periodic booths set up for gathering taxes. These taxes on trade goods were just one of several taxes that Rome imposed upon the Jewish people. There was also a poll tax, an income tax, and a land tax. Each type of tax would have an assigned collector for these taxes. The tax collectors charged the citizens the tax and were allowed to keep as their personal income any additional charges they collected. Because these tax collectors were Jews who worked for the Roman government, the Jewish people viewed them as thieves and traitors to Israel.

Levi (v. 27). In the first century AD, Jewish people often had two names, one being either Hebrew or Aramaic, and the other either Greek or Latin. Levi was a distinguished Hebrew name stretching back to one of the twelve sons of Jacob. “Matthew” was Levi’s Greek name, meaning the gift of Yahweh. Both the Gospels of Mark (2:14) and Luke use the name Levi for this disciple; Matthew’s Gospel refers to him as Matthew (Matt. 9:9). Mark’s Gospel mentions that Levi was the son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14). All four listings of the disciples of Jesus also mention James, the son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). It could be that Matthew was related to James, the son of Alphaeus.

Follow me (v. 27). Matthew likely lived in Capernaum, the town where Jesus ministered (Matt. 4:13). Because of this, Matthew was likely acquainted with Jesus and had perhaps witnessed Him teach and heal. When Jesus saw Matthew in the tax collector’s booth, He perceived that Matthew’s heart was open to God’s prompting, even though he was sitting in his place of shame. Using the phrase He used when He called the other disciples, Jesus asked him to “Follow me.” Jesus invited him to become a disciple with a total commitment. Being a disciple entailed spending more time with Jesus and learning about His ministry and teachings. As a result of his training as a disciple, Matthew would one day invite others to follow Jesus. Jesus’s invitation to discipleship involves a call to repentance (v. 32).

Leaving everything (v. 28). Matthew responded by leaving all, just like the fishermen called by Jesus in Matthew 4:18-22. The cost to Matthew might have been significantly higher due to the lucrative nature of serving as a tax collector. What Matthew received, though, far outweighed what he left behind. He would learn in the days ahead how valuable it was to follow Jesus and thereby receive salvation and eternal life (Rom. 8:17).

Luke 5:29-32

Connection to the Point: Jesus was willing to associate with those who needed His help.

Grand banquet (v. 29). The impact of Jesus’s call to Matthew was immediate. He was so moved by Jesus asking him to become one of His disciples that he wanted his business associates and others to hear Jesus. So, Matthew hosted a lavish banquet at his house in honor of Jesus. It is

possible that Matthew was repaying the honor Jesus had given him by hosting a banquet in His honor.

Large crowd of tax collectors and others (v. 29). In a first-century banquet, a host would invite colleagues and subordinates to a banquet. Most Jews would not have welcomed tax collectors to their homes. Matthew likely was considered a traitor for serving the Romans and was not welcome by Jews, so he associated with others who were also outcasts. None of the guests likely followed Jewish law or were accepted by society and were ceremonially unclean. Matthew may have wanted other outcasts to encounter Jesus.

Reclining (v. 29). Reclining indicates this was a lengthy dinner. Tables were low to the ground, and diners reclined on an elbow to share in the meal. Such practice allowed for closeness of fellowship and deep conversation. This banquet was more than just physical nourishment; guests also expected relational nourishment.

Pharisees (v. 30). The Pharisees were one of the most prominent Jewish religious sects during Jesus's time. Their name meant "separate ones." They strictly followed the Mosaic law and its interpretations. They took pride in their daily purity and piety. They believed in miracles, angels, demons, and the resurrection from the dead. In this belief, they stood in direct opposition to their political/religious opponents, the Sadducees, who did not believe in these things. The Pharisees' approach to righteousness with God was through obeying the law. They were the chief opponents of Jesus; and He denounced them as hypocrites (Matt. 23) and constantly monitored His teaching and activity and accused Him of breaking the law. However, it was their interpretation of the law that Jesus opposed.

Scribes (v. 30). Originally, scribes used their writing skills to record valuable information. Over time, the scribes became copyists of the sacred writings of Judaism. In addition, they were seen as experts in the Mosaic law and its interpretation. They served as teachers of the law in Jewish life. Occasionally, others called them lawyers. Most scribes belonged to the party of the Pharisees. As a result, the scribes united with the Pharisees as chief opponents of Jesus. Here, in the story of the banquet at Matthew's house, it would appear that the scribes and the Pharisees showed up uninvited, intending to try once again to bring an accusation against Jesus.

Complaining (v. 30). The Greek word means "complaining, grumbling, or murmuring." In the Gospels, the same word is used to describe both the Jewish leaders and the Jewish crowds who complained about things Jesus said or did.

Disciples (v. 30). This is the first reference to the Greek term translated "disciples" in Luke's Gospel. Luke formally lists these disciples in 6:12-16. Often, when the Pharisees confronted Jesus, they approached Him with accusations against His disciples. Even though their issue was with Jesus, they used the guise of questioning the disciples as a ploy to hide their intent (Matt. 12:1-7; Mark 7:1-8). When they asked the disciples why they were eating with the people, they were essentially asking Jesus why He associated with sinners. In the first century AD, sharing a meal was an act of intense fellowship. Jesus's presence at this banquet represented a profound friendship with those considered outcasts.

Tax collectors and sinners (v. 30). While the reference in this passage undoubtedly included Matthew's associates who attended the banquet, a broader meaning would encompass all the various outcasts with whom Jesus associated during His ministry. Jesus spoke directly against such criticism in Luke 7:34: "The Son of Man has come eating and drinking, and you say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!'"

Healthy . . . sick (v. 31). Jesus began rebuking the accusations of the Jewish leaders. Using the analogy of a doctor whose job is to bring healing to sick people, not healthy ones, He pointed to the identity of those who needed the ministry of the physician—the sick!

Righteous . . . sinners (v. 32). In the same way that sick people need a physician, so sinful people need the spiritual healing of Jesus. With this pair of contrasting labels, Jesus completes the analogy given in verses 31-32. Not the healthy, but the sick need a doctor; not the righteous, but the sinners, need a relationship with Jesus. While the Pharisees might see themselves as righteous, Jesus intended that they were people who imagined they were righteous through pride and good works. Sinners, on the other hand, were those who knew they had no right standing with God and would be dependent on the gift of God's grace.

Repentance (v. 32). This is a word that means to change the mind and heart. It is the picture of a person going in the wrong direction and who makes a conscious decision to turn and go in a new direction. This change was what the Pharisees needed since they considered themselves righteous. The path of salvation for them was to change and realize that they were sinners in need of God's forgiveness through His Messiah, Jesus Christ.