

# Personal Study

Invite 4, Connect 1 • Week of January 12

Today's lesson is about two individuals who had been waiting their entire life for an invitation from Jesus. We're finding that people are more open to a warm, genuine invitation to church or Life Group than we may realize. The question is, as Christ-followers, are we open to inviting people to Christ? As we invite at least four individuals per week – according to the parable of the soils (Matthew 13:3-9) – at least one person will connect. Connecting means a worshiper feels at home, welcomed at first. We don't make a first impression a second time. Later, the worshiper gets 'plugged in' to an area of ministry or service. People want to belong.

In the gospel of Matthew, chapter nine, some people are bringing to Jesus a paralyzed man. Jesus not only heals the man, but first forgives the man's sin! Later, Jesus walks right into the tax office of 'Levi' and the disciple we know as Matthew immediately leaves his line of business and follows Christ. An encounter with Jesus definitely changes the trajectory of individuals across the landscape of history. With those who humbly submit to His love – the outcome is positive and miraculous. And yet, with others (like the religious leaders in this same chapter) the words of the old man Simeon, at Jesus' dedication, come to mind:

*"This child is destined to cause many in Israel to fall, but He will be a joy to many others. He has been sent as a sign from God, but many will oppose Him" (Luke 2:34).*

Read Matthew 9:1-13

1. Cross-reference vv2-8 and we find that "four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. They couldn't bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, so they dug a hole through the roof above His head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus" (Mark 2:3-4). Like the friends, do you care enough to invite people to Christ? If not, take time to discern your indifference to being open to 'invite four/connect one'.

How might a fresh outpouring from the Holy Spirit rekindle your desire to share Christ's love with others? Ask the Lord to help you love Him all over again (or fall in love with Christ for the first time). Ask Him to give you a bold love for the people around you.

2. The plain truth states that when we invite, we add. But when we connect, we multiply. One simple invitation can affect countless lives with hope and salvation. How did Jesus' invitation to Matthew (vv9-13) prove to be an operation of multiplication?

When have you witnessed a simple invitation *to one individual* expand so that multiple people, families, and acquaintances experience Christ's love?

As always, as Jesus is doing good and making people whole, there is opposition also at work (v3, v11). Jesus says, "Healthy people don't need a doctor—sick people do... Now do and learn the meaning of this Scripture: 'I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.' For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners" (vv12-13).

3. One of our points in the message is "you are positioned for the invitation". God has you right where you are to show kindness, hospitality, and be an image bearer of God by inviting people to worship. Who in your office, neighborhood, friends need an invite?

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