

JESUS

through the eyes of the unlikely

Week of January 15 – The IRS¹

Overview:

Who do *you* see when you look at Jesus? Teacher? Miracle worker? Divine Son of God? All of these? Our view of Jesus is shaped by our own perspective, our church history, and our study of scripture. Over the next several weeks, we will view Jesus from Luke's perspective, through the eyes of some unlikely characters he met while on earth. We'll discover themes like identity, power, surrender, forgiveness, redemption, and many more. We pray that as you see Jesus in fresh ways, you are drawn to follow Jesus more closely and become more like him every day.²

Group Objectives:

Relationships and Life Transformation are the primary purpose of community groups

- Reflect on this past Sunday's message and other devotional reading.
- Pray together and provide encouragement for other group members.
- Consider the labels we put on ourselves and others, and how we can welcome the unlikely into the kingdom.

DNA statement(s) tie-in:

- *We are on mission to reach one more*—Every person matters to God, so every person matters to us. God invites every one of us to join him in his great mission to reach one more—one more coworker, neighbor, family member, and friend.

Conversation Starters:

- If you could throw a party and invite anyone, past or present, whom would you invite?

Listening to God

- Where did you see God at work last week? How were you able to join him?

Learning from God's Word: Bible Study Discussion

In first-century Israel, tax collectors lived on the margins of society. They were mostly Jews contracted by Rome to collect taxes from their own people. They didn't fit anywhere: Romans dismissed them as Jews, and the Jews saw them as traitors and thieves. Tax collectors earned their money at the expense of their own people. Rome gave them a quota of taxes to collect, but they could demand any amount and keep whatever extra they brought in for themselves. It was all legal, but their bonuses amounted to state-sanctioned extortion.

¹ This week's lesson was written by Rachel Vaughn and edited by Dawn Gentry.

² For a monthly reading and devotional guide to accompany this series in Luke, go to cccomaha.info.

Pharisees, on the other hand, were generally popular Jewish leaders of their time. They believed it their duty to protect Israel by enforcing God's Law. But their passion for the Law often led them into legalism and blinded them to the heart behind the Law—God's love for all people.

- **Read Luke 5:27-29**

- From this passage, what do we know about Levi?
 - Do you think this was his first interaction with Jesus? What do you imagine he knew/saw before Jesus called him?
 - Why was his call so unlikely? What do you think the other disciples thought of him?
- What was Levi's response to Jesus? What does that tell you about what he thought of Jesus?
- Whom did Levi invite to his party? Why do you think he invited them, specifically?

- **Read Luke 5:30-32**

- What was the Pharisee's chief complaint of Jesus? Why would this be important to them?
- How would the Pharisees think of the people at Levi's party?
 - What would Pharisees believe was necessary for them to be right with God—or did they believe it was even possible?
- In verse 32, who in the story do you think Jesus considers to be the sick and the well?
 - Where would the Pharisees place themselves? Why does that matter?

- **Read Luke 18:9-14, Hosea 6:6**

- According to these passages, what does God want from his followers?
- What do the tax collector and Levi understand about following Jesus that the Pharisees miss?

Leaning into Obedience:

- Who do you most identify with: the unlikely tax collector or the blinded Pharisee?
 - Do you struggle more with believing God could want *you* in his kingdom?
...Or believing God could want "*that other person*"?
- How can we combat the tendency to declare others too far gone for God, or automatically write someone off?
- How do we "feast with sinners" without falling into sin ourselves?
- How do you sense God calling you to respond to this passage?
 - Is there an example to follow? A command to obey?
- How can the group encourage you this week as you respond?

Prayer Prompts:

- Invite members of the group to share personal prayer requests.
- Allow time for silent reflection on the following questions.
Have I ever fully admitted my need for God?
Who have I decided is not welcome in God's kingdom?
- Option: Give your group time to pray, either silently or aloud, for people or groups of people they struggle to love as Jesus loves.