

Episode: Luke Series No. 6

Narrator: Matthew

Primary Scriptures: Luke 5

Story Summary: Early ministry of Jesus

Location: Capernaum

Time: Circa 30 AD

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Luke 5:11, 5:16, 5:25, 5:27-28, 5:32

We know almost nothing of Matthew's life before or after he became a follower of Jesus. We know he was a tax collector in Capernaum when Jesus called him as a follower.¹ He had a tax collecting booth and a house, and his friends included tax collectors and other people considered to be sinners. We know that Mark and Luke called him "Levi" and that he was an apostle.² And most importantly, we know that Matthew heard Jesus' call and left his booth immediately to follow him. That is virtually all we know directly about Matthew.

We don't know Matthew's hometown or how he was educated. We don't know how long he knew Jesus before hearing and acting upon his call. We don't know how well he got along with the other apostles or what he did after the death of Jesus.

From his writing of the book of *Matthew*, we can surmise he had an excellent knowledge of the Scriptures, and that he was focused on the Jews knowing about Jesus as the Son of God. We can surmise Matthew joined Jesus early in his ministry and wrote as an eyewitness to much of what Jesus said and did. We can deduce that Matthew knew several of the other apostles before Jesus came to the area, and also met Luke many years after the death of Jesus.

In Chapters 4 and 5, Luke insinuates that Jesus knew Simon Peter before he called him to follow him. It is possible Jesus would have known some of the other apostles before he called them.

In Chapter 5, Luke brings the Pharisees into the picture, and shows how they begin to oppose Jesus. It seems they are not quite sure what to do with someone who can so obviously do miracles and healings while not fitting their notion of "righteousness." Jesus and his followers don't even fast "appropriately" according to the rules of the Pharisees.

The healing of the man with leprosy and the paralyzed man have many facets. Jesus was the first to ever heal these types of maladies. Faith was involved with the healings. The healings led to the conclusion that Jesus could forgive sins, which meant he was God incarnate. No wonder the Pharisees were in a furious quandary about what to do with Jesus.

¹ Matthew 9:9-12

² Mark 2:13-15, Luke 5:27-29

Discussion Questions:

1. How long would you guess Jesus knew Simon Peter and his fishing partners before calling them to follow him?
 2. How long do you think Jesus knew Matthew before calling him to be a follower? Why would Jesus have been familiar with Matthew?
 3. Why would Matthew's friends have been other tax collectors and sinners?
 4. Why would Matthew have left a lucrative job to follow a poor preacher? Do you know other people who have left lucrative careers to follow Jesus?
1. Jesus had already healed Simon's mother-in-law Luke 4:38. 2. Matthew had a tax booth that Jesus would have had to walk by every time he left town in a certain direction. 3. tax collectors were agents of the Roman government and had the right to try to collect as many taxes as possible. The common people detested them and considered them to be sinners. They were only allowed to socialize with other tax collectors and "sinners."

Application Questions

1. Matthew had to leave his friends in order to pursue his relationship with Jesus. Are there friends you need to leave, at least temporarily, to pursue Jesus better? What other things in your life might you need to leave behind to be a better follower of Jesus?
2. Jesus taught that you cannot put a new way of life into an old lifestyle. Have you ever tried to do that? How did that work for you? What did you learn from it?
3. How could you go about making friends that are good enough to lower you through a roof to see Jesus?
4. Jesus did not fit the Pharisees' model of what it meant to be righteous. They reacted with anger and disapproval. How do you react to Christians who don't agree with you?

Application Questions for Teens

1. Simon and his friends thought so much alike that they all left their jobs to follow Jesus. Would you like to have friends that are that close? If so, what would you be willing to do to get them?
2. Jesus said that he came to heal sinners. Do you ever feel like you are too much of a sinner for Jesus to want you? If so, what can you do in those moments overcome those feelings with the truth?
3. What ideas or desires do you hold to that are keeping you from becoming closer to Jesus? What would it take for you to release those?