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## LUKE

### Luke 5:27-39

How can we become the Christ-centered church our world so desperately needs? Join us in Luke's Gospel, the most expansive biography of Jesus in the Bible. With the beloved physician as our guide, we hope to experience Jesus so we can participate with the new reality God is bringing into our world.

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## The Big Idea

Jesus did not come to call the righteous, but to call sinners. This is a new kind of thing—which is great news for sinners...and confusing news for those who think they are already righteous!

## Good to Know

- **"Tax Collector" (vs. 27)** - The Roman government hired local people to impose tariffs, taxes and tolls on all sorts of goods that traveled in and out of cities. These tax collectors (telones) were allowed to add a surcharge, but since there was no government regulation over this industry, it was rife with corruption, and the Jewish people absolutely despised these traitors.
- A lot of scholars believe that Levi (vs. 27) is another Jewish name for "Matthew" in Matthew 9:9.
- **"Left everything" (vs. 28)** - Just like Peter, James and John, Levi reoriented his entire life to follow Jesus, walking away from a lucrative (and exploitative) career simply because Jesus told him to. This is what real repentance looks like!
- This is the first depiction of the ten meals that Jesus shares in Luke. Each one highlights a vital aspect of the kind of kingdom that Jesus is inaugurating. This feast was a demonstration of how the former age of ritual cleansing as a proxy for dealing with sin had now been replaced by the present and active forgiveness of God.
- **"Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?" (vs. 30)** - By eating with Levi, Jesus was saying that God's mercy and forgiveness are so powerful that literally anyone who repents can enter an intimate relationship with God.
- Pharisees were known to wear a "ceremonially clean" housecoat when visiting a "common Israelite" (people known as am ha-aretz, "people of the land"). To them, Jesus' willingness to freely associate with people like Levi was proof that He was beneath them.
- **"Those who are well have no need for a physician, but those who are sick." (vs. 31)** - Jesus was essentially saying, "You Pharisees quarantine yourselves from sinners. I roll up my sleeves and treat them up close." (By the way, did you catch the subtle touch of "Doctor Luke" in that quote? Cool, right?)
- **"Fasting" (vs. 33)** - In Judaism, fasting was a sign of lamenting and mourning over the present sin-torn age while waiting in anguish for the kingdom of God to finally come. It was a way of looking back with regret over Israel's past sin and failure.

- But Jesus said that the long-awaited Messianic wedding feast (vs. 34) had begun! The time of fasting was behind them (for now).
- **“A piece of cloth” (vs. 36)** - Jesus used this parable to illustrate that no one would tear a corner off a new coat and patch it on an old coat because not only would the patch shrink and fall off, but the new coat would be ruined as well. This was His clever way of saying that the old program of ritual cleansing no longer fit with the new program of God’s up-close-and-personal mercy. You can’t just copy and paste bits of Jesus’ new ministry on top of the old system. You have to set the old system aside and take all of what Jesus is now offering.
- **“New wine in old wineskins” (vs. 37)** - Jesus continues to show that the Pharisees’ hyper-focus on Torah laws is obsolete now that Jesus is here, illustrating this through the parable of the wineskins. When you put new wine (God’s forgiveness) into old wineskins (obsessing over ritual cleanliness and doing religious somersaults in order to please God), it doesn’t make you more acceptable to God, it blows up in your face!

## Group Guide

### Following the series with your group?

- Start with some [icebreaker questions](#).
- Read the passage together before you dive in.
- Share any insights from the message. Use the questions below to get your conversation started.

## Conversation Starters

1. Levi left everything to follow Jesus. What do you think he saw in Jesus that compelled a tax collector like him to make such a drastic change?
2. Levi threw a huge banquet for Jesus and invited all of his friends. What does this say about his understanding of God’s forgiveness and grace?
3. The Pharisees were triggered by the fact that Jesus was eating with people like Levi. Have you ever recognized the pharisaical tendency to “quarantine” yourself from people on the fringes of respectable religious society?
4. Jesus said He came not for the righteous but for sinners. How does this statement challenge the way we think about our own need for grace?
5. Jesus compares Himself to a bridegroom, saying that His disciples will fast after He is taken away. What does this teach us about the purpose of fasting?
6. Have you ever fasted before? What was the experience like, and what did you learn from it?
7. What does it look like to be a “new wineskin” that is able to contain the “new wine” of Jesus’ kingdom?

## Prayer

Jesus, you have rendered the old, dry religious ways of making ourselves acceptable to God as obsolete. Please give us your heart for the people who would never set foot in a church on their own. Help us be fully present to the newness of your grace. Amen.

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