

Application Guide: “Three Questions About Forgiveness” (Mt. 9:1-13)

February 6, 2005: In a sermon based on Matt. 9:1-13, Joe Bartemus, Pastor of Adult Education, reminded us that Jesus’ power over nature, the supernatural, and sin is a display of more than his physical strength. It is a display of the Divine and his power to forgive. May we rejoice this day that Jesus Christ is able to forgive sin – even able to forgive *us*!

1. “Who forgives sin?” (v. 1-8). Of course, the answer is “Jesus”, but so often we lose focus of the power and truth of this fact! As Pastor Joe stated, “What Christ considers as utmost importance in matters of the kingdom is not to heal the sick or calm the waves, but to have a right relationship with his people through forgiveness.”
 - a. How do the cares of this life often take your focus off of Christ? Consider your prayer life – how much time do you spend focusing on physical issues over the eternal aspects of Christ’s Kingdom? How do both of these aspects of life coincide as we minister to others?
 - b. As Pastor Joe said during the Sunday evening service, “When you come to grips with Jesus forgiving you, you will forgive others” (cf. Matt. 6:12). Is there anyone in your life that you need to remove some barriers (e.g, sin, bitterness, wrong assumptions due to rumors) in order to have a right relationship with them?
2. “Who receives forgiveness?” (v. 9). Jesus forgives individuals! He calls us by name! And he is not a respecter of persons – he calls the “good”, the bad, and the ugly.
 - a. If you have not shared testimonies before, use this time for group members to share how Christ opened their eyes to saving faith in Him.
 - b. What assumption does the fact that Matthew followed Christ (v. 9) upon being called make about the nature of salvation and discipleship?
3. “What is the extent of forgiveness?” (v. 10-13). After Matthew’s conversion, he had a party at his house, inviting all of his ragamuffin friends to meet Jesus. As Pastor Joe mentioned, the collection of people at this party were considered the worst sinners in all of Israel! They were in cahoots with the Roman authorities collecting taxes and often times pocketing some of the proceeds themselves.
 - a. Do you have a heart full of love for the lost people of the World? Of your own neighborhood? How is it being acted out?
 - b. What are ways that you act as if God’s forgiveness cannot reach certain people? How do you, in contrast to Christ, live as a respecter of persons – between the business “ladder” at work, the social strata of church, and the level of income you make? What kind of people do you avoid?
 - c. Who are the least likely people in American culture to receive Christ? Do you pray for these people? Do you sorrow and grieve over them?