

Nearer Than You Think
Making Room at the Table
Mark 2:13-17

Introduction:

Whether it's school, sports, or religion, when we focus only on the rules, it can be difficult to remember the overall purpose of something. Jesus reminds us that when we put the letter of the law before relationships, we may forget why the law was written in the first place. God loves you more than he loves rules.

Discussion Questions

1. Share a time when you have followed the rules even when you may not have wanted to. Share a time when you have broken the rules and why you chose to break the rules?

2. Read Mark 2:13-14

- What societal and religious rules was Jesus breaking when he invited Levi/Matthew to follow him?
- Why do you think Jesus chose Levi/Matthew, an outcast, tax collector as a disciple?
- What does this teach up about sin and Jesus' redemptive power?
- What did Levi risk in following Jesus?
- What does it mean to you to follow Jesus? What might you need to risk?

3. Read Mark 2:15-17

- One of the first things Jesus does with Levi is share a meal with him. A lot of our relationship building with people happens around food. Share one of your favorite memories around sharing a meal together with others.
- The Pharisees are upset with Jesus because he is not following the religious rules. What do you think is at stake for them if Jesus doesn't follow the rules?
- Jesus demonstrate that God pursues sinners and meets them in the middle of their sin. Levi/Matthew left his tax booth, how does this show that forgiveness doesn't permit a person to stay in sin?

4. In his response to the Pharisees Jesus says, "I have come to call not the righteous but sinners." What change does that represent? What kind of kingdom is Jesus making known in the world? What does that mean for us?

- How is Bethany a place for the sick? Are sinners really welcome?
- Jesus calls sinners but he leads them out of their sin. In the same manner, how can those who are well help those who are sick?

Keeping in Step

Jesus welcomed in a new kingdom that was not confined to religious and societal rules. Jesus welcomes all people to the table. What are some ways you, and Bethany can be more inviting to people who are curious about faith?