

Making Room for People Far from God
Matthew 9:9-13

Introduction: This past Sunday we took a break from our series on the Word of God to be reminded of the vision for our *Making Room* effort. Obviously, if one stops by the church these days it is easy to see the construction going on. But in this study, we want to be reminded that the vision for this effort is not just about a building. It is as much about our lives and the need to make room for people who are far from God, for children and youth, for worship and prayer. Today, we are looking at a passage that reminds us that we should make room for people far from God.

Opening Question: Who was a person in your life that had a significant role in helping point you to God? How did he or she do that?

Read Matthew 9:9-13

1. What was Jesus communicating by sharing table fellowship with the tax-gatherers and sinners?

2. Why were the Pharisees offended that Jesus would eat with tax-gathers and sinners?

3. What does Jesus mean when he says that he didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners (v. 13)?

4. Read Isaiah 49:6. What does this say about the scope of Jesus' mission?

5. In what way was Jesus' table fellowship with tax-gathers and sinners consistent with his mission? What implications does this have for our mission as a church?

Steve said:

If Jesus' mission was to call sinners to Himself, that must be **our** mission as well. If Jesus really wants to befriend people far from God so that they will receive what He's offering, we as a church **have** to be committed to the same. And this commitment will be reflected in our ministry structures, in our facilities, and in the very culture of the church. . . Our vision isn't merely to take care of everybody who is already at Faith. Our vision is to see God use us to befriend many people who are currently far from God: people we already know as well as people we've never met.

6. When you read what Steve says here, what does this stir up within you (i.e. excitement, fear, hope, etc.)?

Steve said:

This morning I'm asking you, "Do you have room in your life for friendships with people who are far from God?" I'm not asking if you have an awesome strategy for reaching your friends for Christ. You don't have to figure out what's going to happen. I'm really asking you to make room in your life to befriend people. This is every bit as serious as asking you to give to the building fund. We're asking you to change your lifestyle (if necessary) and the way you interact with people - which is a huge thing.

7. Do you have room in your life to develop friendships with people who are far away from God? Explain.
8. What, if anything, would have to change in your life to have room to begin developing friendships with people who are far from God?