

**Sinners and Sick Folk
Vision Lesson #02**

*Engaging lost and broken people
to lead them to Jesus Christ
in order to find hope, healing, and redemption.*

Introduction:

Over the next several weeks, we are going to look at each of the three areas outlined in our vision: engaging, leading, and finding. Each one of these sections is important to the whole. Eliminate one and the whole thing falls apart. However, this first section (engaging lost and broken people) may be the hurdle that is most difficult to overcome as we get started.

We have been very intentional about emphasizing an outward focus in this. Truthfully, the language “lost and broken” probably puts some people off and can be a barrier to others. The point is not to judge other people, but to remind ourselves that we need to be focused on people outside of faith, those who are searching for something or may not even know they need to be searching. If we simply said “engaging people,” too often we would look at the person sitting next to us in the pew. While these people need the hope of Jesus just like everyone else, the very fact they are sitting next to you indicates some sense of an understanding as to where to find that hope. We will continue to help them grow in their relationship with Jesus—those mechanisms are in place—but what about the people outside of our doors?

Here is the second aspect of engaging I want to point out. Studies have shown and continue to show that many people in America in 2017 will never enter the doors of a church building. They are not anti-God, they just do not see the church as a viable option to find the hope they are looking for. We can argue all day long about why this is, but it is, and so we need to reframe our perspective as to how to reach the 60% (and growing) of the population that refuses to come to “us.” This is why we have used the word “engaging.” It indicates action and intentionality. It describes how Jesus went about seeking people out. Someone once appropriately said: “Jesus spent time in the market place. If we are going to reach others, we need to do the same.” The question becomes what are the market places and how do we place ourselves within them?

Text:

Matthew 9.9-13

Leader Notes:

You want to do two things in your lesson this week.

First, you want to follow up with the assignment from last week. Have your group share what they found as they read through the gospel they selected. After everyone has had an opportunity to share what they have discovered, work together to summarize a general idea of who Jesus spent time with and why. Then be sure to spend some time determining the implications for us, if we are really going to be like Jesus.

I believe—because I have spent time doing this very exercise—that the general summary of who Jesus spent time with is that he engaged with people we probably would call “outsiders.” (Remember this was a guy who people claimed was a glutton and drunkard.) Yes, he spent time in the synagogue, but did you notice that most of the time the synagogue or Jewish leaders of the synagogue are mentioned, Jesus is doing something that gets them crossways? He is not opposed to the synagogue, he just seeks to focus on different things (others) than the leaders do (themselves). What is the implication for us?

This summary should lead directly into today's lesson and the importance of engaging others. This is the second thing that needs to happen this week (and next). This lesson will be a two-part lesson. This first week, I want us to look at a specific passage about the way Jesus engaged others. Then the "To Do For Next Week" assignment will be to just observe people who may be seeking hope. Who are the people with whom we might engage, we are asking? Next week's lesson will begin to explore specifics of how to do that.

Suggested Group Meeting Agenda:

After the "Icebreaker Question," spend some time reviewing last week's assignment. If your group did not follow through with the assignment or if you did not assign them to do so, grab some Bibles and spend time sharing with one another what you see as the answer to the questions asked.

NOTE: This step is really crucial to the entire vision. If we do not realize that Jesus spent his time in pursuit of others, outsiders we might call them, then we fail to realize who God is calling his people (that's us) to be as his church. If you did not assign this to your group and need to spend your entire time this week working through this together, that will be the most valuable use of your time for this week.

Here are the questions we were asked to answer:

The purpose for reading through the gospel is to ask ourselves: If we are going to be like Jesus, what exactly did Jesus do?

1. What is happening in the passage you are reading? (It is helpful to use each subsection as a "passage" within the gospel.)
2. Who are the people involved in this passage?
3. How does Jesus interact with these people: what was his message and what did he do?

Summarize your findings so that you can say: If we were to give a one-sentence synopsis of who Jesus interacted with and his message to those people, it would be _____.

Now that you have this sentence summary, read the text for today and answer the questions.

Close praying specifically for the people you will come in contact with through the exercise below, as well as that the people within your group will be dedicated to see all of the people they come in contact with this upcoming week.

Discussion Questions:

Icebreaker Question: Have you ever found yourself in an extremely awkward situation because it was a place you did not belong, or at least a place you never thought you would find yourself? [Example: In the movie *Mom's Night Out*, the main character of the story, a preacher's wife, finds herself both in a tattoo parlor and jail. There have been other movies where the "saintly" person finds themselves in the "pit," (a bar, perhaps).] What examples can you share of similar circumstances that happened to you or someone you know?

What was it that made the situation so uncomfortable? Why was that location considered a place "you should not have been?" Who makes the rules as to what is an appropriate place to be and why? Why are those rules important? Why are they misguided, at times?

- Why would it have been so astounding that Jesus called Matthew to follow him? What type of person would we treat today like the tax-collectors were treated in Jesus' day and age? Who are people we shun and avoid today and what is the reason for that?
- Contrary to the norm of the day, Jesus (the teacher) calls someone to be his disciple (Matthew in this instance). Typically this happened the other way around. In what ways do we find calling someone to follow Jesus who has not first sought him out uncomfortable? Is it appropriate for us to ask someone to follow Jesus in the manner that Jesus did? Why or why not? Why do we assume that only people who show interest in God first are people we need to share our faith with?
- Jesus was obviously interested in this man Matthew because he goes to his house. Why was this so scandalous, especially to the Pharisees? Did the Pharisees, based on what you know about them and what they were trying to do, have a point in being upset with Jesus' actions? Why or why not?
- In what ways do we miss opportunities to share the good news of Jesus with others because we wait for them to come to us, rather than going to their house for a meal or what not?
- When you think about the exercise you did from this last week, how does this story fit with your summary of Jesus?
- Think about Jesus' statement that he came to call sinners, not the righteous. When you think about how we go about ministry at South Plains—both the ministries we have and how we do them—how well do you think we live out this idea that was central to Jesus' example? In what ways do we do this well and in what ways can we do this better?
- How can we be better at engaging people, that is, going to their houses and being where they are?

To Do For Next Week:

For next week, spend time observing the people you come in contact with every day. Get a notebook and list the people you see throughout each day this week. Once you have made a list of these people, think about these things:

- Who did you see the most this week? Anyone you saw daily? Anyone you saw only once?
- What do you know about each person on your list, specifically, what do you know about their faith?
- Did you catch anything in conversations you had with them that might indicate they are searching or have struggles in their life they are trying to address?
- In what ways could you perhaps engage in a conversation that helps you better answer the question above?
- If you have someone who is searching, how can you better engage that person in the coming weeks?

The point of this exercise at this moment is to just observe. You are being asked to be hyper-observant in order to simply determine ways you already come in contact with people who, using the language from our vision, might be lost (that is, without any hope in Jesus) and/or broken (that is, dealing with issues that might derail their desire to know the peace of God better).

Come next week prepared to share your findings with your group.