



Matthew – The Quick Change

Adapted from “12 Disciples” series by Dennis Marquardt.

What if you were very wealthy and very comfortable in life? If you're like more wealthy, comfortable people, spiritual things would not likely be high on your list of priorities. Normally this type of person is resistant to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their comforts and positions hinder them from seeing their need of God. Hence, Jesus' warning about the difficulty for rich people to enter the kingdom of God.

To illustrate this, here's an unusual way to trap wild raccoons: Raccoons like shiny things. So, to catch one, people used to take a small, screened box attached to the ground and place a wadded ball of tin foil inside. It had to be nice, shiny foil. A raccoon would come by and decide it wants that shiny ball and so would reach in and grab it – and it will not let it go. Once they grab it however, their paw changes shape (its bigger) so they

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can't withdraw from the cage. Many times a raccoon will give up its freedom rather than let go of that silly piece of tin foil. Sometimes, the raccoon will die at the hands of the trapper and his dogs rather than let go! As long as they continue to grasp the foil they cannot get away.¹

Such is often the case with people comfortable with this world's shiny stuff.

Matthew (also called Levi) stands out as one of those rare examples of a man who had almost everything this world had to offer; money and power.

Yet he instantly gave it all up for Jesus! He was a tax collector who allowed the Lord to “collect” HIM. Later, he wrote a powerful account of Jesus’ life and ministry—the Gospel of Matthew.

The Bible teaches us that there is nothing in this world that compares with knowing Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. Matthew desired to make a change in his life. He wanted wisdom, spirituality, and a new

¹ Greg Baer, “The Raccoon Trap,” Real Love Newsletter, February 25, 2009, https://reallovecoaching.net/newsletter/2009/02/the_raccoon_trap.html (accessed July 21, 2017).

identity. And Jesus offered this wealthy, educated “reject” of Israel a chance to become His disciple.

Jesus offered him a chance to cash in on something valuable. For Matthew, it was a transformational change. He literally walked away from one life and embraced a new one as one of Jesus' most trustworthy followers.

A tax collector familiar with the concept of “quick change” made a spiritual, eternal quick change through Christ!

It is never too late for a "quick change." Matthew's birth name, Levi, became *Matthew* which means, "gift of God."

“COURAGE” Level Questions

Exercise #1: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Luke 5:27–32 (ESV) After this he went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax booth. And he said to him, “Follow me.” And leaving everything, he rose and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his house, and there was a large company of tax collectors and others reclining at table with them. And the Pharisees and their scribes grumbled at his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” And Jesus answered them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.”

Luke 3:12–13 (ESV) Tax collectors also came to be baptized and said to him, “Teacher, what shall we do?” And he said to them, “Collect no more than you are authorized to do.”

Matthew 9:9–12 (ESV) As Jesus passed on from there, he saw a man called Matthew sitting at the tax booth,

and he said to him, “Follow me.” And he rose and followed him. And as Jesus reclined at table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were reclining with Jesus and his disciples. And when the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” But when he heard it, he said, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

C1: Levi (later becoming Matthew), was a tax-collector and, therefore, viewed by others as a sinner because of his economic and political connection with Rome. Why do you think Jesus called Levi to follow Him when all the other disciples were men of far humbler, less educated backgrounds?

C2: In Luke 3:12-13, we see tax-collectors coming to John to be baptized. Why do you think they wanted to be baptized?

C3: Have you been baptized in water? Why or why not?

C4: If you have NOT followed Jesus' example by being baptized in water, what is stopping you from being baptized very soon at church...**or even right now?**

C5: When Matthew began to follow Jesus, he immediately invited his friends to meet Jesus. Why do you think he did this?

C6: Matthew was not afraid to share Christ with his friends. Have you ever been afraid to share Jesus with your friends, and if so, why? It's ok to honest here. The point of this question is to GROW in Christ.

“STRENGTH” Level Questions

Exercise #1: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Luke 5:27–32 (ESV)

Luke 3:12–13 (ESV)

Matthew 9:9–12 (ESV)

S1: Matthew was comfortable in the life he was living. He was educated and wealthy and yet left it all to follow Christ. What in your life needs to go in order for you to walk closer to Christ? The challenge here is to speak to Jesus and ask Him to reveal things to you. If you have the courage and strength, list a few of those things:

1.

2.

3.

4.

Exercise #2: Matthew immediately told his friends about his decision to follow Jesus. On a scale of 1-4 with 1 being *very high* and 4 being *not very high*, rate yourself on how eager you are to share about your decision for Christ with your friends, family, and/or coworkers.

Next, write out a plan to rate higher in future.

Exercise #3: Most men find it hard to share Jesus in the workplace. Yet Matthew invited his co-workers to dinner so they could meet Jesus. Write out a strategy for introducing three friends or colleagues to Jesus. *(It could be by bringing them to church, to a men's event, to your home for a meal, or out for lunch.)*

S2: Matthew desired serious change – character change. What needs to change in you to be a follower of Christ like Matthew?

“ENDURANCE” Level Questions

Exercise #1: Read and answer or discuss the following.

Luke 5:27–32 (ESV)

Luke 3:12–13 (ESV)

Matthew 9:9–12 (ESV)

E1: What are three things you learn from these scriptures?

1.

2.

3.

Exercise #2: In 30 seconds, list out the names of as many people in your life as you can. Then, circle the names of those who DO NOT know Jesus.

Finally, take a moment to ask Jesus, *“Give these people to me! Work through me to win their hearts and save them.”*

Exercise #3: On a scale of 1-4, where would you rate your walk with Christ in the following situations:

*(1 being a Levi, a **sinner**; and 4 being a Matthew, a **follower of Christ**)*

- Sharing Christ with a co-worker
- Inviting someone to your house to meet Jesus
- Leaving your wealth behind to follow where Jesus is calling you to go
- Disciple other men regarding what is more important, money or Christ
- Sharing with other men the need to be baptized in water and baptized with the Holy Spirit