



It's a Wonderful Mess!

Who's Invited?

#npitsawonderfulmess

Week 1

1 of 4

December 8, 2019

Bottom Line: If there's anything that the Christmas season reminds us of it's that we're all in need of help, help that Jesus is willing and able to give.

Icebreaker: What's the most overwhelming job of the holiday season in your opinion? Are you willing to receive help? Do you ask for it? What tradition do you feel is a waste of time? Do you do it anyway?

Key Verse: *"On hearing this, Jesus said, 'It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'" Matthew 9:12-13 NIV*

Matthew was telling the story of light coming into darkness, and he wanted to tell it authentically. He didn't want to skip over the difficult places in the story. It looks like he goes out of his way to make sure the whole story, including the less desirable parts, is being told. He doesn't just tell about the mess others were in; he tells his own story. He was categorically the vilest person in Capernaum. By the evaluation of the time, Matthew was the most wretched sinner in town. This tax collector uses himself as an illustration to show how far this forgiveness business goes—it goes to the extremity. He invited Jesus to a dinner party at his house, and Jesus came! Jesus was criticized for hanging out with tax collectors and sinners, and He wore that tag with pride. He said He came for the sick and sinful. Matthew was not offended—he knew he was a sinner and was glad Jesus came. When Jesus issued the invitation to follow, Matthew left his tax collecting table and went.

Matthew knew if acceptance by Jesus was based on performance, he had no chance. But the lineage of Jesus is filled with flawed characters, people with less than stellar pasts, none of whom could have come to God on their own merits. He well understood that Christmas is not about what we have done, but what has been done for us. Then Matthew had a "grace" encounter with Jesus and his life was changed. He became aware of his sinfulness and the powerful love of Jesus. His life change was so radical that he wanted all his friends to experience the same grace he had received (Matthew 9:10). Matthew knew that Christmas is for people in a mess—we all are. When we realize it, when we see how much we are loved, accepted, and forgiven, we are anxious to share the news. Our relationship with God is not based on how bad we've been, or how good, but what Jesus has done for us.

THINK IT OVER >>>

What impacted you most from the message?

It is the human tendency to focus on what I have done—self-righteousness—instead of what God has done. Agree/Disagree. Why?

Shame and self-righteousness are quite different, but both have the power to keep us from accepting Jesus. With which are you most familiar? How does Christmas address your need?

Does your spiritual genealogy push you toward shame or self-righteousness? Explain.

Matthew knew that SIN was the issue that Jesus came to address. He wanted us to know that Jesus not only came for sinners but that he came from sinners. Reflect and discuss. How important is it that Jesus came from our mess? He came FROM sinners but never sinned. How important is the fact that in the middle of the mess, Jesus never sinned?

LOOK IT OVER <<<

Most people associate Christianity with religious living . . . an attempt to live a life filled with godly morals and virtues. Some days, we're good at that. Some days, we're not. Fortunately, Christmas reminds us that Christianity is not as much about what we do as it is about what has been done for us. How does your spirit respond initially to that? Has your heritage trained you to be a "doer" or a receiver? Explain.

So, if you feel like the things you've done (or haven't done) are keeping you from God . . . well, you can throw that thinking out the door. And conversely, if you feel like the things you've done are responsible for your relationship with God . . . well, you can throw that thinking out too. Is this motivating to you, or does it seem like "lowering the standard"? What place do you think performance plays in a solid relationship with God?

What is the help we desperately need that Jesus is anxious to provide? How has He done it for you?

NEXT STEPS

1. Invite Christ into your life.
2. Focus on what God has done.
3. Pray and act in faith for the “messy situations” in your family and with your friends.

EVALUATION/ACTION

Realizing and reaching your full potential in Christ

Bottom Line: If there’s anything that the Christmas season reminds us of it’s that we’re all in need of help, help that Jesus is willing and able to give.

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| Rate yourself from 1 to 10 1 (never), 10 (always) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
| Why did you give yourself this rating? | | | | | | | | | | |
| What benefits will you obtain by raising your rating? | | | | | | | | | | |
| Do you know someone who demonstrates this bottom line well? What do you admire about that person? | | | | | | | | | | |
| What specific action can you put into practice to raise your rating? | | | | | | | | | | |
| At the end of this week, reflect - where did you see the bottom line show up in your actions throughout the week? | | | | | | | | | | |

PRAYER

List group members and their prayer requests for this week:

DAILY STUDY

Want to dig deeper? Check out **The Daily** this week at newpointe.org/daily:

Monday: Ephesians 2:8-9

Tuesday: 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Wednesday: 2 Corinthians 4:7

Thursday: Psalm 40:17

Friday: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Don't let the conversation stop here. Keep talking it over with others throughout the week.

(Don't forget to bring this paper to your next small group meeting)