

## THE GLOCAL CHURCH

### Jesus' Simple Strategy

Matthew 9:9-13

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**LISTEN:** <http://www.fbcjc.org/sermon/the-glocal-church-jesus-simple-strategy/>

Jesus was a global thinker and a global strategist. As far as we know, he never left the confines of the region of Palestine, approximately the size of New Jersey. Yet he was global in perspective. And since he was just as passionate about the up-close world, he was also local in his viewpoint, so we would call him “glocal.”

Jesus strategy for reaching the world is deceptively simple. **FIRST, JESUS' STRATEGY IS GROUNDED IN A PERSONAL, INNER EXPERIENCE OF FAITH.** This gets at the old adage: You can't share what you don't have. Gospel partnership is all about sharing out of our overflow. As Matthew responded to the call (v. 9), so following Jesus is a deeply spiritual decision. But sadly note the Pharisees in v. 11. They ask, “Why does your teacher eat with...sinners?” Notice—your, not our teacher. religion was a cold, mechanical, distant, external function, a ceremony. No personal relationship. The Christian faith is an inside job—new desires, new want-to's, new power, operating out of love, not fear. And remember, when we start trying to externalize faith, as the Pharisees did, there are some things in the Christian life which you will never understand until you step inside and accept Jesus personally.

We have to admit we have a need and repent (return to God) and then trust Jesus to be our spiritual physician (v. 12). And mercy (v. 13) keeps our hearts forever tender toward others. And that is foundational to being a glocal church, sharing the overflow of God's mercy.

**JESUS' STRATEGY IS CARRIED OUT THROUGH RELATIONSHIPS.** Here's a question. The house mentioned in v. 10—was it Jesus' house? Matthew's? Whose? We don't know. But we know Jesus liked to eat. Meals break down barriers. Several years ago, I heard a very successful restaurant owner interviewed. He said people will always crave certain things we receive moments after our birth: Eye contact, a smile, a hug and something to eat! When we interact with our global partners in Kenya and Ukraine, meal times are always highlights.

For all of our need to use social media, we need to remember that God's love is ultimately communicated face to face, person to person. Here's a great quote by Ian Morgan Cron: “If we spent less time worrying about how to share our faith with someone on an airplane and more time thinking about how to live radically generous lives, more people would start taking our message seriously” [*Chasing Francis*, p. 200].

**JESUS' STRATEGY IS ALWAYS CROSSING BOUNDARIES.** Be honest with me. Does it bother you that Jesus was so relaxed with a bunch of sinners? Celsus, one of the first intellectual critics of the Jesus Way, once wrote that because the church was made up of harlots, thieves and people of all races, it obviously could not ever be anything significant. There you have it!

But I want us to flip this thought, and notice that a subversive part of Jesus' strategy was not only to reach the "riffraff" of his day, but also the social elite, the wealthy, the successful, the educated. After all, Matthew was probably pretty well off. And tax collectors were among the few in that culture who could read and write (I'm indebted to Dr. David May for this thought). Jesus instinctively knew that to reach these people for faith would spread the gospel faster.

Do you see Jesus crossing other boundaries besides geographic ones? Not just go into all the world, but go into all kinds of worlds—artists, authors, poets, farmers, CEOs, millennials, bikers, hikers, tattooed, pierced and doubters. We have this practice in the church office. When we see our church members featured in the newspaper, we try to post it on the bulletin board (I know we miss some; apologies!). Hardly a week goes by that we don't display someone from FBC JC who has influence in this community. With that position of influence and power, we are called to be salt and light, to bear witness to Jesus, to make a difference, to go into unique worlds.

Several years ago, some Harvard research revealed that people who make a commitment to a large humanitarian causes, at some point, have experienced a significant encounter with someone outside their own circle, someone who has broadened the boundaries of their lives, showing them larger perspectives [*Sabbatical Journey*, by Henri Nouwen, p. 69]. That's exactly what Jesus does all through the gospels, and particularly here, in our text. It's not complicated. We just go where Jesus went and do what Jesus did. Amen!