
Matthew 9:9-13

Leader Guide

Teachers Dig In

Dig In to the Bible

- Read: Matthew 9:9-13
- In This Passage: Jesus asks a tax collector named Matthew to be his disciple. Tax collectors were known for being greedy, cheating men who no one liked. So when Jesus went to Matthew's house for dinner with a lot of other "bad" people, the religious leaders got mad. But Jesus came for everyone—and those who realize they are sinners need Jesus.
- Bible Point: Jesus came for everyone.
- Summary Verse: "Many will see what he has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the Lord" (Psalm 40:3).

Dig Deeper

- You'll Be Teaching: *Jesus came for everyone.* Kids will be familiar with the categories of popular people and outcasts. They may have experienced similar scenes as the one in the Bible story, where someone was judged for associating with a "loser." Maybe *they've* felt like the "loser." Help kids learn that in Jesus' view, there are no outcasts. Everyone is welcome.
- Think About: Who is someone you'd consider an outcast? Ask Jesus to help you show that person the same kind of welcoming attitude he showed Matthew and his friends.

Dig In to Prayer

- Pray for kids in your group who seem like outcasts among the others. Pray for everyone to show Jesus' welcoming attitude and include those kids.

Quick Tip

When questions arise, resist the temptation to preach an answer to your kids. Instead, ask several kids what *they* think about a particular idea. Ask them why they think the way they do or to back up their answers with information or experience.

This Lesson at a Glance



BIBLE MESSAGE

Kids get excluded based on “bad” things they’ve done.

Supplies

- Bible
- snack (optional)



PRAYER

Kids learn a prayer of confession and squeeze and release their fists to experience Jesus’ freedom and forgiveness.



JESUS CONNECTION

Kids try breaking into a circle.



SCRIPTURE SKILLS

Kids play Flag Tag and call for help.

Supplies

- Bibles
- “Hands-On Bible: Books of the Bible Poster Set” (purchase [here](#))
- crepe paper streamers (three 1-foot pieces per child)



BIBLE MEMORY

Kids each show something “amazing” they can do.



ACTIVITY PAGES WITH A POINT

Older kids find which path from Jesus leads to a person; younger kids color a picture of the Bible story.

Supplies

- “Jesus Eats With Sinners at Matthew’s House” Activity Page (1 per reader) (download [here](#))
- “Jesus Eats With Sinners at Matthew’s House” Coloring Page (1 per non-reader) (download [here](#))
- pencils
- crayons
- three-hole punch and binders (optional)



OVERTIME

Kids play Blob Tag.

**Marked supplies can be reused from Core Bible Discovery*

Let's keep kids safe! You can help by using supplies as instructed for only ages 3+, purchasing child-safe items, and being aware of allergy concerns.



BIBLE MESSAGE

Jesus Eats With Sinners at Matthew's House (Matthew 9:9-13)

[10 min]

Supplies

- Bible
- snack (optional)

Discuss

Say: **In today's Bible story, we'll learn about some people others thought were bad guys.**

Ask: • **Tell about a villain—or bad guy—in a movie, game, or book you like.** Have kids turn to a partner to share. Then ask a few kids to share with everyone.

Say: **In movies and books, it's usually not too hard to tell who the bad guy is. We'll find out if the bad guys in our Bible story were *really* bad guys. But first, let's play a game.**

Sit or Stand

Have everyone stand up. Say: **We're going to play a game where we pretend that certain things are bad. These are things I might think aren't so good. So if I call out something and you've done it, you have to sit down. Everyone else gets to be in the cool group with me.**

First thing on the list: Sit down if you've eaten pizza with pineapple on it. I think that tastes bad! Have kids who've eaten pineapple pizza sit, and gather everyone else to give them high-fives. Then have everyone stand back up to reset the game. Continue with these "bad" things.

- Sit down if you've waited until the last minute to do your homework.
- Sit down if you've stayed up past 10 p.m.
- Sit down if you like the toilet paper roll to go *under* instead of *over*.
- Sit down if you've left uneaten broccoli on your plate.
- Sit down if you've sung a song by yourself in public.

Say: **Okay, we know that none of those things are *actually* bad things—unless you were disobeying your parents! But let's get serious with this one. Some things are wrong no matter what. If you've ever done anything that goes against God's way—something like lying, disobeying, putting yourself before other people, saying mean things—take a seat.** All kids should sit down. (If kids will still be able to see you, you should sit down, too. Your honesty can point out that *no one* is without sin.)

Say: **Well, looks like we've all done wrong things. The Bible calls things like that sin. Sins are thoughts and actions that God says are wrong.**

Open your Bible to Matthew 9, and show kids the words. **Our Bible story is about some guys who'd done lots of those wrong things. In fact, they'd made so many bad choices that they were known for being bad guys. People called them "disreputable sinners"—or bad guys.**

Read Matthew 9:9-10.

Say: **Matthew and the tax collectors sinned by taking more money from people than they had to. But Jesus gathered all the tax collectors and bad guys for dinner! So, even though you've all done wrong things, you can all stand up**

and be in my cool group! Have kids stand, and give out high-fives. If you'd like, serve a snack and remind kids that Jesus ate with this group of sinners. Then sit down with everyone.

Say: **Jesus came for everyone.** Even though he was hanging out with people who were known for what they did wrong, he loved them! But not everyone agreed with Jesus. The Pharisees were religious leaders. Listen to what they thought about Jesus spending time with sinners.

Read Matthew 9:11-12.

Ask: • **Tell about a time you needed a doctor.** Share your own example first.

Say: **We go to the doctor when we're sick. And Jesus was saying that being full of sin is like being sick—you need help. He came to help the people who need it! Listen to what else he said.**

Read Matthew 9:13.

Say: **The Pharisees worked really hard to follow all of God's rules—and even a bunch more they made up! They thought they were pretty great—or righteous.** Have half of the kids stand back up. **The Pharisees looked down on anyone who didn't live as perfectly as they did.** Let the standers look down at kids sitting down. **That's why they didn't think Jesus should hang out with sinners!** Lead standers in turning their backs on kids who are sitting.

But Jesus came for everyone. He came to save us *all* from our sins! So the people he was hanging out with knew they needed Jesus!

The fact was, those Pharisees were sinners, too. Have the standers turn back around and sit down. **No matter how hard they tried to be perfect, they weren't. Jesus came for them, too, but they thought they were too perfect to need him—too healthy to need a doctor.**

Everyone needs Jesus! Let's thank him now for coming to save us.

Have kids all stand as you pray: **Jesus, thank you that you came for everyone—no matter how many bad things we've done. We're sorry we do bad things, but we thank you for forgiving us. Help us love and follow you. In your name, amen.**



PRAYER

Prayer of Confession

[5 min]

Confess Together

Say: **Today we're learning that Jesus came for everyone. We all struggle with sin and making wrong choices. That's why God sent Jesus! Jesus made a way for us to be forgiven and have a friendship with God.**

When we pray, we talk with Jesus. We can talk with Jesus about anything—even our wrong choices. That's what a prayer of confession is all about.

To “confess” means to admit we've messed up. And since everyone sins and makes wrong choices, it's good for Jesus' friends to all pray and confess our sins together. Jesus hears us and forgives us, like a faithful friend.

Let's pray a prayer of confession now. As I pray, let's all squeeze our fists really tightly, like we're holding on to our wrong choices. Demonstrate, cautioning kids not to squeeze too hard. Now let's close our eyes and talk with Jesus.

Pray: **Dear Jesus, we confess that we've disobeyed you. We've thought mean thoughts and said unkind words. We've done things to hurt people. And we haven't done things to help people. We haven't loved you or others very well. We are so sorry. Please forgive us and help us share your love with everyone.**

Have kids take a deep breath and then let it out as they open their hands to receive Jesus' forgiveness.

Pray: **Thank you, Jesus. Your forgiveness makes our hearts happy. You're amazing! Amen.**

Ask: • **How did you feel when you released your grip?**

• **How is that like or unlike talking with Jesus about our bad choices?**

Say: **When we confess our sin, Jesus faithfully forgives us and helps us (1 John 1:9). And that feels good! I'm so glad that God forgives us because Jesus came for everyone.**



JESUS CONNECTION Break In

[10 min]

Tip

- Since this activity may evoke emotions in kids who may have been bullied or left out, be sure to give *several* kids the opportunity to try “breaking in.” This way no one feels singled out. Additionally, it’s important to allow time for debriefing the activity, giving kids a chance to process, listen, learn, and connect to Jesus’ welcoming love.

Break Into a Circle

Say: **Jesus spent time with *all* kinds of people—not just rich or powerful ones. That surprised some leaders. They thought a teacher like Jesus shouldn’t spend time with people who didn’t obey all of God’s rules. Let’s play a game that can remind us of the way those leaders acted.**

- Stand and form a circle, having kids face in. If you have more than 12 kids, form smaller circles of 6-10 kids each.
- Determine who had the most recent birthday. Ask that child to step outside the circle.
- Have everyone else close the circle, standing shoulder to shoulder and linking arms tightly.
- On your signal, the Outsider will have 30 seconds to try breaking into the circle in any way he or she can—pulling arms apart, crawling between feet, or even trying to jump over the wall of people.
- After 30 seconds, have kids change roles so a new person is on the outside. (The first Outsider will join the circle.)
- Play several rounds.

Welcome People In

Have everyone sit down.

Ask: • **What did you do to keep the Outsider from getting into your circle?** Let kids call out responses.

• **If you were on the outside, how did you feel when people did that?**

Say: **In our game, it was fun to [repeat some of the tactics kids shared]. But in real life, sometimes we do hurtful things that keep people out—out of a group of friends or even out of God’s love. We might think some people aren’t good enough to be a friend of God. Or they’re too mean for Jesus to love them.**

But Jesus came for everyone! When Jesus died on the cross, there wasn’t one person he left out. He died to save sinners—and that’s everyone! Let’s try something that will help us remember to make room in Jesus’ family for everyone.

Form one large circle. Have kids link arms tightly, as they did in the game.

Say: **Sometimes we need to let go of feelings of judgment and unforgiveness, because Jesus forgives everyone. Let go of the arms you’re linked with.** Pause.

Sometimes we need to step back and make room for people in our circle of friends, because Jesus invites them in. Take two steps back. Pause.

**Or maybe we need to reach out to people, showing them Jesus' love.
Reach your hands out to the sides. Pause.
Wow! Our circle totally changed! This week, look for ways to show
others that Jesus came for everyone.**



SCRIPTURE SKILLS Help Me!

[10 min]

Supplies

- Bibles
- "Hands-On Bible: Books of the Bible Poster Set" (purchase [here](#))
- crepe paper streamers (three 1-foot pieces per child)

Tips

- It may take a while for kids to find the Bible verse. That's okay! This activity is primarily about building Bible navigation skills.
- If you have a lot of non-readers, have some picture Bibles on hand for them to flip through as older kids look up verses. They won't look for anything specific, but they can look at the pictures to practice paging through Bibles.
- If you have a big group, assign multiple Taggers and Rescuers.

Explore Acts 2:21

Say: **Jesus ate dinner and spent time with people the religious leaders thought were bad. But Jesus came for everyone, not just people who obey all the rules. Let's see what the Bible says about who Jesus came to save.**

Make sure kids all have Bibles. Younger kids can sit with older kids so they can observe the skills of using their Bibles even before being able to read.

Say: **Our Bible verse is in the book of Acts, chapter 2, verse 21. Let's find the book of Acts. That's in the New Testament—which is the later part of the Bible. Open your Bible kind of near the back.** Allow time.

- Point to the book of Acts on the poster so kids can see the name and what books come before and after it.
- Mention that the chapter numbers are the big numbers, and help kids find the big 2 in Acts.
- Mention that the verse numbers are the small numbers, and help kids find the small 21 in Acts 2.
- When everyone has found the verse, ask someone to read Acts 2:21 aloud.

Ask: • **What do you think it means to call on the name of the Lord?**

Say: **Jesus came for everyone. And all we need to do is ask Jesus to save us. Let's play a game and practice calling out a name to be saved.**

Call for Help

- Choose one child to be the Tagger and one child to be the Rescuer.
- Give the remaining kids each a piece of crepe paper streamer.
- Ask kids to hold their crepe paper in their hands as they run around the room trying to avoid the Tagger.
- Encourage the Tagger to try to take or tear kids' crepe paper streamers.
- When a Tagger tears or takes a crepe paper streamer, the child who had it stolen will freeze in place and call out to the Rescuer.

- Rescuers will be ready with a handful of crepe paper streamer pieces and will give kids who call out for help a chance to get back in the game by handing them a new streamer.
- The Tagger can't tag the Rescuer.
- Occasionally pause the game and assign new kids to be the Tagger and Rescuer.

Ask: • **How easy or hard was it to be rescued when you got tagged?**

• **When you need help, do you tend to ask for it or try harder to do it by yourself? Give an example.** Give your own example first, giving kids time to think of their own stories.

Say: **Maybe you're the type of person who doesn't like to ask for help. You like to do things yourself. But in this game, there was no way to free yourself! In the same way, we can't save ourselves from sin. The religious leaders thought they didn't need to ask for help, but they did. Jesus came for everyone. He's ready to save us if we just call on his name.**



BIBLE MEMORY

See and Be Amazed!

[10 min]

Tip

- If you have a large group, form smaller “Show and Tell” groups of five to eight people. Assign an adult or teen helper to each group.

Show and Tell

Say: **Let’s learn a verse from the Bible! The Bible was originally written in three languages. Today it’s in hundreds of languages so people all around the world can understand it and know that Jesus came for everyone.**

Psalm 40:3 says, “Many will see what he has done and be amazed. They will put their trust in the Lord.”

Not just one person or two people. Not just people who live here or live there. *Many* people will see what Jesus has done and be amazed! To celebrate, let’s *all* “Show and Tell” our amazing skills.

Think of one amazing thing that you can do, and show us! You could show us how you hop on one foot, a cool dance move you made up, or your favorite basketball move! We’ll take turns showing each other what we can do and then telling why we like to do it!

- Choose a willing child to go first.
- After kids demonstrate their talent, they can share why they like to do that.
- Applaud, then lead kids in saying Psalm 40:3 together after each person’s “Show and Tell.”

Talk About It

Ask: • **What’s something amazing you saw someone do today?**

• **How did it make you feel about that person?**

Say: **You can do some amazing things, like [some things kids did]. But no one does things as amazing as what Jesus did! When Jesus lived on earth, many saw what he did and were amazed. That made them put their trust in him! Some of the people who trusted Jesus were Matthew and his friends—guys who’d made lots of bad choices.**

Ask: • **Why was it amazing that Jesus ate with people who’d done wrong things?**

Say: **Most religious leaders wouldn’t go near anyone they thought was bad. But Jesus did something amazing: He loved everyone! Many saw his amazing love and put their trust in him, because they could see that Jesus came for everyone.**



ACTIVITY PAGES WITH A POINT For Everyone

[10 min]

Supplies

- “Jesus Eats With Sinners at Matthew’s House” Activity Page (1 per reader) (download [here](#))
- “Jesus Eats With Sinners at Matthew’s House” Coloring Page (1 per non-reader) (download [here](#))
- pencils
- crayons
- three-hole punch and binders (optional)

Tip

- **WARNING!** Don’t just print and distribute! [Here’s why.](#)

Older Kids: Do an Activity Page

Say: **The religious leaders didn’t think Jesus should hang out with people who made bad choices. Let’s see which person Jesus is going toward in this puzzle.**

Distribute the activity pages and pencils. Kids will identify which path leads from Jesus to a person.

Ask: • **What surprised you about this puzzle?** (Note: Some kids may have found one path that led to a person and then stopped looking. Invite kids to compare answers until they realize all the paths led to people.)

• **Don’t name names, but describe a kind of person you wouldn’t want to hang out with.** Give an example, such as someone who says mean things to you.

Say: **Jesus came for everyone. Even people who are** [repeat some of the adjectives kids used]. **Even sinners like Matthew and his friends! We can share Jesus’ love with everyone.**

ANSWER KEY: All the paths! Jesus came for everyone!

Younger Kids: Color a Coloring Page

Distribute the coloring pages and crayons. Say: **Jesus ate dinner with Matthew and his friends, even though some people didn’t like them. Jesus came for everyone! Let’s color his dinner with Matthew.**

Allow time for kids to color.

When kids finish coloring, three-hole-punch their pages and put them into binders, if desired.



OVERTIME
Everyone's Invited

[10 min]

Play Blob Tag

Say: **Jesus came for everyone.** When some people saw him eating with sinners, they thought Jesus shouldn't hang out with *those* people. But Jesus said he came for the people who know they need help! And ***everyone*** needs Jesus' help! Let's play a game that includes everyone.

- Choose one child to be "It."
- It will try to tag someone else, who will link arms with It to become one bigger It. (If it's too hard for kids of different heights to link arms, they can hold hands instead.)
- It will continue adding more and more kids to the chain.
- Anytime anyone in the chain tags someone else, that person joins the chain.
- Continue until everyone is included in the chain.

Ask: • **Tell about a time you felt left out.** Share your own story first.

Say: **You never have to feel left out when it comes to a friendship with Jesus. Jesus came for everyone! Just like in this game, everyone's included.**

Play additional rounds, and let the game keep going as long as needed to fill time until parents begin to arrive.