

Study Series: Difference Makers

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 Lesson Title: “Dinner with Linebackers and Liars”
(pp. 92-104)

Session 8

January 23, 2022

**The main point of this lesson is:** Difference makers dine in diversity while speaking with clarity.

**Focus on this goal:** To help adults be neither condemning of sinners nor condoning of their sin

**Key Bible Passage:** Matthew 9:9-13

During the Session

Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion

**Invite** participants to identify all the different kinds of tables at which they sit and/or eat (samples: dining, kitchen, coffee, restaurant, picnic). **Record** responses on a large writing surface. **Request** participants consider the people with whom they sit at those tables and **ask:** *What is more diverse—the kinds of tables you sit at, or the kinds of people you sit with at those tables?*

**Declare:** *We sometimes think being a difference maker means changing the world with grand gestures, but we can leave a history-changing, life-giving, Spirit-empowered legacy simply by choosing to sit at tables with different kinds of people. This session will encourage us to dine in diversity while speaking with clarity.*

Step 2. Dinner, Tax Collectors, and Pharisees, Part 1

**Summarize** Matthew 9:1-8 (studied in Session 7, pp. 81 ff.) then **read** Matthew 9:9. Guide the group to discuss Day One, activity 1 (p. 93).

**Declare** understanding the cultural context of a Bible passage is incredibly important. **Evaluate** whether eating a meal with a person was more or less significant in Jesus’ day than it is today.

**Invite** responses to Day One, activity 2 (p. 93).

**Read** the sentence (p. 93) beginning “By eating with tax collectors and sinners ….” **Ask:** *What comes to mind when you hear “make a radical public statement”? Can we make a difference without making radical public statements? Explain your reasoning.* **Assert** believers can make radical public statements simply by choosing to sit at tables with people others might choose not to associate with.

Step 3. Dinner, Tax Collectors, and Pharisees, Part 2

**Invite** volunteers to state why it was so radical for Jesus to eat dinner with tax collectors. Discuss Day Two, activity 1 (p. 94).

**Remind** the group that: *God uses unlikely people to be difference makers; being a difference maker requires a new heart* (Session 6) *and courage* (Session 7).**Ask:** *How do we see all three of those truths about difference makers evident in Matthew 9:9-10?*

**Acknowledge** in our day we’d probably rather eat with tax collectors than Pharisees, but that was not the case in Jesus’ day. Briefly **lecture** on how the Jews and Jesus regarded the Pharisees (pp. 95-96).

Step 4. Diversity and Clarity, Part 1

**Assert** that, although Jesus had a problem with the Pharisees, He didn’t reject them, but ate with them as well. **Ask:** *Why do you think Jesus dined in diversity?*

**Note** Jesus obliterated boundaries by dining in diversity. **Analyze** how diversity is valued in theory, but not necessarily in reality in society at large, and in Christ’s church. **Inquire:** *Do more diverse churches lead to more diverse tables, or can more diverse tables lead to more diverse churches? Explain your reasoning.*

**Request** a volunteer read from Matthew 9:11 the question the Pharisees asked Jesus’ disciples. **Discuss** Day Three, activity 1 (p. 96). **Note** this points out the necessity of not just dining in diversity but of speaking with clarity.

Step 5. Diversity and Clarity, Part 2

**Declare** Jesus was radical in His relationships with sinful people, but He always called people out of their sin. **Relate** the examples of the women in John 4 and Luke 7:36-50, and of Matthew in Matthew 9.

**Invite** a volunteer to read the Day Four pull quote (p. 99). **Discuss** Day Four, activity 1 (p. 99).

**Read** the paragraph (p. 100) beginning “Be encouraged ….” **Declare** another key to being able to dine in diversity while speaking in clarity is to have a strong group of spiritual encouragers.

**Explore** what the author means by saying “difference makers don’t live in a bubble but a balance” (p. 100). **Ask:** *How can we encourage one another to be difference makers who sit at diverse tables?*

Step 6. Why Jesus Came, Why We Go

**Ask** a volunteer to read Matthew 9:11-13. **Request** participants identify Jesus’ motivation for dining in diversity and speaking with clarity.

**Invite** another volunteer to read the pull quote of Day Five (p. 101). **Discuss** Day Five, activity 1 (p. 101). **Mention** attitudes of service and sacrifice if nobody else does. **Ask:** *How might we want to make the same kinds of sacrifices the Pharisees were willing to make? How is showing mercy a much greater sacrifice?*

**Request** participants silently consider Day Five, activity 2 (p. 102). **Declare:** *No matter who you resemble, Jesus came to have an intimate friendship with you. If you will acknowledge you need Him and invite Him in, He will change your heart and empower you to be a difference maker.*

Step 7. Practical Application – Live Out the Lesson

**Challenge** adults to pray the Difference Maker Declaration (p. 66 or on the index card where they recorded it in Session 6, Step 7, p. 79) every time they sit at a table to eat today.

**Urge** them to share a meal or coffee this week with someone they might not normally associate with, choosing to value and love that person while relying on God to guide their conversation into truthful clarity. **Close** in prayer.

