

# different

## Week 7: Don't Curse, Bless

Pray: Go around the group and, in prayer, see how many blessings you can thank God for.

Those other people. No matter how open minded we think we are, we all have a group we avoid. They're not like us – in their values and views, customs and culture, looks and language. Perhaps we fear them because they threaten our way of life. Maybe we curse them for persecuting us. We don't want to hang out with them. Then we find out that's just what Jesus is doing.

Read: Matthew 9:9-13

Watch: "Us and Them"

Reflect

1. Have you ever been in a community or country where you were felt like an outsider? Describe your feelings. How were you treated?
2. Jesus invites Matthew the tax collector to join His inner circle. Tax collectors made money off the Roman persecution of their fellow Jews. They were banned from the synagogue. How would a tax collector on Jesus' team impact public opinion about Jesus and His movement? Picture someone you consider a traitor today. How would you feel having them on the church staff?
3. Sharing a meal is a sign of acceptance. Pharisees and tax collectors refused to eat with each other. Jesus ate with both. How likely are you to share a meal with someone who is very different than you? Would you be comfortable at a party of people who hold opposing views to you?
4. What does Jesus mean by the following sayings and what does this mean for us as His followers?
  - a. "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick"
  - b. "I desire mercy, not sacrifice."
  - c. "For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."
5. Paul writes, "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse." (Romans 12:14). It's one thing to bless those who are different than you. It's another to bless those who persecute you. How would you do either of these?

Steps:

Share with your group one step of faith that will help you make a difference this week. Ask one person to hold you accountable to this step. Examples:

- A. Have a meal or coffee with someone who is very different from you. Just listen and learn what life is like from their perspective.
- B. Invite a neighbor you don't know well over for a meal. No agenda – just get better acquainted.
- C. Invite a friend who is unchurched, a seeker or even a doubter to worship or your Growth Group.
- D. Create an action step of your own.

Pray: As you pray, thank Jesus for including you at His table and ask Him who He wants you to invite.