

**Icebreaker:**

Last week, Jerry referred to “Why” questions. Briefly answer one of these: Why do you come to church? Why do we do what we do at ZPC?

**Read this week’s scripture and discuss:**

1. In the Matthew passage, Jesus says to Matthew, “Follow me.” Do you find Matthew’s response realistic? Why or why not?
2. Based on this scene with Jesus in Matthew 9, with whom would you rather dine: the religious leaders or the tax collectors and sinners? Why?
3. Is there someone who you wouldn’t normally associate with that you have been called to sit around the table with? (Or has there been a time in the past when you have done that?)
4. It has been said, “The church will not be shaped as much by what happens on the stage as it does around the table.” Do you think this is true? Why or not?
5. Jesus’ words in John 3:16 are grand, “For God so loved the world...” Yet Jesus often loved with very simple human actions. How do his simple actions match up to such a grand vision for the world?
6. It was said by ZPC staff, “In small acts, love is revealed.” Can you list some small acts of love that make an impact to one other person and even to the world?
7. Please read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 on the card from worship on Sunday. Is there an example of this kind of love that you have experienced?

**Prayer:**

As you pray for one another, please pray for the following needs in our church family:

**prayer requests**

- > Pray for the individuals and volunteers involved with IHN as we host homeless families at ZPC this week.

[The following are from ZPC’s prayer calendar, which is available at the Welcome Center or at [zpc.org/prayer](http://zpc.org/prayer).]

- > Pray for Noah’s Ark children, families, and staff to experience God’s love each day. May their lives be touched by the relationships built on Christ’s love.
- > Pray for the guests and team of the Women’s Brazil Great Banquet #6 Sept 20-23 that the Brazilian women would experience God’s grace and love as they grow in their faith.

This sermon series and home group series is not based on a specific book of the Bible, but instead is about “Being Shaped Like Jesus.” John 3:16 may be the most well-known of any verse in the Bible. It is a grand vision that God was willing to send his Son into a hostile world because God loved the world. What does it mean to love? We all know that love is more than romance, so talk about how love is both grand and Godly and small and kind.

1. We wonder if Matthew left out some particulars. If Matthew just got up and walked out and followed Jesus that seems unrealistic to some. On the other hand, Jesus was so compelling that he called young men to leave everything and follow him and they did. Would you do that?

2. The religious leaders are the Pharisees and often seem to be skeptical of or working against Jesus. It seems that the tax collectors were much more receptive to Jesus than the Pharisees. So in that regard, maybe it would be more beneficial and rewarding to eat with them.

3. Help your group reflect on their answers. Here are some possibilities: an estranged family member, in-laws, staunch Republicans or Democrats, a person from a different country with some language barrier, someone from a drastically different socio-economic group than you.

4. The stage in a church would represent where worship is led – preaching, song-leading, corporate prayers. The table is in this context the kitchen or dining room table, but might also be the communion table. What good happens from the stage? At the table? Why the table?

5. God is grand – God loves the whole world, makes us each unique and in His image, and desires for us to have eternal life with Him. His love is big and grand. Jesus dined with sinners, touched lepers, and talked with people who weren’t generally accepted (a Samaritan woman at the well). Jesus’s small actions exemplify how we too might love others.

6. We can use Jesus’ example to list some small acts, then go further. Included in small acts of love could be: making a phone call, having coffee or lunch, baking cookies for a friend who is struggling, inviting that new person/couple/family over for dinner or to go out after church, checking on your elderly parents, volunteering in a local ministry once a week or once a month. What else?

7. One example is the older husband caring for the elderly wife with dementia. Someone checking on you or caring for you when you were sick. Helping you with your taxes, or with yardwork, or with a home repair project. When has someone tangibly loved you and how did it feel?