



# Lesson Overview



## Sermon Title

The Best Invitation Ever

## Main Theme

Jesus sees our potential, not just our past. When He calls us, He makes us new and gives us a brand-new purpose.

## Bible Verse

"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

- 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)



# Opening Questions



- 1. Have you ever moved to a new school or city where you got a chance to start completely fresh? What did that feel like?**
- 2. Do you think people can really change from who they used to be? Why or why not?**
- 3. What does it feel like when someone picks you for their team, even when you don't think you're the best player?**



# Modern Parable



## The Graffiti Artist's Masterpiece

Jax was known in his neighborhood for one thing: getting into trouble. His signature was the swirly, colorful graffiti tags he spray-painted on alley walls and fences. To most people, including his teachers and neighbors, he was just a problem kid. They'd shake their heads and whisper, "That's Jax the troublemaker." He felt stuck with that name, and honestly, sometimes he just decided to live up to it.

One afternoon, a new art teacher named Mr. David saw Jax's latest work on the side of an old brick building. But instead of getting angry, Mr. David saw something else. He didn't see vandalism; he saw raw talent. He saw bold colors, creative lines, and a kid who had something to say. The next day, he found Jax and gave him an invitation that shocked everyone. "I want you to help me paint a giant mural on the wall of the community center," he said. "Your art deserves to be seen by everyone, in the right way."

Jax was speechless. Someone saw him as an artist? He nervously accepted the invitation. He traded his hidden spray cans for big buckets of paint and brushes. For weeks, he worked alongside Mr. David, learning how to turn his small designs into a masterpiece that covered an entire wall. When it was finished, the whole town came to see it. For the first time, people weren't whispering about "Jax the troublemaker." They were pointing in amazement at the work of "Jax the artist." He was the same person, but his purpose and his name had been made new.



# Object Lesson



## Clean Slate

### Supplies:

A small whiteboard or chalkboard

Dry-erase markers or chalk

An eraser

### Instructions:

1. Hold up the whiteboard. With the markers, draw a sad face or write some negative words on it, like "Made a mistake," "Left out," "Angry," or "Unpopular."
2. Say something like, "Sometimes, this is how we see ourselves, or how we think other people see us. These mistakes and sad feelings can feel stuck to us, like they're part of who we are."
3. Then, hold up the eraser. Say, "But when Jesus gives us His invitation, He does something amazing. He doesn't just cover up the mistakes... He wipes the slate clean!"
4. Dramatically and completely wipe the board clean.

**The Point:** Jesus' love and forgiveness are like this eraser. He doesn't hold our past against us. When we accept His invitation, He sees us as a brand-new, clean slate, ready for Him to write a beautiful new story on our hearts. With Him, we get a fresh start!



# Sermon



## The Unlikely Follower

Imagine the most unpopular kid in school... the one nobody wants to sit with at lunch. Now, what if the kindest, most respected person in the whole school walked right up to them in front of everyone and said, "Hey, you're with me now. Come on." Can you imagine how that would feel? That's the best invitation ever! Your whole world would change in a second! That's almost exactly what Jesus did for a man named Matthew.

In Jesus' time, nobody was less popular than a tax collector. People saw them as greedy traitors who worked for the enemy. Matthew was one of them. He probably felt stuck, defined by his job and disliked by everyone. But Jesus didn't see a traitor; He saw a heart that was ready for something new. He walked right up to Matthew's tax booth, a place everyone else avoided, and gave him the best invitation: just two words, "Follow me." And right away, Matthew accepted. He left everything—his job, his money, his old life—and followed Him. He was so excited about his new life that he threw a huge party and invited all his friends (other tax collectors!) to meet Jesus, too.

## Scripture of the Story in the Bible: Matthew 9:9-13

### Lessons For Us

This story teaches us three amazing things. First, Jesus sees our hearts, not the labels people put on us. Second, we don't have to clean ourselves up before we accept His invitation; He invites us just as we are and makes us new. And third, following Jesus means leaving the old stuff behind to start an incredible new adventure with Him.



## Sermon Continued...



So, if Matthew, a tax collector whom everyone avoided, could be called by Jesus and become a brand-new person, what does that mean for you? It means no matter what mistakes you've made, or what others might say about you, Jesus is looking at your heart right now, ready to offer you a fresh start. What part of your "old self" are you ready to leave behind today so that you can walk into a brand-new adventure with Jesus?

### Closing Prayer

Dear Jesus, thank you for seeing the real me, not just my mistakes. Thank you for giving me the best invitation ever to follow You. Help me to leave my old ways behind and to live as a new creation in You. Help me see others the way you see them, with love and potential. Amen.



# Q & A



## ? Test your knowledge!

1. What was Matthew's job before Jesus called him?
  - a. A tax collector.
2. How did most people feel about tax collectors?
  - a. They disliked them and thought they were sinners and traitors.
3. What two simple words did Jesus say to Matthew?
  - a. "Follow me."
4. What did Matthew do immediately?
  - a. He got up, left everything, and followed Jesus.
5. What did Matthew do to celebrate his new life?
  - a. He threw a big party at his house and invited his friends to meet Jesus.
6. Who were the guests that Jesus ate with at the party?
  - a. Other tax collectors and people called "sinners."
7. Who complained about Jesus eating with these people?
  - a. The Pharisees (religious leaders who thought they were perfect).
8. What was Jesus' amazing answer to them?
  - a. "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick."
9. What does this mean for us?
  - a. Jesus came for people who know they need help and forgiveness, not for those who pretend they have it all together.
10. Does Jesus care about our past mistakes when He calls us?
  - a. No, He cares about our future with Him!



# Game Ideas



**🎲 Jesus Says:** This is just like "Simon Says," but the leader gives commands using "Jesus says..." Actions should be things that show we are following Him.

**Instructions:** The leader calls out actions like, "Jesus says give a high-five to a neighbor," "Jesus says pretend to share your snack," "Jesus says show a thankful face," or "Jesus says take one step forward" (symbolizing following Him). If the leader gives a command without saying "Jesus says" first, anyone who does it is out. This is a fun way to practice listening for the right voice to follow!

**Transformation Station Relay:** A fast-paced relay that shows the fun of becoming new.

**Instructions:** Divide the kids into two teams. At the other end of the room, place a pile of "new" clothes for each team (a colorful cape, a funny hat, a bright vest, oversized sunglasses). On "go," the first player from each team runs to their pile, puts on one item, and runs back. The next player runs, adds another item, and so on. The first team to have all its players transformed wins!

**Wipe the Slate Clean Relay:** A team game about the power of forgiveness.

**Instructions:** You'll need two small whiteboards and markers. Divide kids into two teams. A leader writes a "mistake" word (like "Greedy," "Lied," "Selfish") on the first player's board. They run to their team, who must quickly erase the word, shout "MADE NEW!", and hold up the clean board. Then the player runs back, and the next player goes. It's a race to see who can wipe the slate clean the fastest!



# Craft Ideas



## Before & After Self-Portrait

This craft gives kids a powerful visual reminder that in Christ, they are made new!

### Supplies:

- A piece of paper for each child, folded in half like a card
- Crayons, markers, and colored pencils
- Fun stickers (hearts, stars, crosses, smiley faces)
- Glitter glue (optional)

### Instructions:

1. Have the kids label the left side of their folded paper "Before Jesus" and the right side "After Jesus."
2. On the "Before" side: Ask them to draw a picture of themselves feeling sad, lonely, or making a mistake. They can use dark colors like gray and black to show how sin feels. They could draw storm clouds or scribbles around their picture.
3. On the "After" side: Have them draw a new self-portrait. This time, they should have a happy, peaceful face. Encourage them to use bright, joyful colors. They can draw a heart on their shirt, a cross next to them, or sunshine all around.
4. Let them decorate the "After" side with stickers and glitter glue to show how beautiful and special their new life in Christ is. They can take it home as a reminder that the "old has gone, the new is here!"



# The At-Home Connection



## Dinner Table Discussions

Parenting is a marathon, and you're doing great! Life is busy, but connecting your child's Sunday lesson to their everyday world doesn't have to be complicated. Use these simple prompts to start a conversation around the dinner table this week.

### Discussion Questions:

1. Jesus invited Matthew to follow him even though others didn't like him. Who is someone at school or in our neighborhood that we could invite or be extra kind to this week?
2. Matthew left his old life behind right away. What is one "old" thing (like a bad habit, a mean way of talking, or a selfish attitude) that we can ask Jesus to help us leave behind?
3. How does it make you feel to know that God sees what you can become, not just the mistakes you've made in the past?

### Family Activity: The "New Creation" Jar

1. Find any old, empty jar in your house (a pickle jar, a spaghetti sauce jar, etc.).
2. Together, work to make it new! Wash it out thoroughly.
3. Decorate it to make it look brand new and beautiful. You can paint it, wrap it in construction paper, or cover it in stickers and glitter.
4. Place the jar somewhere you'll all see it. Use it as a "Blessing Jar." Whenever something good happens or you see God working in your family, write it on a small slip of paper and put it in the jar. Watch how God fills your new life with good things!