

1. In 2:14, Jesus sees Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax booth, and he says to him, "Follow me."¹ And Levi rises and followed him. What does Jesus' calling of Levi reveal about whom he chooses to call as his disciples (see 1 Cor. 1:26–29)? What might Levi's occupation and social reputation have meant to those who witnessed Jesus calling him? Consider how readily you might overlook certain people because of their reputation, occupation, background, or apparent unworthiness. How can Christ's gracious call to Levi challenge you to extend the gospel invitation to people you might otherwise avoid? How does remembering that Christ called *you* by grace cultivate humility and gratitude?
2. In 2:15-17, the scribes of the Pharisees see that Jesus is eating with tax collectors and sinners and ask his disciples why he is doing so. Jesus, knowing their question, he says to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners." What does this response teach us about Jesus' purpose in coming into the world? How does his willingness to eat with sinners challenge both self-righteousness and the temptation to withdraw from people who need spiritual healing? How can we as Christians cultivate relationships with unbelievers and with those struggling with sin without compromising biblical convictions?
3. When Jesus is questioned about why his disciples do not fast like the disciples of John and the Pharisees, he asks, "Can the wedding guests fast while the bridegroom is with them? As long as they have the bridegroom with them, they cannot fast. The days will come when the bridegroom is taken away from them, and then they will fast in that day." Why does Jesus compare himself to a bridegroom? What does this image teach us about (a) the joy of his presence and (b) the significance of his death? How should this shape our understanding of fasting and other spiritual disciplines? How can you practice spiritual disciplines in a way that deepens your communion with the Lord?
4. In 2:21-22, Jesus gives us two back-to-back illustrations. In the first, he explains how "no one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment," because "if he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made." Then in the second, he adds, "and no one puts new wine into old wineskins," because "if he does, the wine will burst the skins, and the wine [will be] destroyed [along with] the skins. But new wine," he says, "is for fresh wineskins." In your own words, explain the meaning of these short parabolic illustrations. What was it about his coming into the world and about his teaching that could not simply be treated as something to be fitted within the existing framework of religious tradition? What is an example of "the new wine" that Jesus brings that requires "fresh wineskins"?

¹ In the parallel passage of Matt. 9:9, Levi is called by his other name, Matthew. I like the theory that some have proposed that Levi was the name given him at birth, while Matthew may have been the name given him by Jesus upon his becoming a disciple, in the same way that Jesus had given Simon the new name Peter. Matthew means "gift of the LORD." But of course, this is only sanctified speculation!