A Conversion, A Celebration & A Clinician!

I. Slide#1 Announce:
   A. Slide#2 I moved our Communion from this morn to Wed. Join Romulo & I, Wed 7pm, for a time of extended worship & communion. [Goal? A personal love fest w/your Savior]
   B. Slide#3 Justice Matters: Only 13 days away! Get Signed up in info booth today. [read workshops]
   C. Slide#4 Divorce Care: We have our next Divorce Care program starting up tomorrow night 6:30pm.
      1. DC: 13 week faith based support group program. [folks don’t need to attend CM]
         a) Addresses anger, depression, children, finances, loneliness, forgiveness, etc.
         b) Weekly video series (New & Updated) & discussion groups. And, new workbooks.
      2. DC4K: Ages 5-12. Combines games, crafts, activities, music & video’s to help children cope w/their situation.
      3. Teen program: 13 & up. Deals w/the difficulties teenagers often experience.
      4. Rick & Lorraine DeLeon are in info booth.
   D. Slide#5 John & Lisa: Directors of our Machaca Camp in Belize. 4 Things:
      1. Discipleship: speak to the ministry you offer. Parents of seniors.
      2. Hwy 62 (Is.62:10 Prepare the way for the people; Build up, Build up the highway!)
         a) 2 Yr plan. Expensive on families. How can we as a body help you with this?
            (sponsorships thru businesses; raise funds; CM its our ministry CM!)
      3. Warrior Week: Opening up for the 1st time? (1 week) [survival skills, PT, B.S., Outside!]
      4. Staff Opportunities: ?

II. Slide#6 Intro:
   A. Outline: A Conversion; A Celebration; & A Clinician!
   B. Read Jason’s Mower story:
   C. Slowly the synagogue door was closing on Jesus.
      1. The guardian’s of Jewish Orthodoxy was declaring war on Him.
      2. So...to the seaside He goes. Open air, fresh breeze, short walk...let’s join Jesus on the shore of Galilee, in Capernaum.

III. Slide#7 A CONVERSION! (13,14) An Invitation to Follow!
   A. BACKDROP!
   B. Tax Collector – We have many tax collector jokes.
      1. Slide#8a A fine is a tax for doing wrong. A tax is a fine for doing well.
2. **Slide#8b** In order to simplify tax collections in the near future the IRS will issue a new easier to use tax form.
   1. How much money did you make this year? ________
   2. SEND IT IN

3. **Slide#8c** IRS agent to taxpayer: "I'm afraid we can't allow you to deduct last year's tax as a bad investment."

4. **Slide#9 IRS - Be audit you can be**
   a) Today we make jokes, but in biblical times...they were Hated!

C. **Tax office** – This was a tax station in Capernaum on an important trade route. Tax collectors were also used to excise taxes for port duties & fishing tolls.

1. **Slide#10 map** Traveling from the Roman province to the N/E the 1st town a traveler would come to was Capernaum(see blue arrow). Thus the tax office was placed on this busy thoroughfare.
   a) 2 main roads: Via Maris(in purple), King's Highway (in red). [The imp land bridge between Europe & Africa] All traffic must go through here. It was 1 of the great roads of the world! ["Via Maris" is Latin and means "the Way of the Sea" from Mt 4:15]

D. The Romans collected their taxes through a system called “**Tax Farming**” (like our **Franchises** today)

1. They assessed a tax figure, then sold the right to collect taxes to the highest bidder.

E. **There were 2 kinds of taxes in those days:** Stated Taxes & other Duties.

1. **Slide#11 Stated Taxes** – Poll Tax (all men 14-65, women 12-65 had to pay just for being alive); **Ground Tax** (1/10th of all grain; & 1/5th all wine/oil produced); also there was a **Tax on fish** (which is what Capernaum was famous for); **Income Tax** (1% of one’s annual income).

2. **Duties** – Here was the most opportunity for abuse.
   a) These were taxes for: using roads, harbor docks, sales tax, import/export duties.
      A Tax was even paid on a cart... *each wheel was taxed!*

3. If you didn’t have the money to pay NO PROBLEM!...they also loaned money...at an exorbitant rate! *(today we call them credit cards)*

4. They were “Trained Extortionists”!
   a) Barclay said, “So rare was honesty in the profession that a Roman writer said he once saw a monument to an honest Tax collector!”

5. **Slide#12,13 The Jewish tax collectors were most despised** (as Daffy Duck wud say despicable!)
   a) These Jews couldn’t serve as a judge or a witness in a court session.
   b) They were excommunicated from the synagogues!

F. All of this made Jesus’ dealing w/Levi, the tax collector incredible!!!

1. Yet, didn’t this become one of Jesus’ trademarks in His ministry?
2. Saving such individuals like: **Mary Magdalene** (7 demons); **Zacchaeus** (another tax guy); The adulterous woman that was brought to him; The 5 time divorcee at the well. Oh & **You & I**.

G. (14a) **As He passed by** – Even as he is walking along He was looking for opportunities!
   1. Jesus was never off duty!
      a) Lord, help us to **look** for men/women who need You...**as we walk**!
   2. And Jesus wanted the man...no one else wanted! :)

H. **Mark** says, He saw Levi - **Luke** states, He saw a tax collector; **Matthew** says of himself, He saw a man.
   1. Levi was a well hated man. Jesus you want a Tax Collector as a disciple???
   2. When “low-life Levi” got saved, do you think that many said, “he won’t last”?
      a) Did anyone doubt whether you’d last as a Christian?
   3. **Levi** received a name change to **Matthew**...“Gift of God”!

4. Centuries ago a number of workmen were seen dragging a great marble block into the city of Florence, Italy. It had come from the famous marble quarry of Carrara, & was intended to be made into a statue of a great OT prophet. But it contained imperfections, & when the great sculptor Donatello saw it, he refused it at once. So there it lay in the cathedral yard, a useless block. 1 day another sculptor caught sight of the flawed block. But as he examined it, there rose in his mind something of immense beauty, & he resolved to sculpt it. For 2 years the artist worked feverishly on the work of art. Finally, on Jan.25, 1504, the greatest artists of the day assembled to see what he had made of the despised & rejected block. Among them were Botticelli, Leonardo da Vinci, & Pietro Perugino, the teacher of Raphael. As the veil dropped to the floor, the statue was met w/a chorus of praise. It was a masterpiece!

   Slide#14 Michelangelo’s David is 1 of the greatest works of art the world has ever known.
   a) Jesus saw in the flawed life of Levi…a **Matthew**! (writer/evangelist)
   b) Jesus sees in us what no one else sees!
   c) Jesus wanted the man no one else wanted!

I. Slide#15,16 **He arose & followed him** – **Luke** adds, **So he left all**, rose up, & followed Him.
   1. This was 100% commitment!
      a) Remember the Chicken & the Pig walking by a restaurant & noticed a charity was going on, serving Bacon & Egg breakfast. The Chicken said, “let’s go in & give to the charity”. The Pig said, “No way! For you it’s only a contribution, but for me it’s a commitment!!!”
   2. Matthew gave up all!
      a) James & John, Peter & Andrew could always go back to fishin…**as they did later**!
         (1) But not Matthew, he burned his bridges completely! Walking away, he would never get it back.
3. Matthew staked everything on Christ!
   a) God never goes back on the man who stakes his all on Him!

4. Matthew received clean hands, a mind at rest, & a new name.
   a) Now he could look people in the face.

5. Matthew left everything…except his pen!!!
   a) Writing one of the most important documents of all time! The Jesus’ Story.

IV. Slide#17 A CELEBRATION! (15,16) An Invitation to Dinner!

A. (15) So, Levi throws Him a party! (Lk.5:29)
   1. And Jesus throws down the gauntlet of defiance…and goes! (Barclay)
      a) Slide#18,19 And weird, the outcast of society seemed to be comfortable around Jesus.
         1) Note: Picture is strange/shocking…but its supposed to be!
         b) You’d think they’d feel like a porcupine in the middle of a bunch of kittens….but that wasn’t the case.

   2. New believers, there’s no finer time to win others for Christ as there is when you 1st get saved!

   3. There is the natural response of a truly regenerated soul!…To honor Christ!

   4. Lk.15:32[NIV] But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.

B. Have you become too good to dine w/your pagan family members or friends? (If so, who are you more like in our story?)
   1. But, my uncle Larry the lush will be there. My aunt sleazy Sally & cousin Carl the cusser are coming. Not to mention, bad mouth brother Bob & cigarette Sue.
      a) Surely I shouldn’t subject my children to that!
      b) Or, join the real world!…& teach your children through it (there is a line of course!)

   2. Slide#20 Remember, the Christian’s life is not one of isolation, nor assimilation, but Mission!

C. We would never see ourselves as Pharisees but the question is, do we act like them?
   1. We seem to arrange our lives so that we are with non-believers as little as possible!
      a) We attend Christian bible studies where almost everyone is Christian, we play sports with Christians, eat dinner w/Christians, go to Christians doctors, call Christian plumbers, & even take our pets to Christian vets!
      b) We are to “keep the faith”, but not from others!
   
   2. Listen carefully to Jesus’ prayer, My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. Jn.17:15(niv)
a) Not to remove them from danger/opposition but to preserve them in the midst of conflict!

b) Like Daniel in Babylon; or the saints in Caesar’s household. (Phil.4:22)

3. History records that when Oliver Cromwell ruled England, the nation experienced a crisis: They ran out of silver & could not mint any coins. Cromwell sent his soldiers to the Cathedral to see if any silver was available. They reported back that the only silver was the statues of the saints, to which Cromwell replied, “Melt down the Slide#21 saints & get them back into circulation.”

a) Is that God’s nudge for you this morning?

D. (16) Sinners - a technical term for common people, as opposed to Law keepers.

E. While the Scribes & Pharisees stood on their lil soap boxes of scorn; looking down their noses of neglect; & scanned w/their beady eyes One who was scandalous. It was then that Jesus donned his white Doctors smock & went to work in a hospital of hurting souls!

1. Slide#22 Once again, the Pharisees & Scribes missed the fact that the symbol for Christianity would be a Cross NOT a Ladder!

F. About now, Jesus was “taxed” with the scribes & Pharisees shocking conduct.

1. Pretty disgusted with their pygmy hearts.

V. Slide#23 A CLINICIAN! (17) An Invitation to Wholeness!

A. A Clinician is defined as a doctor having direct contact with and responsibility for patients, rather than one involved with theoretical or laboratory studies.

B. (17) This was a well known Proverb...And, a statement of His mission!

1. Jesus was saying, “To people who think they are righteous, I have nothing to say. But to those who know they have need, I have come.”

2. Slide#24 The Message Bible says, I'm here inviting the sin-sick, not the spiritually-fit.

C. If you say, “I am an honest, moral, upright, person”…Then I have no gospel to preach to you!

1. Why send a doctor to someone who is not sick?
   Why offer financial help to a man who is not poor?
   Why throw a life preserver to a man not drowning?

D. “The 1st link between my soul & Christ is not my goodness, but my badness; not my merit, but my misery; not my standing, but my falling; not my riches, but my need.”

1. Slide#25 So, the only Passport into His Presence is a Passport stamped with SIN.

2. The Psalmist nailed it when he said in Ps.107:20 NLT He sent out his word and healed them, snatching them from the door of death.

Some want to live within the sound - Of Church or Chapel bell;
I want to run a rescue shop - Within a yard of hell!

E. Matthew was not only called to leave everything, but also to find a friend/companion for the coming pathway! Fellowship was offered!

1. Slide#27,28 This morning, Jesus offers you an Invitation to Conversion; an Invitation to Celebration; an Invitation to Himself...the Great Clinician!

2. Jesus says, Follow me! – stop wandering around, cease your questionings, your intellectual debates, come & travel w/me, & find all your answers in my friendship!