**Series Road Map**

**Series Overview:** We live in a westernized, individualistic culture. In that, we can lose sight of the fact that the Gospel is for EVERYONE. When Jesus commands his disciples to be his witnesses everywhere, he means to all people—ethnicities, backgrounds, languages and cultures. How do we reconcile this in 2021 and beyond? How do we unleash a generation to the world to spread the hope of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? That’s what we’re going to explore in this series entitled, “The Nations.”

**Week Overview:** What does it mean to share the Gospel with the Nations? To preach the Good News—as Jesus commanded his disciples to do—in Jerusalem and Judea? It means developing the practice of hospitality and inviting others to the table that may not be our first choice.

***Outline:***

**Grab the Room (Intro):** Story of a time you invited someone “different” to the table (literally or figuratively).

**Tension (what’s the struggle):** We live in the most connected society ever and yet, many of us are lonelier than ever. How do we develop authentic relationships with one another to share the Good News if we don’t even know how to talk to each other? Use the dinner table.

**Text: Acts 1:8-9, Matthew 9:9-13,**

**Truth:** The history of the church is around the table. For hundreds of years, this is where the people of Jesus met. The gospel spread from one table to the next. From one home to another. All over a meal.

The table is a very ordinary place. So routine and everyday it is easily overlooked as a place of life changing community. By setting a table and sharing a meal, we provide the context for which people feel loved, where people feel heard; a place where God's spirit can move. The practice of eating and drinking is central to the Kingdom of God; Jesus ate with the lost, Jesus ate with community, Jesus ate with God.

**THP**: Make room at the table

**Supporting Points:**

**Application (call to action)**:

Practice: Hospitality

Invite one person you’d deem as “inferior/less than” to your lunch table at school this week.

*Red – Scripture*

*Blue – Personal Story*

*Green – Prop*

***THP/Main Points – Bold***

**The Nations**

**Week 1**

**Northview Church**

**Fall 2021**

**Intro:**

[General Welcome]

Tonight, we have an opportunity to step INTO the Word—the Story of Jesus—and to pull out a practice from his life that will allow us to live out the charge he gave us as disciples of Jesus in Acts 1:8. He said that, “*you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”*

We’re in this series entitled, “The Nations” where we’re breaking down this verse from Acts chapter 1 and discussing, “what does it look like to ACTUALLY be a witness, to be a friend, to be a testament or an example to my neighbor? To those in our close sphere, those in our school, those on our social media feeds and to the world?

This week, I want to really focus in on what it would look like to be witnesses or friends to those in our Jerusalem or Judea. For us, this is our immediate circle—our friends and our family—as well as our COMMUNITY—our community at school, our community here at Northview Students and our community in our city—whether [insert specific communities] or elsewhere.

What does it look like to be a Holy Spirit-filled witness to our city? That’s what we’re going to talk about tonight.

Hear the Word of the Lord from Matthew chapter 9, beginning in verse 9. It says,

*As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.* ***10****While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew’s house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples.****11****When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”* ***12****On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.****13****But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%209&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23393a)*] For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

Pray with me.

*Prayer.*

*Amen.*

**Personal Story:**

**Story of a time you invited someone “different” to the table (literally or figuratively).**

*I was a sophomore in High School when I met Collin. Collin showed up to youth one Sunday Night and as a high schooler, you could always find me playing knock out before service. Collin happened to jump into line to play and after a few games, we exchanged names and I asked him if it was his first time to our church. He said it was. I invited him to sit with my friends and I at service that night and afterwards, I told him how we—we being my friends and I—had a tradition that after youth every Sunday night we either went to Taco Bell or Sonic which was literally right across the parking lot from our church. I asked him if he wanted to join, and he said sure.*

*That night, around the dinner table, about 10 of us talked about what kind of cars we were getting for our 16th birthday, we talked about what colleges we dreamed of going to, one of my friends was an actress in the Hunger Games and so she was telling us about what it was like to be on set with Jennifer Lawrence and Josh Hutcherson. It was a night of laughter, of wonder and of dreaming. It was a great night around that table and I remember leaving feeling so fulfilled.*

*That same group began meeting every Sunday night after church at Taco Bell or Sonic to talk about life, our struggles, our wins, our losses, our relationships and our break ups. It was a sweet community—and Collin became a regular at our table. Eventually, once I started driving, Collin began asking for a ride. I didn’t realize it until I went to pick him up, but Collin lived in the heart of downtown Nashville in a really rough area. As I pulled up to his house, it looked like it was the size of my bedroom. Collin came out, got into my car smelling like smoke and we drove to church together in silence. Eventually, I started to ask Collin about his life. He told me that he lived with his single mom. He was an only child and they didn’t have a lot. It turns out that our conversations about cars and college were completely foreign to Collin—his mom and him were just trying to do whatever it took to put food on the table—to SURVIVE.*

*Eventually, Collin started coming home with me after these meals to spend the night. In the summer of 2014, Collin ended up moving in with me and living with our family for 3 months. He started introducing himself as, “Collin Davis” and said that he was Micah’s brother. It was a sweet time of friendship and brotherhood that developed, but you know what I realized? Our friendship all began with an invitation to a seat at the table.*

**Tension:**

I don’t think it’s a secret that we live in the most connected society ever. At the snap of a finger, we can pull up—on our devices—a friend from Norway or China or Russia. In an instant, we can send a message of communication literally around the world. Our ability to connect and accessibility to the world has never been higher. Simply put, there’s never been MORE opportunities to be a witness to not just the world, but to those all around us. With one message, one tweet, one snap, we could potentially have communicated with every single person in our school. The potential for relationship has never been greater and yet, many of us are lonelier than ever. How can that be?! How can it be that we’re so connected and yet feel so alone?

Maybe you hear Jesus’ call of his disciple Matthew and immediately think of the lunch room. And you think, “there’s no way I could just ‘invite’ someone to the table like that. There’s no way I’d ever be caught dead sitting with THOSE people. There’s no way I’d ever take a chance to look UP from my phone and to ask the question, “could we share a meal together? There’s NO WAY I could ever work up the courage to go outside of my friend group to befriend someone different than me.”

And then we wonder, how do we develop authentic relationships with one another to share the Good News? Acts 1:8 sounds great Micah, I’m ready to go! How do I do it? And yet we’re not even willing to talk to one another.

Is there a way to break the cycle? Is there an opportunity that we have before us? Is there something that we can do that will exemplify us as a disciple or follower of Jesus?!

There is…it’s to: **(THP)—Make room at the table.**

**Text:**

In Matthew chapter 9, Jesus is walking and he walks by this guy named Matthew who’s sitting in a Tax Collector’s booth. Verse 9, *As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector’s booth. “Follow me,” he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him.*

Now, here’s what you need to understand—tax collectors were not only seen as notorious sinners and cheaters and swindlers, but they were also seen as collaborators or partners or allies with the Roman government who was oppressing the Jewish people. So, these were Jews who had essentially sold their souls to sworn enemy of their people so that they could cash in on a high-paying job. And because of that, NO ONE liked them.

And yet Jesus walks by this man and says, “Follow me.” And it says that Matthew got up and followed him.

Now, notice, the very next line, where Jesus and Matthew end up. Verse 10, ***10****While Jesus was HAVING DINNER AT MATTHEW’S HOUSE, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples.*

So, just picture this…Jesus has extended this invitation to Matthew. He says, “follow me.” Follow you where? Where are we going? We’re going to your house. We’re going to dine at your table.

Why would Jesus have immediately moved to the table with his new disciple, Matthew? Because Jesus understood that to gain the trust, the authority and the respect to teach him the Way of Jesus, he had to build relational equity by allowing Matthew to get to know the Person of Jesus.

Jesus’ invitation, “follow me” could also be seen as, “Matthew, come and eat with me.” And so Matthew and Jesus begin to gather around the table and it says that, “*many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples.”*

Meanwhile, some Pharisees or Jewish religious leaders are kind of hanging around in the background. They want to make it very clear—they are not eating at this table. They are not associating with the tax collectors and other “sinners.” To do so would be wrong. To do so would be to not follow God. To do so would be challenging, uncomfortable or difficult—so they say.

And so while everyone is eating, the Pharisees pull a few of the disciples aside and say, verse 11, *“Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?”*

In other words, why is your Rabbi, why is your leader eating with these people?! This isn’t right! This isn’t how we do it. This isn’t how the world works. Doesn’t he understand the social structure? We all have our place. We all have our friends. We’re supposed to stick to them! We’re not supposed to go outside the bounds of our comfort zone. If you’re popular, you’re not supposed to befriend the loner. If you’re a loner, you’re not supposed to invite others to your table. If you’re ugly, you don’t sit with the pretty people. If you’re pretty, you don’t sit with the ugly people. If you’re black, you don’t sit with the white people. If you’re white, you don’t sit with the Asian people. That’s not how the world works!!

So they say.

**Truth:**

And yet, Jesus makes it clear—when he calls us to be witnesses to his witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea—he’s not saying, “hey, just befriend your fellow believers. Hey, just witness to people who look like you. Hey, just take care of the people you care about.” NO! He’s saying you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and Judea—in your CITY, in your SCHOOL, in your COMMUNITY—to EVERYONE. To every fellow Carmel High Schooler, to every other person in Cru, to all people on your Track team—regardless of their grade, their gender, their ethnicity, their popularity or their wealth.

Why would I do this?! Why would I risk my own popularity, my own social status, why would I risk everything that I’ve built, that I’ve worked for, that I’ve gained—just to be ridiculed for befriending, “the tax collector or sinner”—the loser, the bully, the loner, the stoner, the LGTBQ+, the minority, the outcast? Why would I do that?

Because to **(THP)— Make room at the table** is to authentically apprentice under Jesus.

Verse 12, *On hearing this, Jesus said, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.****13****But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice.’[*[*a*](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Matthew%209&version=NIV#fen-NIV-23393a)*] For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.”*

Jesus says, “I’m not here to sit at tables with people who ‘measure up’ to me. I’m not here to sit at tables with people that will grow my platform, that will build my base or my brand, that will increase my clout or my fame. I’m not here to boost my own status or popularity. I’ve come for the sinners. I’ve come for the outcasts. I’ve come for the losers and the lonely. The forgotten and the fallen.”

**Application:**

And so, is there a practice or a habit that we can extract from the life of Jesus and implement into our own life? There is. It’s the practice of hospitality. Hospitality was one of the earliest distinctions that set The Church apart from the rest of culture. For hundreds of years, before churches became a building, the TABLE was where the people of Jesus met.

In our fast-paced, hurried, full-schedule culture, how easy is it for the table to get missed in our lives? We wake up, grab a protein bar and get on the bus to go to school. We’d rather “get some homework done” or “scroll on our IG feed for the 100th” time so we grab our lunch and find a corner in the hallway to eat alone. We get home from band practice or lacrosse practice and it’s been a long day and we have hours of homework to do, so we grab whatever dad’s made and go to our room to eat alone. And then we repeat and do it all over again.

But students, here’s what I need you to understand: The practice of eating and drinking with others—of GATHERING around the table—is a central practice the Kingdom of God.

Matthew 9—Jesus shows us—Jesus ate with the lost, he ate with sinners, with tax collectors and with pharisees! He ate with men, women and children. He ate with the lowest of the low and Israel’s most esteemed. He ate to teach, he ate to WITNESS, he ate to commune.

**Inspiration:**

Students, what would it look like for us—as a community—to be intentional about gathering around the table? This is why our life groups are SO important! We don’t just say circles over rows because it sounds cute. We say it because it’s TRUE! It matters. The rhythm of gathering together and sharing authentically is a central practice of the disciple of Jesus.

And so maybe for you, tonight is the night where you take your next step. Maybe for you, that means jumping into a life group for the very first time. Maybe for you, you’re already in a life group, and this week? This week is about inviting “that” person to your table. The person you see sitting by themselves every day. The person you know others have excluded or alienated. The person deep down, you know you should be kinder to. Perhaps your next step is inviting them to the table and being a witness of Jesus by simply being a friend.

Maybe tonight, you walk in here and you say, “Micah, I’m the outsider. That’s me! I’m the one who’s never getting an invite to the table.” Can I just tell you? Jesus has a seat for you at his table, my friend. You are welcome at his table. In fact, he wants you to come to him RIGHT NOW. To enter into a relationship with him, to lavish you with love, to remind you of your worth and security and identity in HIM! That opportunity is available for you right now. And if you’d like to accept it, I want to give you that invitation now. So, if everyone could bow their heads and close their eyes…

[Gospel Invitation]

Friends, we have the opportunity to reorganize the centrality of our homes, our cafeterias and our lives. The life of a follower of Jesus was meant to center around the table—not the iPhone, not the Xbox and not the TV. But the table. The table where we can gather, where we can enjoy great food, but even better conversation. Where we can be slow, present and attentive to the people directly in front of us.

What if we became a countercultural community of high school students? Where in the rush of activities that are constantly occurring, once a week, we took time to commune and be present? To slow down and to befriend others in our sphere.

To do so would be just one way we could fulfill Jesus’ commission of being a witness to those in our city.

Let’s pray.

*Prayer.*

*Amen.*