

**My comments in Comic Sans 12 pt. Red. This is done to accommodate those unable to receive the color.** Gene Mace's comments are preceded with the initials "GM."

**TRINITY UNITED METHODIST CHURCH  
IHOP BIBLE STUDY  
Topic: Matthew 9: 9 to 9: 7 "Staff Qualifications"**

The gospel of Matthew's message is powerful and relevant to our current human situation. Matthew's purpose is to give us a training manual for teaching the Deeply Satisfied Life. This material is developed for the early church, but is applicable for us today.

Matthew's teaching role model is Jesus. The "Deeply Satisfied Life" is the experience ("Gut Trip Analysis") of the term Sanctification (which is an Old Christian Code Word understood as "Head Trip Analysis").

This is our eleventh lesson in this series, and is associated with "Tools For Teaching The Methods For A Happy/Holy Life." My reflections on the gospel give us the overall title of "The Training Manual For Teaching The Transparent Sanctified Life." With this metaphor established, let us continue.

**I. Read the assigned reading at one time.**

**II. The Context for this lesson** is to put into the Training Manual a list of the qualifications for being staff members (teachers) who utilize the "Tools For Teaching The Methods for a Happy/Holy Life." **The kind of staff members Matthew looks for are those who are awake to the fact that they live before ONE REALITY that is like a soup containing particles representing both The Way Life Is (TWLI or the human/natural), and particles representing the Really Real (or spiritual reality). If necessary, turn to my book on Old Christian Code Words, and the concepts of TWLI and The Really Real are defined in it.** I've written this in red to draw attention to it. **To appreciate this statement is to make sense of what are the qualifications to be called to be one of Matthew's teachers/staff members.**

For now, it is enough to know that we are searching for staff that is awake to this one reality. These people are acknowledging both the physical/natural reality and the spiritual experience. Then, the following characteristics can be added.

**Vss. 9: 9 What are the operating words in this verse that suggest the kind of staff for which we are looking?**

**The qualification for using Matthew's "Tool Box" is the relationship the staff member takes to Reality (TWLI).**

**First, they say, "Yes!" Those who follow Jesus are the "Yes" people. It is a distinguishing mark of Christians that they first say "yes," and then**

they can prioritize their response; i.e., "Yes, I'll go to Africa after I finish learning the native language." If we choose to say "No," then there is no opportunity to change our mind.

Second, Christians are qualified as "Tool Box Teachers" when we are not victimized by our circumstances or situations in life. Instead, we are victors. If we are born with one leg, we have a choice either to be victims to our circumstances and be chronic complainers, or we have the choice to be one-legged dancers and be victors over our circumstances.

Reality never changes. It is us who can change. This is the basis of the Good News! Our lives are transformed! Reality stays the same.

To desire that we "grow another leg" is a wish dream, and this is unreality. One of my axioms is that "there is only one thing God hates, and that is a wish dream." The reason being is that God is in the reality and not in the lie of unreality. God only is found in the middle of what is real. In fact, one definition of God is The Authentic!

Now, using this formula, observe the qualifications Matthew lays out for those who teach from the "Tool Box."

**Vss. 9: 10, 11 Why does Jesus choose "sinners" as a qualification for staff?**

Sinners are those who understand The Way Life Is. They are not living in a dream world. Those who believe they are created "righteous" are living a lie. Yes, we can be "made righteous" by living our life in the shadow of Jesus Christ. But we are still sinners made righteous. We are not The Righteous.

**GM-**It seems to me that Jesus identified here people who knew what it meant to be looked down upon. They apparently exhibited a sense of mercy toward other people. He seems to juxtapose them over against the people who considered themselves righteous and were judgmental toward other people. When we can acknowledge our own sinfulness and be merciful toward ourselves, we can extend that mercy toward others.

**What is implied in choosing "Tax Collectors?"**

In Jesus' time, Tax Collectors were doing not only an unseemly activity, but were collaborators with their Roman captors; they were traitors! They were sinners, and they were traitors. How far down the social ladder can you go? The point at which they qualify as "Tool Box Teachers" is that they experienced their lives transformed. This does

**not change their REALITY, but it does change THEM! They knew the experience of transformation.**

**GM-**Tax collectors were the really bad guys of that day. Even they are people who need the sense of being loved by God. They are still humans in need of concern and love.

**Vss. 9: 12 What is implied in the necessity for our staff to be sick?**

**Again, the sick are those who "have been there and done that." The qualifications to be "Tool Box Teachers" is their lives are transformed!**

**GM-**The "sick" are those who understand their need to be healed. Basically, it seems to me that this is not so much affirming sickness as it is affirming one's recognition of being sick.

Recognition of our sickness is the first step toward healing. **Amen!**

**What is implied in the quotation "I desire mercy, not sacrifice?"**

**GM-**Sacrifice is an external. Mercy is an internal stance that reaches out to others. Sacrifice doesn't really change things whereas mercy does. For me this recalls the words in Micah, "do justice, love kindness and walk humbly with God."

**Gene Mace says it best. Sacrifice is an "objective thing" while Mercy is an "experience thing." What we "experience" is the miracle of transformation. When we experience "forgiveness" we know the restoration of At-One-Ment, and the peace it brings to us.**

In this regard, research the background of the Minor prophet Hosea. Find out the context Hosea used in writing his book in the Old Testament. Then, see if you can extrapolate from this story the characteristics representing "mercy" and not "sacrifices."

**Hosea is a minor prophet in the Old Testament. He spoke to his nation of Israel just prior to the fall of the northern kingdom of Israel to the Syrians around 722 B.C.E. (Before the Common Era.) He used his marriage to Gomer—a prostitute—as a metaphor for his nation who prostituted themselves in their relationship to God. He named his three children using similar metaphors: a son—"The defeat of Israel;" a daughter—"God will no longer show mercy;" a son—"For you are not God's people."**

**The point Matthew makes in referring to Hosea in 9:13 "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" is the miracle of transformation. We all have prostituted ourselves by believing we can change reality. This prevents God from transforming us. We are worthy of only being "stoned to death because of our prostitution." It is when we awaken to the fact that we are prostitutes, and then we discover God is with us in this reality, and then can move to have our lives transformed! Ah-ha! Now we know MERCY! All**

of the sacrifices we lay on the altar are useless unless our lives are transformed.

Ah, yes. This will preach!

The qualification for using the "Tool Box of Teachers" is to EXPERIENCE MERCY! Then we have something to share because we've been there, done that, and experienced the transformation.

**Vss 9: 14, 15 What is implied concerning staff qualifications in 9: 14, 15?** It is my suggestion not to be literal in these verses. Instead, see if you can push your thinking to the EXPERIENCE implied in this story. Share your reflections.

The issue here is fasting. Matthew's point is that there is nothing wrong with fasting. There is nothing wrong with John's disciples fasting. THE EXCEPTION to fasting is WHEN to fast.

Think of it this way. Fasting is a spiritual activity for awaking our spiritual eyes to see in the ONE REALITY SOUP both our natural reality (TWLI) and our spiritual reality (the Really Real). Fasting is a spiritual exercise to clean our spiritual lens to see more spiritual specks in the soup of reality.

Fasting is like "sacrifices," it is an objective thing we do. However, when we are in the middle of experiencing the transformed life we are living with our spiritual eyes already open. This is a time to celebrate. This is the time when the "bridegroom" is with us.

**GM**-Hosea's key themes were "faithful love" and "knowledge of God". This appears to me to be calling us to the relationship with Christ. Jesus seems to be saying that the relationship is more important than the rituals of one's religious expression. While Jesus was with them, the time spent with him was more important than doing religious stuff.

**Vss 9: 16, 17 What is implied concerning staff qualifications in 9: 16, 17?** Again, push your thinking to the EXPERIENCE implied in this story. Share your reflections.

The Staff Members using Matthew's "Tool Box" are creating something new. The axiom "God does not call the qualified, but qualifies the called" is descriptive. None of us are "qualified." However, those of us with our eyes open are called to be teachers and staff members.

The teaching we are called to teach is **THE ONE REALITY**—this is the “new unshrunk cloth,” this is the “new wineskin” into which we pour the new still-fermenting wine!

Those qualified to use Matthew’s “Tool Box” are those whose eyes are open to the truth of the **WHOLE REALITY**—the human/natural part of the soup of reality, and the spiritual part of this soup.

**GM**-It seems to me that Jesus is calling us to “think outside the box” for that which is creative. It is a call to experience life and extrapolate from that rather than trying to make life fit into various ideological (head trip) boxes.

**Talk to me, folks!**