

Call to Invite

In the Old Testament, when God called someone about something, it was with the sense of a summon like an invitation that should not be dismissed. In the New Testament, the English word “call” is a translation of the Greek word “kaleō.”

The Greek word **kaleō** has several meanings. It can mean: a) to call or cry out a loud sound, b) to name or designate, c) to read out loud, or d) to invite.

1. Examine a part of the Parable of the Wedding Feast (Matt 22:1-14). What is the Wedding Feast telling you about the Kingdom of Heaven? How does Jesus use the word “call?” How do people respond?

Jesus spoke to them again in parables, saying, “The kingdom of heaven is like a king who held a wedding feast for his son. And he sent his slaves to call (**kaleō**) those who had been invited (**kaleō**) to the wedding feast, and they were unwilling to come.

Again he sent other slaves, saying, ‘Tell those who have been invited (**kaleō**), “Behold, I have prepared my dinner; my oxen and my fattened cattle are all butchered and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast!”’ (Matt 22:1-4, NASB)

2. Carefully observe how Jesus responds to the Pharisees. How does He use the word “call?” Who is Matthew?

After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, “Follow Me.” And he left everything behind, and got up and began to follow Him.

And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them. The Pharisees and their scribes began grumbling at His disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with the tax collectors and sinners?” And Jesus answered and said to them, “It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call (**kaleō**) the righteous but sinners to repentance.” (Luke 5:27-32, NASB)

As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector’s booth; and He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he got up and followed Him. (Matt 9:9, NASB)

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Teacher Notes

In the Old Testament, when God called someone about something, it was with the sense of a summon like an invitation that should not be dismissed. In the New Testament, the English word “call” is a translation of the Greek word “kaleō.”

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Inform the student how you can learn how a word is used in the Bible by using a Bible lexicon such as: Blueletterbible.org.

Search for the word of interest such as: call.

The Old Testament was written in Hebrew, so you'll find the underlying Hebrew word and all the instances it is used.

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Ask the student: what does the comparison of the kingdom of heaven to a “wedding feast” tell you? How do you get there? Encourage the student to carefully observe the passage and ask questions to help them think through the figure of speech.

Like a wedding feast, you are invited to the kingdom of heaven.

Because there are people who were unwilling to come, you have a choice of whether you accept the invitation or not.

According to Jesus, salvation is by invitation not by coercion. It is a matter of choice.

Ask the student: who do the slaves represent who are carrying out the invitations?

The slaves carrying out the invitations are anyone pointing people to God in the Old Testament (i.e. Old Testament prophets) and anyone sharing the gospel in the New Testament.

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Ask the student: who is Levi?

Levi is Matthew. This is the record of how Matthew became a disciple of Jesus.

Ask the student: how does Jewish society view tax collectors? What do your observations reveal?

Tax collectors seem to be a separate class of sinners and perhaps despised.

Ask the student: why would Matthew give Jesus a big reception? What does this tell you about Jesus’ calling?

Matthew was aware that he was not held in high regard in society.

But Jesus saw him worthy of being a disciple.

Ask the student: how do you know that Jesus’ call to Matthew was an invitation and not a command?

Matthew hosted the reception in joyful response of being asked to be a disciple. The reception was an indication of his gratitude.