

First-Responder Followers of Christ
Luke 5:12-16 & 27-32

Many Christians focus on the wrong things when they encounter people who suffer from a collision with the world and sin. Luke 5 links two incidents to make a massive theological point about responding to people in need of Jesus.

The 1st incident is about a man with leprosy. A Jewish audience would know that this disease caused him to be pronounced ritually unclean. He was cut off from people, the temple and the sacrificial system. His condition was perceived as God's curse for some sin. Without access to the temple sacrifices, he couldn't receive forgiveness and healing. Levi was considered a traitor and extortioner. Like the leper, he was banned from the temple. Both the leper and Levi were functionally dead to decent Jewish society and cut off from God's mercy. You couldn't touch a leper. You couldn't eat with tax collectors.

So, Jesus touches the leper and joins the tax collector and his friends for a meal. He was addressing the most significant needs of these men: to be given hope and real healing. To be invited back into the forgiving, loving presence of God.

A Christian steps into a broken world to point people to the Great Physician. 1) Like a paramedic, our job is to stabilize people injured by a broken world with a touch of love, acceptance, and the truth about salvation and gently guide people to the Great Physician. 2) Like a paramedic, we can't get distracted trying to "fix" people's surface problems; their external habits, political views, or social flaws first.

Many instances of church hurt come when we try to usurp the work of the Great Physician and step out of the role of 1st responder. We can't manipulate, argue, or otherwise pressure people to be saved. We can't try to "fix" them and make them more acceptable to us or to Jesus. We are to stabilize the person by reaching out with love, acceptance, and the truth about salvation. Then, to guide them to the one who can truly heal: Jesus.