

Introduction:

It's a new year and it seems like many of us are almost relieved to be rid of 2016. Ready for a fresh start, we have spent the past few weeks telling ourselves what we are going to do differently this year; some of us making the same resolutions we made last year and the year before that. What is it exactly that is going to be fresh about your fresh start? What would it be like, instead of focusing on what *you* are going to do to change *your* life this year, if we broke that cycle and decided that this year, we are going to focus on what *Jesus* wants to do *through us* to change the lives of the people we interact with? That truly would be a fresh start.

Scripture:

Matthew 9:35-38 - Jesus traveled through all the towns and villages of that area, teaching in the synagogues and announcing the Good News about the Kingdom. And he healed every kind of disease and illness. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. He said to his disciples, "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields."

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you have a resolution, goal, or hope for what your life will be like in 2017?
2. When Jesus interacts with the crowds in Matthew 9, he has compassion for them because they were "confused and helpless." Do you feel like these two words relate at all to your experience before meeting Jesus?
3. Where do you see yourself (either past or present) in this story?
4. For some of us, a fresh start begins with getting serious about following Jesus and making the leap from following his stories & ideas to truly following *him*. What difference do you think it makes to follow the person of Jesus instead of the story of Jesus?
5. Jesus makes the opportunity to offer people who are different than him compassion & good news instead of judgement. Where do you or could you do the same?

Take the Next Step:

Just as it was in Matthew 9, today "the harvest is great, but the workers are few." We are workers. You are a worker. Who is God calling you to reach out to? Who's next?