CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS
MAY29 2021

Scripture Story: Matthew 9:9-17; Mark 2:14-22; Luke 5:27-39.
Commentary: *The Desire of Ages,* chapter 28.

not love at first sight



Photo by Jennifer and Company

flashlight

"His whole life was a sacrifice of Himself for the saving of the world. Whether fasting in the wilderness of temptation or eating with the publicans at Matthew's feast, He was giving His life for the redemption of the lost. Not in idle mourning, in mere bodily humiliation and multitudinous sacrifices, is the true spirit of devotion manifested, but it is shown in the surrender of self in willing service to God and man" (*The Desire of Ages,* p. 278).

keytext

"While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, 'Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?' "

(Matthew 9:10, 11, NIV)

CCBSG B2 2021.indd 37 8/31/20 2:04 PM

what do you think?

In 2001 a huge money scandal involving a corporation was revealed. Many employees stole hundreds of millions of dollars while their victims lost all their money, their pensions, and sometimes even their homes.

How would you react if one of those employees who was guilty of destroying people's lives came to your church? Below are several options. List them from 1 being most likely, and 5 being the least likely, in how you would react if this were to happen. Remember to answer truthfully.

____ You would ignore the whole situation since what they did didn't affect you.

____ You would feel angry and keep your distance in fear that you might say something regrettable.

____ You would feel angry and say something without concern for their feelings.

____ You would show them a kind face, but keep your distance.

____ You would accept them and try to be a good witness to them. After all, they are in church, so they must want to change.

did you know?

In Jesus' time, tax collectors were hated by the Jews. But what was even worse was a Jew who became a tax collector. They were seen as traitors, and no one would accept them. Which is why, when Jesus accepted the tax collectors, so many of the Jews were unhappy. Even to this day tax collectors are shown in a bad light. Their job is to collect unpaid taxes from people as well as corporations. In many fictitious stories, they are portrayed as evil people, but in real life many people see them in the same light. After all, who really likes the IRS or its agents?

INTO THE STORY

"After these things He went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, 'Follow Me.' So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.

"Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house. And there were a great number of tax collectors and others who sat down with them. And their scribes and the Pharisees complained against His disciples, saying, 'Why do You eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?'

"Jesus answered and said to them, 'Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.'

"Then they said to Him, 'Why do the disciples of John fast often and make prayers, and likewise those of the Pharisees, but Yours eat and drink?'

And He said to them, 'Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them? But the days will come when the bridegroom will be taken away from them; then they will fast in those days.'

"Then He spoke a parable to them: 'No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine will burst the wineskins and be spilled, and the wineskins will be ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins, and both are preserved. And no one, having drunk old wine, immediately desires new; for he says, "The old is better."'"

(Luke 5:27-39, NKJV)



OUT OF THE STORY

Why do you think the Pharisees were so angry about Jesus accepting a tax collector?

Why were tax collectors hated so much?

Do you think Levi felt unworthy when Jesus said, "Follow Me"? Explain.

Do you think Jesus worried about what others might think of Him befriending such unpopular folks as tax collectors? Why or why not?

What do you think Jesus meant when He said, "No one puts a piece from a new garment on an old one; otherwise the new makes a tear, and also the piece that was taken out of the new does not match the old"?

What do you think Jesus saw when He first met Levi?

punch lines

"And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister" **(Colossians 1:21-23, ESV).**

"Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none of them" **(Psalm 139:16, ESV).**

"But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart'" **(1 Samuel 16:7, ESV).**

"Therefore welcome one another as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" **(Romans 15:7, ESV).**

"All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out" **(John 6:37, ESV).**

further insight

"When God's people are truly converted, when they realize the obligation resting on them to labor for those within their reach, when they leave no means untried to rescue sinners from the power of the enemy, the reproach will be removed from our churches."—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church,* vol. 7, p. 11.

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read John 6:37.

The church is one body with many members, called from every nation, kindred, tongue, and people. In Christ we are a new creation; distinctions of race, culture, learning, and nationality, and differences between high and low, rich and poor, male and female, must not be divisive among us. We are all equal in Christ, who by one Spirit has bonded us into one fellowship with Him and with one another; we are to serve and be served without partiality or reservation" (Fundamental Belief 14, Unity in the Body of Christ). Jesus said, "All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never cast out" (John 6:37, ESV). Jesus sought out sinners and accepted them. He sought out people whom most of society hated. Instead of seeking to be at the home of a well-known or well-respected Jewish leader, He desired to be the guest of a sinner, someone deemed an outcast in society, so that He might give that person the hope of salvation.

Write down three ways in which we can follow Jesus' example in accepting others.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Sunday

Read 2 Chronicles 7:14.

Have you ever felt unworthy of something? Have you ever done something to dishonor someone and, in return, been given mercy and forgiveness? Did you feel ashamed and filled with guilt? That may be how Levi felt. When Jesus accepted him, he must have felt unworthy when looking back on his life. Yet he probably also felt a great sense of joy in realizing that Jesus was willing to look past his many faults and accept him as a disciple. Use your Bible reading for today as an example and read through your Bible and try to find as many texts as you can about forgiveness and acceptance. Write down the three that you think are most important in your notebook or daily journal.

Monday

Read James 5:20.

Many of us seek to be with people of good reputation. But Jesus didn't. Often we pass by people who we think could be either bad influences or who seem to have bad pasts. But Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick." He then says, "For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners" (Luke 5:31, 32, NIV). While we should choose our friends carefully, if we neglect to seek out people who "need a doctor," how then will we be able to witness and spread Christ's love and hope? Throughout this next week, make an extra effort to follow Jesus' example and try to be a light to those who have seen only darkness. What is God's encouragement to us in today's Bible reading.

Tuesday

Read John 10:11.

In order to do God's will, we must surrender and die to self. Jesus' whole life was a sacrifice. To surrender to God, we must also be humbled. There may be people who we feel are "unworthy" of our attention. To remove these judgments and thoughts from our minds, we can pray and ask God for humbleness as well as the will to surrender completely to Him. Read through this story again and then read through *The Desire of Ages*, chapter 28. What does Jesus say about Himself in today's Bible reading? Are we expected to "lay down" our lives for others? What would that look like?

Wednesday

Read James 4:11, 12.

Rather than look on the outside of people, we must look into them and try to see their hearts and their inner beauty. Many times we pass judgment on people because of their outward appearance. But how can we truly know their hearts just by the outside? We all have flaws, but because of Jesus we can be saved despite the fact that we all sin. Read through some of the gospel this week in your daily devotions, and try to find more examples in the Bible of how Jesus accepted others whom many would see as sinful and unworthy.

Thursday

Read 1 Samuel 16:7.

In this day and age image is a very important part of our society. Image is talked about everywhere; whether you read about it in a magazine or see it on television, the media seems to want us to be more concerned about how our noses look or what new skin products work rather than refashioning our characters. What warning do we have in 1 Samuel 16:7 about focusing primarily or only on appearance? Pray today and ask God to help you look beyond other's faults or physical beauty and see their needs.

Friday

Read John 6:37.

In this life there will be many traps set for us. There will be many devices used against us to blur our judgment. But if we hold fast to Jesus, we will be able to overcome anything the enemy sends our way. Jesus wants us to share His love with anyone and everyone who will listen. We have been given a gift, not so that we can take it in vain, but so that we can show it to the world so they can be a part of God's kingdom. It doesn't matter where you've come from—you can claim the promise of eternal life in Jesus. Reflect on the words in today's Bible reading.

this week's reading*

The Desire of Ages (or *Humble Hero*), chapter 28.

A special adaptation of *The Desire of Ages,* entitled *Humble Hero,* has been created just for you by the White Estate and the Pacific Press Publishing Association. Get more info about it at: www.cornerstoneconnections.net. By following this plan you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.

CCBSG B2 2021.indd 40 8/31/20 2:04 PM