

## Invitation to the Friendless

Sometimes it feels that we are all alone in the world. Leaving family, getting through college and entering the career world can often leave us feeling isolated. This is a lot like how Matthew, the tax collector in the New Testament felt. But it's in the midst of these feelings that Jesus, once again offers an invitation to each one of us. Jesus' invitation is two-fold. One is a call to be friends with Jesus. Check out this verse from Proverbs.

**'...there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother.' Proverbs 18:24**

The invitation that Jesus offers is personal in the fact that he wants to be friends with us. This may seem a bit odd, but He actually wants to spend time with you, hang out with you and talk with you. And this is especially true if you feel that you are the 'tolerated one' in your social circle. It's those who Jesus is serious about befriending. We are told in Psalm 68 that God's desire is to place the lonely ones in community. That is exactly what happens to Matthew. Check out Matthew's account of the story.

**'As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. 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'?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'" Matthew 9:9-12**

So even if we are the 'tolerated ones' or even the 'lonely ones', Jesus wants friendship and connection with us. The other piece of accepting the invitation is that friendship with Jesus includes joining him in fulfilling the Master Plan. And this is exactly what Matthew jumps into. Matthew was a close disciple of Jesus and one of the infamous twelve who followed him for three years. He later wrote an account so that others could hear of all that Jesus did and learn to follow Him as well. Matthew realized the greatness and integrity of the God he chose to follow.

**"A father of the fatherless and a champion of widows is God in His holy dwelling. God provides homes for those who are deserted. He leads out the prisoners to prosperity." Psalm 68:5-6a**

So the question for each one of us is this – do you want to be friends with Jesus? Because He definitely wants to be friends with you. Even if you are different from most people. Even if you aren't well liked by some people. Even if you have never had any true friends up until now. Jesus wants to be that friend that sticks closer than any brother. If you want to...here is a prayer that you can pray to enter and affirm your friendship with Jesus.

**PRAYER:** Jesus, I hear you want to be my friend. I think I want that...but I am not totally sure. But at this moment I am open. I ask you to show me and continue to show me what it means to be your friend. Help me to see your love and acceptance. Help me to not be afraid of what friendship with you might mean for my life. Help me to trust You. You're the best friend anyone could ever have, so please help me to see that. Help this truth to become reality in my life. In Your name, Amen.