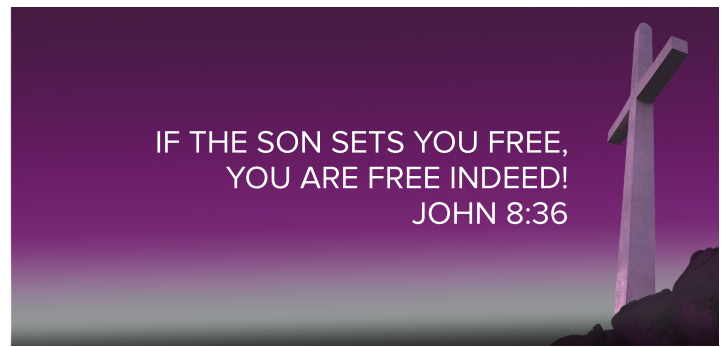


Jesus 101

“Grace Thoughts”



A short devotional to help get you excited about Jesus!

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!" –Matthew 9:9

Rejection takes many forms. You might send out invitations to a party and no one shows up, or you might not get picked for either of the two teams being formed in a school PE class until the very end. I have vivid memories of being rejected when I was twelve years old. Having just come to the United States with my family, I distinctly remember the most popular girl in my class and the way she looked down on me because of my accent, skin color, or the hand-me-down clothes I wore. But all of that changed the day when another girl befriended me.

Matthew (called Levi in Mark and Luke) is the perfect example of a rejected person. He was a tax collector (Greek *telōnēs*) and therefore was despised by his fellow countrymen for at least three reasons. First, tax collectors were viewed as traitors because they collected tax for the hated Roman government. Second, the tax collectors were known to abuse their authority for personal gain because the amount of tax was at the collector's discretion. Extortion was the norm for these people, thus making them rich at the expense of the needy and destitute. Third, Jews viewed tax collectors as ritually unclean, as they often compromised the purity laws by dealing with Gentiles and handling their money. Therefore, for socio-religious-political reasons, tax collectors were despised and rejected. That Jesus would choose a tax collector as His disciple (see Matthew 10:3) is more shocking than we can understand. And perhaps just as startling is the fact that Matthew left everything and followed Him (Matthew 9:9). The next scene happens at Matthew's house with a big celebration at which Jesus and His disciples, as well as "many tax collectors and sinners," are guests (Matthew 9:10; see also Luke 5:29). If you have ever been *rejected* by a religious person or group, you must know that this is not the way Jesus treats you. Furthermore, Jesus invites the rejects, the despised, and the marginalized to follow Him. He has a special interest in the captives and the lost. Yes, He has come for all of us, the least of these.