

### *The first step...*

What is the first step in...

- Making a meal?
- Getting a new job?
- Passing a class?
- Learning to speak a new language?
- Restoring a broken relationship?
- **Building a relationship with God?**

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## The First Step with God

Luke 5:27-39



[bib.ly/Lu5.NIV](http://bib.ly/Lu5.NIV)  
[tiny.cc/cmchandouts](http://tiny.cc/cmchandouts)

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**Luke 5:27-29**

<sup>27</sup> **After this**, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. “Follow me,” Jesus said to him, <sup>28</sup> and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.

<sup>29</sup> Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them.

**tax collector = Jewish people who helped Romans (occupying government) collect taxes  
Seen as traitors who were also swindlers**

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***Setting***

“After this...”

- Outreach to **fishermen** **Luke 5:1-11**
  - Miraculous catch of fish, and call to be fishers of people
- Outreach to **Priests (Sadducees)** **Luke 5:12-16**
  - Man with leprosy cleansed
  - Told to give convincing evidence to the priests
- Outreach to **Pharisees** **Luke 5:17-26**
  - “Roof paralytic” forgiven and healed
  - To prove Jesus’ authority to forgive sins

**Sadducees, Pharisees = powerful religious leaders in Judaism**

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**Luke 5:30-32**

**30** But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who belonged to their sect complained to his disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?”

**31** Jesus answered them, “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. **32** I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.”

**sinner**s = rejected because of ‘socially unacceptable’ sins  
**repentance** = on the journey of leaving immoral and disloyal life patterns

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**Luke 5:33-35**

**33** They said to him, “John’s disciples often fast and pray, and so do the disciples of the Pharisees, but yours go on eating and drinking.”

**34** Jesus answered, “Can you make the friends of the bridegroom fast while he is with them? **35** But the time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; in those days they will fast.”

**fast = not eat (and sometimes drinking) as religious mourning**

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**Luke 5:36-39**

**36** He told them this parable: “No one tears a piece out of a new garment to patch an old one. Otherwise, they will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old. **37** And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. Otherwise, the new wine will burst the skins; the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined.

**38** No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins.

**39** And no one after drinking old wine wants the new, for they say, ‘The old is better.’”

**wineskins = stretchable animal skins to hold new wine**

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**Luke 5:27-39**[bib.ly/Lu5.NIV](http://bib.ly/Lu5.NIV)

**27-29:** Jesus called Levi to follow him, and he did with joy!

- Tax collector: despised by everyone (fishermen too)
- Levi: left / rose / followed
  - Left: from career path and more; perhaps no return
  - Rose: transformation (paralytic), not just a new goal
  - Followed: Jesus
    - God in the flesh → not merely religion or morality
- Levi hosted a great feast for Jesus
  - Rejoicing in following Jesus! (not a funeral)
  - “Left everything” out of joy

30-32:

- Some things are gone forever: career

33-35:

- Some things transformed: relationship with resources

36-39:

- Feast for many others in need of Jesus, just like Levi

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**30-32: Pharisees complain: avoid sick people!**

- Pharisees: increase your distance from “sinners”
    - “Sins”: religious and certain moral failures
    - They viewed “sin” as contagious, like leprosy
  - Eating together implies mutual acceptance
    - Eating with “sinners” is like touching the leper
  - Jesus: Hospitals should be full of sick people!
  - Jesus’ purpose
    - Not: reward & fellowship with the healthy/righteous
- 33-35:      • Instead: go to & love the unhealthy/“sinners”
- 36-39:      • PLUS call to repentance → pursue health in Christ

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**33-35: Pharisees complain: fast & pray, but don't rejoice!**

- Their other concern about Levi's feast: rejoicing!
- Pharisees believed that new followers and disciples should be mourning over their failures
  - Joy only comes with significant progress in “righteousness” (religious & certain moral actions)
- Jesus' better analogy: rejoicing with the bridegroom
  - The love and presence of God bring rejoicing rather than mourning!

36-39:

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**36-39: Jesus' way of grace must transform everything**

- Mixing Jesus' way with other ways ends in disaster  
Grace=Gift of love: from first to last, for every person
- Errors of “religion”: **trying to earn God's love**
  - Trying to earn God's love (be better, then go to God)
  - Beginning by grace, then returning to earning
  - Receiving grace, but making others earn it
  - Teaching grace, but making ourselves earn it
  - Mixing a little grace into religion
- **We actually prefer the way of earning God's love!**

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***The Big Idea***

**God loves first**  
**to lead us**  
**to joyful repentance**

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## Two models for the journey to being loved by God

### People change first

1. We realize our failures
2. We own our failures
3. We apologize
4. We repent/change
5. If we do that well enough,  
God loves us
6. God gives generously



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**God Loves First****"People change first"**

You, therefore, have no excuse, **you who pass judgment on someone else**, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. ... So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? Or do you show contempt for the **riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience**, **not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?**

**"God loves first"***Romans 4:1-4*

contempt = treat as having no value

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**God Loves First**

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him.

This is love: **not that we loved God, "People change first"**

**but that he loved us** and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.

**"God loves first"**

Dear friends, **since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.**

*1 John 4:9-11*

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### God Loves First

You see, at just the right time, **when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly**. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this:

**While we were still sinners,  
Christ died for us. "God loves first"**

*Romans 5:6-8*

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**Yet Jesus said, our hearts prefer the path of earning God's love**

- **We keep returning to trying to earn God's love!**
- **Then we try to add a little "God loves first" into it**

**Why? Perhaps...**

- **We feel better about ourselves**
  - **Show our goodness**
  - **See others' badness**
- **We find satisfaction in judging ourselves**
- **We get motivation from the shame of displeasing others**
- **We want control**

**Whatever the reason, we so often prefer the "old wine"**

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**Whatever the reason, we so often prefer the "old wine"**

**So...**

- **We make others earn God's love**
- **We make ourselves earn God's love**
- **We judge ourselves for not being good enough**

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*The Big Idea*

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*Application*

- Receive Jesus' love as a gift **God loves first**
  - “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and **this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God**—not by works, so that no one can boast.” *Ephesians 2:8-9*
  - Accept this reality, once for all
    - Entrust ourselves to the love of God in Jesus
    - “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” *Romans 5:8*
  - Then over and over again!
    - When we judge others
    - When we judge ourselves

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### *Application*

- Receive Jesus' love as a gift
  - **God loves first**
    - **Do you feel like your failures are too much for God?**
    - **Do you feel like God won't love you until you get more serious for God?**
    - **Is there something in your life that makes you feel like God can't love or use you?**
  - **Receive Christ's love, as a gift, for you today, just as you are!**
  - **This can be especially hard for people who have been in the church a long time**

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### *Application*

- Obey Jesus' call to joyful repentance in His love
  - In His love, He calls us to courageous transformation
    - Because we are completely loved, joyfully follow the one who loves us completely
  - “But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss **because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord**, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ and be found in him.” *Philippians 3:7-9*
  - **We are being invited deeper and deeper into God's love!**

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### *Application*

- Obey Jesus' call to joyful repentance in His love
  - **We are being invited deeper and deeper into God's love!**
    - **Are you hesitant to follow God's call to full obedience?**
    - **Are you afraid that His path will take away your joy?**
    - **There is no part in God that does not fully love us!**
    - **Everything that God asks us to do in following Him is an expression of His great love for us!**
    - **Every alternative to full obedience to Christ will turn out to be like garbage compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ, and being known by Him**

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### *Application*

#### **Give**

- ~~Receive~~ Jesus' love as a gift
  - **We are to love others with the love God gave us!**
  - Jesus said:
    - “ **Love your enemies,**  
**do good to those who hate you,**  
**bless those who curse you,**  
**pray for those who mistreat you.**” *Luke 6:27-28*
  - **Do you tell yourself that this person isn't worthy of love?**
  - **Do you feel like you can't love this person?**
  - **Do you fear that love is too risky?**
  - **Do you give in to the voices that say that love will make it worse?**

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### *Application*

#### **Invite others to...**

- Obey Jesus' call to joyful repentance in His love
  - “My brothers and sisters, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring that person back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of their way **will save them from death and cover over a multitude of sins.**” *James 5:19-20*

**Inviting people to joyful repentance  
is to invite them  
deeper and deeper into Jesus' love**

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### *The Big Idea*

**God loves first  
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**What is the first step for us to be in God's love?**

- **Accept the love that God has already given!**

**What is the journey deeper into God's love?**

- **To joyfully leave all else to follow Jesus!**

**What is the first step we are to make toward others?**

- **Love them with the love God has already given us!**

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