

The First Step with God

Luke 5:27-39

What is the first step...

in building a relationship with God?

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

Luke 5:27-39

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

Some things are gone forever: career

Some things transformed: relationship with resources

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

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

Instead: go to & love the unhealthy/"sinners"

PLUS call to repentance ☞ pursue health in Christ

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: 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!

The Big Idea

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

Romans 4:1-4

1 John 4:9-11

Romans 5:6-8

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"

We make others earn God's love

We make ourselves earn God's love

We judge ourselves for not being good enough



Application

Receive Jesus' love as a gift

"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

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

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!

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

Give 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?

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

Conclusion

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!

Reflection Questions

1. Why might that be?
2. Is it harder for you to forgive yourself, or to forgive other people?
3. Where in your life do you tend to prefer the “old wine” of trying to earn God's love? Why might that be?
4. What makes repentance (choosing Jesus' way rather than our own way) joy-filled? What about the times when it is a long and discouraging journey to become more like Jesus?
5. How are we to live like Jesus, loving people first while also calling them to joyful repentance? What is a relationship where you can do that this week?