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By [Bro. Bobot Apit](#)

When your neighbor stumbles through sin or ignorance, do you point the finger to criticize or do you lend a helping hand to lift him up?

YAHWEH EL SHADDAI, help me to look at my own sins first before i make the decision to criticize and condemn others of their wrong doing. Grant me the grace to be forgiven of my owns sins and in turn, help others to find their way back to you. In Jesus Name! Amen!

L uke 5:27-32 After this he went out, and saw a tax collector, named Levi, sitting at the tax office; and he said to him, "Follow me." (28)

And he left everything, and rose and followed him.

(29)

And Levi made him a great feast in his house; and there was a large company of tax collectors and others sitting at table with them.

(30)

And the Pharisees and their scribes murmured against his disciples, saying, "Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?"

(31)

And Jesus answered them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick;

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(32)

I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Meditation by Don Schwager

When your neighbor stumbles through sin or ignorance, do you point the finger to criticize or do you lend a helping hand to lift him up? The prophet Isaiah tells us that God repays in kind. When we bless others, especially those who need spiritual as well and physical help, God in turn blesses us.

When Jesus called a despised tax collector to be his disciple he surprised everyone including Levi (also known as Matthew). The religious leaders were especially upset with Jesus' behavior towards public sinners like Levi. People in Palestine were divided into roughly two groups: the Orthodox Jews who rigidly kept the law and all its petty regulations, and the rest who didn't keep all the minute regulations.

The Orthodox treated the latter like second class citizens. They scrupulously avoided their company, refused to do business with them, refused to give or receive anything from them, refused to intermarry, and avoided any form of entertainment with them, including table fellowship. Jesus' association with the latter, especially with tax collectors and sinners, shocked the sensibilities of these orthodox Jews.

When the Pharisees challenged Jesus unorthodox behavior in eating with public sinners, Jesus' defense was quite simple. A doctor doesn't need to

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treat healthy people; instead he goes to those who are sick. Jesus likewise sought out those in the greatest need. A true physician seeks healing of the whole person – body, mind, and spirit. Jesus came as the divine physician and good shepherd to care for his people and to restore them to wholeness of life.

The Orthodox Jews were so preoccupied with their own practice of religion that they neglected to help the very people who needed the greatest care. Their religion was selfish because they didn't want to have anything to do with people not like themselves.

Jesus stated his mission in unequivocal terms: I came not to call the righteous, but to call sinners. Ironically the Orthodox Jews were as needy as those they despised. All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

Do you thank the Lord for the great mercy he has shown to you? And do you seek the good of all your neighbors and show them mercy and kindness?

What does it mean to “leave all and follow the Lord”? Bede the Venerable, a 7th century church father comments on Matthew’s conversion to discipleship: “By ‘follow’ he meant not so much the movement of feet as of the heart, the carrying out of a way of life. For one who says that he lives in

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Christ ought himself to walk just as he walked, not to aim at earthly things, not to pursue perishable gains, but to flee base praise, to embrace willingly the contempt of all that is worldly for the sake of heavenly glory, to do good to all, to inflict injuries upon no one in bitterness, to suffer patiently those injuries that come to oneself, to ask God's forgiveness for those who oppress, never to seek one's own glory but always God's, and to uphold whatever helps one love heavenly things. This is what is meant by following Christ. In this way, disregarding earthly gains, Matthew attached himself to the band of followers of One who had no riches. For the Lord himself, who outwardly called Matthew by a word, inwardly bestowed upon him the gift of an invisible impulse so that he was able to follow." Are you ready to forsake all for Christ?

"Lord Jesus, our Savior, let us now come to you: Our hearts are cold; Lord, warm them with your selfless love. Our hearts are sinful; cleanse them with your precious blood. Our hearts are weak; strengthen them with your joyous Spirit. Our hearts are empty; fill them with your divine presence. Lord Jesus, our hearts are yours; possess them always and only for yourself." (***Prayer of Augustine***, 354-430) # # #

GOD BLESS US ALL!

O Theos Na Mas Evlogisi!

PRAY as if everything depended on **HIM**. **ACT** as if everything depended on **YOU**. – **Bobot Apit**

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