

Mingling with sinners

Nowadays, Christians go to discos, bars, parties, hang out at worldly events, and so on citing that we are in the world but not of the world and that Jesus was a friend of sinners and hung out with sinners all the time. However, there's a difference between finding excuses to be worldly, and mingling with sinners to be a witness to them.

Matthew 9:9-13

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.

¹⁰ While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. ¹¹ When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?"

¹² On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. ¹³ But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

1) The intention – to follow Jesus

- Matthew 9:9 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.
- Jesus approached Matthew with the intention of calling him to follow him
- Matthew was a tax collector – a despised profession in Israel at that time.
- Jesus put tax collectors and prostitutes in the same category
 - Matthew 21:31 Jesus said to them, "Truly I tell you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.
 - However, notice that he wasn't putting them in the same category to judge them, but to inform the religious people that they're entering the kingdom of God ahead of them.
 - Neither was this an indication that they could keep their lifestyles and enter the kingdom of God without repentance.
- Jesus didn't approach Matthew just to befriend him, but to call him to follow Him
- These days we hear about Christians hanging out with unbelievers, partying with them, and mingling with them in the way of becoming what they are without being or offering any testimony of Christ at all.
- Jesus approached Matthew with the intention of calling him to follow him.
 - He saved the woman caught in adultery and told her to go and sin no more
 - He went to Zacheus' house, not to ask for favours, but to bring salvation
- When we mingle with sinners i.e. non-believers, we do so with the intention of calling them to follow Jesus.
 - Let's not have the attitude of seeing how worldly we can be and can get away with
- Our primary intention is always to see the Kingdom of God advance in the lives of people.
 - That's what Jesus did. He came into this sinful world with the intention of ushering in His kingdom
 - He left us in this world to mingle with sinners with that same purpose.

2) The action – to mingle with sinners

- Matthew 9:10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples.
- Jesus didn't just call Matthew to follow him, He went to His house to have dinner with him and his friends – many tax collectors and sinners
- Besides his final and overall intention of calling sinners to Himself, Jesus was intentional in His actions to meet with sinners.
 - Although the Gospel writers often contrast the attitudes of the Teachers of the Law and the Pharisees to the tax collectors and sinners, everyone is a sinner. Some just think they are more righteous than others and are self-righteous.
- What Jesus could have done as a good Jew was to stay at home and go to the synagogue and back home again, so as not to pollute Himself with the sinful ways of the world.
- Although Jesus knew that everyone is a sinner, He still mingles with sinners in order to save sinners.
 - He ate with Matthew and His tax collector friends and other sinners
 - He ate with Zacheus, a tax collector
 - He allowed a prostitute to wash his feet with her tears and dry them with her hair
 - He ate with Teachers of the Law and Pharisees
 - He accepted a woman caught in adultery and didn't condemn her
 - He went to the home of a loose living Samaritan woman
- What about us? Do we stay in our holy huddle mingling only with Christians, only staying at home and going to church, or do we mix with the unbelievers with the intention of bring them to follow Jesus?
 - This doesn't mean only going to their homes for an outreach, but interacting with unbelievers as a way of life.
 - This means accepting their invitations to their functions
 - Having meals with them at their homes or inviting unbelievers to your homes for meals
- Whatever it is, we need to be intentional in our actions to connect with unbelievers in our ultimate intention of seeing them receive the gift of life in Jesus
- We have been left in this world for a purpose
 - John 17:15-18 My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth. As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.
 - We're in the world but not of the world
 - We are the salt and light of the world. We aren't here to enjoy the pleasures of the world.

3) The attitude – mercy

- Matthew 9:11-13 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."
- The opposition that Jesus got for mingling with sinners wasn't from wicked sinners, but from the religious fraternity
 - Many times our mingling with unbelievers in their homes, functions, and other places will draw criticism from religious people who frown upon doing such things.
 - Judgmentalism comes when we think that a person needs to just follow a set of rules and regulations to be right with God
 - If that were so then Christ died for nothing
- What Jesus focused on was mingling with sinners so that He could have mercy on them all, and that includes us
 - When we recognize the amount of mercy that we've received from God in our sinfulness, we will have more mercy on others in their sinfulness