

Daily Devotional, June 22, 2021 Casting a Line to the Outcast

Then Levi held a great banquet for Jesus at his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were eating with them. 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?" Luke 5:29-30

When we think about how we share Christ's love, we might give examples of how we take groceries to a family that is struggling financially, or maybe helping an older couple or widow out by mowing their lawn. It might even be a time we have gone on a church mission trip.

These things usually have something in common; they are safe. Stop and think a minute about the acts of love you've shown recently. How many of those have been for family members or members of the church? What about members of another church or individuals who don't attend church but are Christians? Ministering to those individuals is great, but it's safe. We don't run the risk of rejection. We can tell them how much God loves them without getting strange looks in return. Going to another city, another neighborhood or another country to minister is safe because those aren't people that you will run into frequently, if ever again. They don't know you and can't judge your life according to your claim of being a Christian.

What would it look like if we were to put safety and security aside and to take a larger risk? It could mean inviting that rather obnoxious co-worker to lunch. It might mean putting aside the traditional Thanksgiving dinner you normally share with family and close friends, in order to invite people who have no other place to go because they have been shunned from their families or have no family to be with.

Many times, we try and justify the distance we maintain from those who have different lifestyles from us, because we don't want to "promote" or "encourage" their behavior. There's a huge difference between endorsing a lifestyle and befriending someone. If you recall, Jesus hung out with the prostitutes and tax collectors (maybe we'd consider them similar to mafioso today?). Jesus didn't condone what they did or were prone to do. He didn't publicly denounce their behavior and humiliate them in public. Instead, He befriended them.

When we associate with people, we build relationships with them. When we have a relationship with them, we talk about life and have the opportunity to share the love of Christ with them.

How many non-Christians are a regular part of your life? Isn't it time to stop using justifications to allow you to feel safe? What person or groups of people has God put on your heart as you read this, that you need to find ways to associate with? If Jesus didn't see Himself as too good for them, then why should you? It's time to challenge ourselves. As you look around you at the many opportunities to reach out to the strangers surrounding you who need to know the experience of Christ's love, step outside of your comfort zone and allow yourself the freedom to be the image of Christ to those who really needs to see and experience Him in their lives today!

Prayer: Lord, please dwell within me. Transform me by Your holy presence, and as You come to me, help me to then become a missionary, by bringing You to others so that they may encounter the joy of Your presence. Make me a pure instrument, dear Lord, and use me to inspire all whom I encounter each day. Jesus, I trust in Your holy name. Amen.