

# You Are Picked!

*A 5-Day Devotional Bible Study for Children*

*Based on the story of Jesus calling Matthew, the tax collector*

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# Jesus Picks Surprising People

## KEY VERSE

"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." – Matthew 9:9

## Devotional

Imagine you are putting together the best baseball team ever. You would want the strongest hitters, the fastest runners, and the most talented players you could find, right? You would want the very best of the best! Most people think that way when they are building a team.

But Jesus was different. One day, Jesus was walking along and he saw a man named Matthew. Matthew was a tax collector, which meant he worked for the Roman Empire and he collected money from people. The problem was that Matthew was not always fair about it. He sometimes took extra money for himself, which made a lot of people very upset with him. Matthew was not exactly the most popular guy in town!

Yet Jesus looked right at Matthew and said two simple but powerful words: "Follow me." Just like that, Matthew got up and followed Jesus. Jesus did not wait for Matthew to be perfect. He did not wait for Matthew to earn it. He just picked him, right where he was, just as he was.

That tells us something amazing about Jesus. He does not choose people because they are the most talented or the most liked. He chooses people because of his love and mercy. And that same Jesus sees you today.

## Reflection Questions

1. Have you ever felt left out or like you were not picked for something? How did that feel?
2. Why do you think Jesus chose Matthew even though Matthew had made some bad choices?
3. What does it mean to you that Jesus would pick you, just as you are, right now?

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## Prayer

Dear God, thank you for being a God who picks surprising people. Thank you for looking at me and seeing someone worth choosing. Help me to follow you the way Matthew did, with a willing heart. In Jesus' name, Amen.

# Jesus Is Rooted in Mercy

## KEY VERSE

"For I desire mercy, not sacrifice, and acknowledgment of God rather than burnt offerings." — Hosea 6:6

## Devotional

Have you ever done something wrong and then felt really nervous about what was going to happen next? Maybe you broke something by accident or said something unkind, and you were not sure if you would be forgiven. That feeling in your stomach can be pretty uncomfortable!

When Jesus chose Matthew, he was showing everyone around him something very important about who God is. Jesus is rooted in mercy. The word "mercy" means showing kindness and forgiveness to someone even when they do not deserve it. Matthew had not been living a great life. He had taken advantage of people and made choices that hurt others. By every human rule, Matthew would not be on anyone's "pick first" list.

But mercy does not work by human rules. Mercy says, "I see your mistakes, and I choose to love you anyway." That is exactly what Jesus showed Matthew, and that is exactly what Jesus shows us. God's mercy is bigger than our biggest mess-ups. It is deeper than our worst days. Because of mercy, we always get another chance.

The religious leaders of Jesus' time were confused and even angry that Jesus would spend time with someone like Matthew. But Jesus reminded them that a doctor goes to people who are sick, not people who are already healthy. Jesus came for every one of us, especially when we feel broken or lost.

## Reflection Questions

1. What does mercy mean in your own words? Can you think of a time someone showed you mercy?
2. Why do you think it was surprising to people that Jesus was merciful to Matthew?
3. Is there someone in your life you could show mercy to this week? What would that look like?

## Prayer

Dear God, thank you for your mercy that is bigger than all my mistakes. Help me to receive your mercy with a grateful heart, and help me to show that same mercy to others around me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

# God's Love Chooses You

## KEY VERSE

"But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." — Romans 5:8

## Devotional

Think about your very favorite thing in the whole world. Maybe it is a pet, a favorite toy, or a best friend. Now imagine loving something or someone so much that you would do absolutely anything for them, even when they were not acting their best. That is a tiny glimpse of how much God loves you.

Today's verse is one of the most important verses in the entire Bible. It tells us that God did not wait until we had everything figured out to love us. God did not say, "Clean yourself up first, and then I will love you." Instead, God showed his love for us while we were still making mistakes, still getting things wrong, still falling short. Jesus came and picked us anyway, just like he picked Matthew.

This kind of love is different from anything we experience in the world. In the world, love sometimes feels like it has to be earned. You have to be nice enough, good enough, or talented enough to be loved. But God's love is not like that at all. It is a free gift, given to you simply because you are you, and because God made you and calls you his very own.

When Jesus said "Follow me" to Matthew, it was an act of love. It was God saying, "I see you. I know you. And I choose you." That same voice is speaking to you right now, today. You do not have to earn God's love. You already have it, completely and fully.

## Reflection Questions

1. Have you ever felt like you had to earn someone's love or approval? How did that make you feel?
2. What does it mean that God loved us "while we were still sinners"? Why is that so amazing?
3. How can knowing God loves you change the way you feel about yourself today?

## Prayer

Dear God, thank you for loving me before I even knew how to love you back. Help me to truly believe in my heart that your love is real and that it is for me. Remind me every day that I am chosen and loved. In Jesus' name, Amen.

# Baptism: God Claims You

## KEY VERSE

"You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased." – Luke 3:22

## Devotional

Have you ever written your name on something to show it belonged to you? Maybe you wrote your name in a book or on a water bottle so no one else would take it.

Writing your name on something is your way of saying, "This is mine. I claim this."

When Jesus was baptized, God spoke from heaven and said, "You are my Son, whom I love." God was claiming Jesus. And when you were baptized, something just as amazing happened. God claimed you! Through the waters of baptism, God put his name on you and said, "This one is mine. I love this child. This child belongs to me."

Baptism is not something you have to do to earn God's love. It is a gift. It is God reaching down and saying, "I pick you. I claim you. You are part of my family now." Just like Jesus picked Matthew to be part of his mission and his family, God picks each of us through baptism and brings us into his family, the church.

That is really good news! On days when you feel left out, when you feel like you do not fit in, or when you feel like nobody notices you, you can remember that the God of the whole universe has written his name on you. You belong to him. You are never alone, and you are always, always loved. That is a promise God keeps forever.

## Reflection Questions

1. Do you know when you were baptized? Ask a parent or family member to tell you the story of your baptism!
2. What does it mean to you that God "claims" you? How is that different from just saying God likes you?
3. When you feel left out or not good enough, what can you remember about what God said at your baptism?

## Prayer

Dear God, thank you for claiming me as your own through baptism. On the days I feel forgotten or small, help me to remember that you have put your name on me and that I belong to you. Thank you for making me part of your family. In Jesus' name, Amen.

# You Are Always Worthy to Be Picked

## KEY VERSE

"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession." — 1 Peter 2:9

## Devotional

We started this week talking about building a team. If you were picking players for a baseball team, you would probably want the very best players, the fastest, the strongest, the most skilled. But we learned something very different about how Jesus picks his team. Jesus does not pick based on talent or popularity or how perfect someone is. Jesus picks based on love and mercy.

Today's verse is like a big, warm hug from God. It says that you are chosen. Not maybe chosen. Not chosen if you are good enough. Chosen, full stop. You are a royal priesthood. You are holy. You are God's special possession. Those are not small words! The God who made every star in the sky, every ocean, every mountain, looks at you and says, "That one is special. That one is mine."

Matthew probably never thought someone like Jesus would pick someone like him. And maybe sometimes you feel that way too. Maybe you feel like you are not smart enough, or talented enough, or good enough. Maybe you have made mistakes you feel embarrassed about. But here is the beautiful truth that this whole week has been pointing to: because of Jesus, because of his mercy, because of his love, you are always worthy to be picked.

That is not something you earn. That is not something you can lose. It is a gift from a God who loves you completely, just as you are, right where you are. Go out this week knowing that you are on Jesus' team, and nothing can ever change that.

## Reflection Questions

1. What was your favorite thing you learned this week? Which day stood out to you the most?
2. How is God's way of picking people different from the way people in the world usually pick others?
3. Who is one person in your life you can tell this week that they are picked and loved by God?

## Prayer

Dear God, thank you for this week of learning about your love and mercy. Thank you for picking Matthew, and thank you for picking me. Help me to walk through every day knowing I am yours, that I am chosen, and that I am always worthy of your love. Help me to share that love with others so they can know they are picked too. Through Christ our Lord we pray, Amen.