

# Last One Picked

## Week 3 | The Despised Disciple Matthew

### BOTTOM LINE

With Jesus, our past mistakes cannot stop his present invitation to step into an unimaginable future.

### GOAL OF THE GROUP

We often think we have made so many mistakes that we have nothing to offer. God has an incredible plan for each one of us, no matter what we have done in the past and we will look at what that means through the lens of Matthew's story.

### SCRIPTURE

#### Luke 5:27-32

Matthew was a tax collector in a time when a tax collector was hated so much for selling out to Rome, they were common targets of violence from Jewish zealot assassins. They chose money over their family and nation, and were ostracized, isolated, and excommunicated from the Jewish community as a result. However, the skills required to be a successful tax collector involved speaking multiple languages, a high proficiency in math as currency needed to be calculated on the fly, and also a level of courage and boldness that could demand exorbitant payments with no legal rationale. Jesus saw something in this despised man, and when Jesus called him to follow, Matthew left everything behind and followed Jesus for the rest of his life.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share: Have you ever looked back on a really bad decision and felt disqualified by it? Have you ever felt unworthy of forgiveness? Share your thoughts with the group.
2. **Read Luke 5:27-32 and Discuss:** Being a tax collector labeled Matthew as a dishonest person who abused authority, and a person of low status in the Roman world. However, successful tax collectors could be very wealthy and have a vast social circle of similar sellouts. You needed to be absolutely brilliant, fearless, and totally committed to your job to survive.
  - a. Imagine picking a career that would ostracize, isolate, and separate you from your family, friends, and neighbors for the rest of your life. What could cause you to this?
  - b. Who do you know who has chosen a similar path? What characteristics of this person's example do you want to mimic in your own life? What characteristics do you not want to mimic?
  - c. Do you believe second chances are only for those with minor bad decisions or offenses? Why?
3. Being chosen to be the disciple of a rabbi was a rare honor afforded to the select few deemed smart enough and had worked hard enough. Jesus invites the least likely, most hated, rejected, dismissed, unclean person imaginable in Jewish society to follow Him. The same call that every Jewish boy longs to hear someday, Jesus speaks directly to the most disgusting man in that town!
  - a. Why did Jesus choose a man who didn't deserve or qualify for the job?
  - b. The call of Matthew was sudden, and his decision to follow was instant. Have you ever been given an unexpected second chance? Did you take it?
  - c. What barriers can get in the way of taking a second chance?
4. Out of brokenness we can be repurposed. God invites us to follow Him. Has there been a time in your life that God was trying to grab your attention and call you to follow Him into an unimaginable future? What did it look like?
5. After Matthew's decision to follow Jesus, he threw a celebration and invited all his old friends. Why would Matthew continue associating with the people from his "old life"?
6. How has God used an area where you have felt hurt, shame, or isolation to impact others?

Will you continue to allow your past mistakes to define you? Jesus is inviting you today – the offer for you is the same as the one He made Matthew.



### TRY THIS

*We can fall into a trap and believe we've made too many mistakes and have nothing to offer. These lies prevent us from seeing what incredible plan God has for each of us. Pray about laying down your old life and picking up the new life promised to you. Ask God to help you bring Jesus into your relationships with family and friends. Listen for Him to speak and write down your thoughts, feelings, nudges, coincidences, images, songs, words from others, etc (these are all ways He can speak to us), in your journal.*

# Last One Picked

## Week 2 | The Petrified Warrior: Gideon

### BOTTOM LINE

God isn't threatened or hurt by our doubts. He welcomes them and meets us in the middle of them.

### GOAL OF THE GROUP

Do you ever struggle with doubt and uncertainty? God isn't looking for people who have everything together. In the story of Gideon, God chose someone with deep issues with fear, insecurity, doubt, and shame to be the hero. We will look at how God welcomes our doubt and uncertainties, and waits patiently until we are ready to engage with what He has called us to do.

### SCRIPTURE

**Judges 6:11-40** | Gideon lived in fear of the Midianites, fear that God had abandoned his people, and fear for his future. Fear gripped Gideon so hard that it produced deep doubt and uncertainty towards God and His plan. When God invited Gideon to lead the attack on the Midianites, Gideon's response was full of insecurity, doubt, and shame. Instead of rejecting Gideon, or even scolding him for his doubt and fear, God met him in the middle of his doubt and fear.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **Share:** Have you ever found yourself with a chance to do something meaningful, only to shrivel up in fear and doubt when the moment arrived? Share the story with the group and/or how you felt after not acting.
2. We all have moments when we feel like we "don't have what it takes". In addition to fear and doubt, what other insecurities overwhelm us in these moments?
3. After years in slavery, Moses led the Israelites to freedom, however, after Moses death the Israelites turned away from God and worshipped false gods. God wanted to get their attention. He allowed the Midianites and other foreign raiders to plunder the Israelite's crops for seven consecutive years at harvest time. **Read Judges 6:11-18.** Gideon wants to make sure God knows who he is talking to, but the promise of God's presence is more than enough to accomplish the task. Do you think God was displeased when Gideon expressed his doubts? Why or why not?
4. **Read Judges 6:19-24.** Can you think of a time in your life when you asked God to give you a sign? What did you ask God to show you?
5. **Read Judges 6:25-32.** Most scholars believe that Gideon's father, Joash, was a priest of Baal and had a level of authority and influence over the altar and Asherah pole that God asked Gideon to destroy. Why did God ask Gideon to destroy these?
6. **Read Judges 6:33-40.** Gideon moves from hiding in a winepress while trying to thresh wheat to leading 32,000 soldiers, but he lets the enormity of the task overwhelm him. He tests God again.
  - a. Do you think Gideon's problem is believing that God always fulfills his word? Why or why not?
  - b. Could Gideon's request be a sign of unbelief? Why or why not?
7. God didn't scold or rebuke Gideon for his doubts and fears. God simply gave Gideon what he needed to find peace in this difficult calling. How can we find peace and strength in God's response? How does this translate to your own life?
8. **Read Judges 7** to finish the story. The bigger point of God's battle plan is made plain in Judges 7:2. God wanted everyone to know that HE ALONE WON THE BATTLE. God wants to use people like Gideon who are willing to obey and follow Him to shock the world. How could God use you like he used Gideon?

God loves to use the least likely people to do the most unbelievable things!



## TRY THIS

*God isn't looking for perfect people. He doesn't particularly care if your theology is systematic and ironclad. He is ok with the mess. God uses Gideon to shock the world, and His people were saved and set free. Bring your doubts. Bring your uncertainty. Bring your fear. Will you let God meet you in the middle of them? Pray and ask God to use YOU to do something epic for His kingdom, possibly even before you have worked out your doubts and fear. Listen for Him to speak and write down your thoughts, feelings, nudges, coincidences, images, songs, words from others, etc (these are all ways He can speak to us), in your journal.*

# Last One Picked

## Week 1 | The Stuttering Spokesman: Moses

### BOTTOM LINE

God presses into our greatest insecurity and transforms us through His power.

### GOAL OF THE GROUP

When we don't feel worthy or able to serve God because of our weaknesses, we find that God understands our weaknesses and pulls us close to Him. Just like he did with Moses, God loves to press into our deepest wounds and insecurities only to use them to transform us and give us a new identity.

### SCRIPTURE

Exodus 4:10-13

Moses had been living as a fugitive from the law for 40 years after killing someone in Egypt, and he was in no hurry to return and face the music. He was wracked with guilt, fear and had developed a speech impediment, yet, God saw something in Moses that no one else saw.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Share: Have you ever found yourself in a position you were not looking for? Think about something positive. Perhaps you gained a position of influence or opportunity to mentor an individual. Share with the group.
2. **Read Exodus 4:10-13 and Discuss.** God saw the man that was going to lead an entire nation out of slavery and into freedom. Moses saw his failures and weaknesses as things that disqualified him from serving God, and yet God saw his background and weaknesses as part of Moses' preparation to be one of the greatest leaders in human history.
  - a. What do you consider to be characteristics of a good leader? Does your list align with God's list?
  - b. Moses protests in Exodus 4 several times. Moses being a poor speaker is beside the point because God created the most eloquent mouths who ever lived. Does Moses really think God made a mistake here?
  - c. In verse 11 we see the power of God revealed in the context of an invitation to trust Him. How does this make it easier to work with God when we are called to do something we are insecure about?
  - d. In verses 12-13 Moses declares the real state of his heart. Simply, he would much rather that God send someone else. Do you think his problem is not a lack of ability, but a lack of willingness? Why or why not?
3. Interestingly, God does not correct Moses' speech difficulties. Instead, He worked in and through Moses human impediments. **Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.** Why does God want to use our weakness, brokenness, suffering, pain, shame, mistakes, deformities, and disabilities to accomplish powerful things?
4. Throughout history God has used unqualified people to do great things. But this is not God making the best of the "last one's picked," but rather His top choices to change the world! Considering this, what is one weakness that you could begin to see as an opportunity to accomplish powerful things?
5. How much more do we need God to get through times of hurting? Do you think it is coincidence when we are called to step into our deepest insecurity and disability?

God's purpose and plan for our lives does not succeed **in spite of** our disabilities and limitations, His purpose and plan for our lives succeeds **because of** our disabilities and limitations.



## TRY THIS

God gives us these promises: **I chose you. I designed you. I have a purpose for you. You are not alone – I am with you.** What purpose and plan does God have for your life? Spend time in prayer each day this week asking God this very question. Listen for Him to speak and write down your thoughts, feelings, nudges, coincidences, images, songs, words from others, etc (these are all ways He can speak to us), in your journal.