

Outline

Me and My Gang People God Loves

Who do you think Jesus would hang with if He were physically walking on the earth today?

- Not us, if we were really honest about our thoughts on this matter
- Probably Barak Obama, the most powerful leader in the free world
- Or the pastors of some of the mega churches or the Pope
- Don't forget the influential entertainers like Oprah or Bono!
- We think He would hang with them because they could do a great job of setting His agenda right in this world

I think the evidence suggests otherwise – I think He would probably live out the Rascal Flatts song – *Me and My Gang*

- It would be a whole different set of people than most of us think – and it would include you – even though down deep in your heart you do not think so.
- When you take a look at the people who were closest to Jesus, it was a group that more closely resembled the Rascal Flatts group than the group I already mentioned:
- [It's a brother and a sister kinda thang. Raise up your hands if you all wanna hang with Me and my gang! We got hippies, gypsies, freaks and geeks High class women in Daisy Duke denim Bangin' on gongs and singin' our songs Dude named Elrod jammin' on an iPod – Me and My Gang! Lyrics to Me and My Gang by Rascal Flatts](#)
- The people Jesus chose to hang with looked and acted very similar to some people with whom you are very familiar: me and you and the person sitting next to you.

One of the first disciples that Jesus asked to be part of His gang was a Crooked CPA by the name of Matthew, very fitting in these questionable economic times.

- One of the least likely that a religious teacher would ask to be a part of his mentoring group because he was hated by all people because he was a Jew who had bought a tax franchise from the Roman emperor and then extorted money from the people of Israel to feed the Roman coffers and to pad their own pockets.
- Tax collectors usually were surrounded by thugs who helped get the money out of the people – like a loan shark with a Vinny who could break your thumbs.
- They were despicable, vile, unprincipled scoundrels.

Yet this is exactly who Jesus is attracted to in creating His gang.

[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 NIV](#)

Why would Matthew just get up and leave his tax franchise and follow Jesus?

- This was an irreversible move, for there would be many money-grubbers who would take it over.
- He would have lost all his profit and may have been in trouble with Rome.
- However, he would have known about Jesus for Jesus had been building up quite a rep and the tax collector's booths would have been in the well traveled places.
- He knew that the religious leaders despised him and would have nothing to do with him.
- So when Jesus stopped and talked to him, it would have surprised him, shocked him. But to have Jesus ask him to be a disciple of His would have floored him even more.
- Matthew's heart was corrupt and all the guilt and shame that went with that would have been confronted with Jesus' invitation to join Him. So he left.
- But he did not just leave, he invited Jesus to come meet his friends and threw a party for Jesus: [While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and 'sinners' came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and 'sinners'?" Matthew 9:10,11 NIV](#)
- Interestingly enough Jesus has room for us sinners right where we are, but the religious often do not. For them we have to clean up, repent, get straight, stop sleeping around, get respectable.

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Which begs the question: Who is qualified to be in Jesus' Gang?

- Matthew, the crooked CPA, who Jesus accepted right where he was – Jesus did not tell Matthew to do a thing to change. He just said – “Follow me.” Hang with me.
- Jesus tells us the same today – Follow me – we'll worry about anything that is hurting you later. I accept you just the way you are.

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.'" Matthew 9:12,13 NIV

So what does God's Crooked CPA Gang member teach us?

1. **I don't have to change anything to be accepted by God – Just follow Him.**
2. **God has already forgiven me for any mistake that I have made or will make.**

So how should that affect how I live?

1. **Quit feeling so guilty.**
2. **Quit thinking that God expects so much from you.**
3. **Quit making other people feel so guilty – they are God's to work on.**
4. **Quit thinking you are healthy – God doesn't let healthy people in His Gang.**

Theme: God's grace is extended to all who will recognize that they need it and cannot earn it.

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