

SPEAKER BRIEF 2

Message:

“Jesus came to help those who are lost and alone find their place with him.”

Lived-experience of young people:

- Almost a quarter of young people say they are lonely “most of the time”. When young people feel alone, they can become isolated and withdraw from the ‘outside world’.
- Young people can struggle to make connections with others. Perhaps they recently moved schools, don’t know anyone, have been bullied, or feel anxious and uncomfortable when starting conversations. Maybe they don’t fit in or feel different from other young people.
- When young people struggle to form connections with friendship groups, family members, and communities, they can feel isolated. Rejection or exclusion can make young people feel like no one understands or likes them.
- Young people can make mistakes. Adults can reject or abandon young people when they make mistakes. Institutions, like schools or social services, can label young people as ‘problems’, ‘failures’, or ‘too hard’. When young people are rejected by adults and institutions, they can feel worthless, isolated, and abandoned at a time when they need support the most.
- When young people don’t feel accepted and included by others, they can withdraw themselves from the world. They can become lost and think there is no place for them.

Personal reflection questions:

- Was there ever a time when you were a teenager when you struggled to connect and felt lonely? What happened?
- When you were a teenager, did you ever make a mistake that left you isolated or excluded?
- How did you respond when you felt lost and alone?

Scripture: Matthew 9:9-13

⁹As Jesus was walking along, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at his tax collector’s booth. “Follow me and be my disciple,” Jesus said to him. So, Matthew got up and followed him. ¹⁰Later, Matthew invited Jesus and his disciples to his home as dinner guests, along with many tax collectors and other disreputable sinners.

¹¹But when the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with such scum?”

¹²When Jesus heard this, he said, “Healthy people don’t need a doctor—sick people do.”

¹³Then he added, “Now go and learn the meaning of this Scripture: ‘I want you to show mercy, not offer sacrifices.’ For I have come to call not those who think they are righteous, but those who know they are sinners.”

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Scripture points:

- Matthew was a tax collector. In Jesus' time, this meant that he collected money from his own people (Jewish people) for the Roman rulers. Because of this, Matthew was excluded and despised by the Romans for being Jewish and by his own people for helping the Romans oppress the Jewish people.
- Considering his role within the community, it's unlikely that anyone important in the town would've wanted to hang out with Matthew. So, when Jesus connects with Matthew and goes to his house, the people of the town were surprised and outraged.
- When Jesus invites Matthew to follow him, Matthew extends the invitation to his friends, who were also outcasts. He doesn't keep Jesus for himself but wants more people to be transformed, too.
- When Jesus is questioned about why he is a friend of sinners, Jesus explains his purpose: to help those who are lost find their place with him.

Personal reflection questions:

- Have you ever felt alone or like an outcast? What happened?
- Jesus seeks out and accepts those who are lost and alone. How has Jesus accepted you?
- Jesus transformed Matthew's life. How has Jesus transformed your life?

The Good News message:

"We all want to feel connected to others, but sometimes we struggle to make these connections. We can feel disconnected from our peers, abandoned by adults, and outcasts at school. This can leave us feeling isolated and alone like no one is there for us. The Good News is that Jesus accepts us. **When we are lost, alone, or an outcast in our community, Jesus sees us and connects with us.** Just like Matthew, we are no longer lost when we find our place with Jesus.

Personal reflection questions:

- For young people who aren't followers of Jesus, this message is an invitation. Jesus loves them. If they feel lost, alone or like an outcast, there is someone who cares for them, accepts them, and has a place for them that they are invited to.
 - For young people who are followers of Jesus and may be struggling with feeling alone or disconnected, this is a message of encouragement and an invitation to join a community of people who will encourage and love them, too.
- For young people who may not feel lost or alone, this message is a reminder that they probably have friends who are. They can be like Jesus for their friends by reaching out to them and accepting them.

Discussion Questions:

- Have you ever felt alone or like an outcast? What happened?
- Jesus seeks out and accepts those who are lost and alone. How has Jesus accepted you?
- Jesus transformed Matthew's life. How has Jesus transformed your life?

