

### Fakers or Followers Week 3 - Message Outline

**MAIN IDEA:** Fakers pretend to be healthy. Followers admit they're sick.

**TEACHING TEXT:** <sup>12</sup> On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. <sup>13</sup> 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

<sup>8</sup> If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. <sup>1</sup> John 1:8-9 NIV

**WHAT DO WE WANT STUDENTS TO KNOW?** Jesus does not run from sinners, scoundrels, and scumbags. He chases after them. And that's really good news. Because that means He is always chasing after us. So, instead of trying to hide from Him, the best thing we can do is honestly confess the things we've done wrong and the things that are wrong with us. That's where we find the forgiveness and healing we need to be made whole.

**WHAT DO WE WANT STUDENTS TO FEEL?** Hopeful that no matter what they've thought, said, or done, they are not too bad for Jesus to forgive. Confident that Jesus will meet their humble honesty with His grace and mercy.

**WHAT DO WE WANT STUDENTS TO DO?** Confess their sins, even when it's scary.

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### THE OUTLINE

**TENSION:** Today, we're talking about one of the greatest fears that plagues us as human beings, and prevents us from living out our God-given purpose, and, more importantly, we're going to learn how the Good News of Jesus pushes out our fear and replaces it with love.

Growing up, my family moved quite a bit. Never stayed at the same school for long. And, every time we moved, the same fear reared its ugly head. The fear of rejection. When I show up to this new school, will I make friends? Will people like me? Will I find a place to belong? Where will I sit at lunch? And oh dear Lord, please tell me I won't get picked last in PE! The fears that haunt us when we're getting ready to do a new thing in a new place. Can anyone relate?

Why are these fears soooo real for so many people? Science says it's because our brains are wired to respond to social rejection in a very similar way to how we experience physical pain. According to the APA... **Social Rejection Increases:** Anger, anxiety, depression, jealousy, and sadness. **Social Rejection Decreases:** performance, focus, sleep quality, happiness, and physical health. The author of one article put it this way: "As far as your brain is concerned, a broken heart is not so different from a broken arm." American Psychological Association

And this lines up perfectly with what Scripture teaches. At the very beginning of the Bible, in the book of Genesis, we are told two really important things about human beings:

- **We are made in God's image. (Genesis 1:26-27)**
- **We are not made to be alone. (Genesis 2:18)**

Whether you believe it or not, you were created in the image of a relational God who, at His very core, is love. You were made to belong to Him and be a part of His family. A family where your "acceptance" is not based on performance or presentation. It's based on the forgiveness that God has offered to us through Jesus! This is why the Gospel is such Good News! The life you were made for, the life that you long for, isn't something you have to earn or achieve. It's something you receive when you believe in Jesus.

But, there's a problem. Our fear of rejection drives us to hide who we really are from God and from the very people He has placed in our lives to show us the love and acceptance we crave. As a result, we pretend to be someone we're not. We present an image. Because we're afraid that if people knew the real us, there's no way they would accept us. Here's the thing, *the image might fool everyone else, but it doesn't fool Jesus. The image may attract some people, but it doesn't attract Jesus. Why? Because He didn't come to save your image. He came to save you.* And, if you let Him, Jesus will help you tear down the image you're presenting to the world, and replace it with the love and acceptance you were created for. **Let's pray.**

**TRUTH:** We are in a message series called *Fakers or Followers*, where we are learning together how to become fully devoted followers of Jesus, and how to avoid the trap so many people fall into: becoming a half-hearted faker held back by fear and insecurity. Last week, we looked at the life of Peter, a friend and follower of Jesus, to learn how to **Becoming Fearless** → **Choosing Faith** → **Falling Short** → **Receiving Forgiveness** → **(Repeat)**.

This week, we are going to look at the calling of Matthew, a reject and an outcast, who became a follower of Jesus. Why? So that we can learn from the religious leaders what not to do. Because in their efforts to honor God, they missed the very heart of God. If you're taking notes, the big idea is: **Fakers pretend to be healthy. Followers admit they're sick.** Starting in v9...

9 As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. Jesus is doing what He always does. Not waiting for Matthew to come to Him, but going to where he is. This is a big deal because tax collectors were viewed as the lowest of the low and the worst of the worst. They would rip off their friends, family, and neighbors to prop themselves and the Roman Empire up. Jesus still says, "Follow me," he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. 10 While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. Matthew is so excited that he invites all of his friends, tax collectors and sinners, to celebrate! 11 When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" The Pharisees were the spiritual elite of their day. Their name means "separated ones." In their pursuit of holiness and righteousness, they did everything they could to separate themselves from sinful things and sinful people. So, when Jesus calls a tax collector to be His disciple, and then goes to a party full of sinful people, the Pharisees have lots of questions. So, Jesus tries to help them see what they're missing. 12 On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who

need a doctor, but the sick. 13 But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners." Matthew 9:9-13 NIV

Healthy people don't need a doctor. Sick people do. That's why Jesus came. To save sinners and bring them into the family of God. Matthew was a sinner, so were all his friends, and everybody knew it. They knew it. Jesus knew it. The Pharisees knew it. And Jesus showed them mercy. Forgiveness that they didn't deserve. And that's a beautiful display of God's love that many of us need to hear. That no sin we commit is too big or gross or bad for God's grace to overcome.

But, what about when the sins that keep us sick aren't as big or obvious? What about when the broken things inside of us are sneakier, more subtle, and easier to hide? This was the problem with the Pharisees. The sinners knew it, Jesus knew it, and, most likely, the Pharisees knew it. Their robes and their hands were spotless, but their hearts were not.

27 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. 28 In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness..." Matthew 23:27-28 NIV

**Fakers pretend to be healthy. Followers admit they're sick.** When I first became a Christian, I knew, very clearly, that I was a sinner who desperately needed the mercy of God. And, after committing my life to Jesus, I committed to become the person God made me to be. Before I met Jesus, I was selfish, angry, arrogant, and violent. I took my friends and family for granted. I was addicted to pornography. And I objectified women. But, as I grew in my faith, my life started to change. I became less of who I used to be, and more of who I was made to be. And that was really exciting! But at some point, I started to take pride in the fact that my life was a lot less messy than a lot of other peoples'. To the point that, I became less and less reliant on God's mercy. I foolishly believed that my growth and development was a result of my "sacrifice", not God's "mercy." And so, like the Pharisees, I started to look down on people who weren't as "holy" as I was. Do you see it? I traded one sin for another. I traded a porn addiction for pride. I traded taking my friends and family for granted for judging people whose sins were more visible than mine. I thought I was healthy because, on the outside, my life looked clean. But, on the inside, I was a mess. I was sick. And I still needed Jesus to heal me.

**APPLICATION:** And some of you are like me. You believe in Jesus and really want to honor Him with your life. But, at some point along the way, you've become convinced that holiness is something to be achieved through our sacrifice rather than it being something we receive through God's mercy. If that's where you find yourself, what do you do? How do we avoid the trap the Pharisees fell into and actually become a more fully devoted follower of Christ? **Fakers pretend to be healthy. Followers admit they're sick.** John, a disciple of Jesus, writes this:

... God is light; in him there is no darkness at all. (God is holy. Totally pure. No sin or darkness in Him.) 6 If we claim to have fellowship with him and yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not

live out the truth. (You can't be in the light and in the dark at the same time. You're either with God in the light, or you're apart from Him and in the dark.) 7 But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. (The blood of Jesus, the mercy God has offered through His sacrifice, not ours, is what purifies us, heals us, and makes us whole.) 8 If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. (We are all sinners. Our sin may not all look the same, but we are all sick, and we need healing.) 9 If we confess our sins (If we honestly admit that we've gotten it wrong, that we've dishonored God and hurt others) he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (Confession leads to healing, forgiveness, and holiness.) 10 If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us. 1 John 1:5-10 NIV

How do we get healthy? **Walk in the Light: 1. Admit when you get it wrong. 2. Commit to do what's right.** That's where you find God. And that's where you find the mercy and acceptance you were made to have. That's where the blood of Jesus, the forgiveness of God, washes over our sins and brokenness, and makes us clean. **DARK→LIGHT.** It breaks my heart to think about how many of you are living in the dark, but claiming to be in the light. And as a result, instead of actually experiencing the mercy and forgiveness that Jesus offers, you're held captive by shame and fear. Let today be the day you step out of the dark and **STEP INTO THE LIGHT.** Admit that you're insecure and you are crippled by the fear of rejection. Admit that you're struggling with lust and no matter how hard you try you can't break free. Admit you're a jerk and, if people can't add value to you, then you don't even bother being kind to them. Admit that when you're not at church or at home you cuss like a sailor. **STOP PRETENDING.** Because claiming to walk in the light when you're really in the dark isn't helping anyone. It's only causing harm.

And then, once you've been honest with God, yourself, and others about the ways you've gotten it wrong, commit to do what's right! Do the stuff that God asks you to do. Live in the light! This is how we move from faker to follower, from empty faith, to a full life. So, when we get to our Switch Groups, these are the questions I want you to answer: **What wrong thing do you need to confess? What right thing do you need to start doing?**

**CONCLUSION:** And listen, I get it. If you've never actually done this before, said out loud who you really are and the ways you've disobeyed God or hurt other people, it's terrifying. But I promise you, it's worth it. Because until you're willing to be honest about who you really are, until you let go of the image you're pretending to be, you will never actually experience the acceptance, love, and healing you need. So, do the small thing that scares you. Don't let fear hold you captive. This is how we... **Becoming Fearless → Choosing Faith → Falling Short → Receiving Forgiveness.** Reject fear. Choose faith. Become fully devoted. Let's pray.