



17: ALICE COOPER AT A CANADIAN KOREAN CONVENIENCE STORE (Luke 5:27-32)

I didn't grow up in the Church, I grew up agnostic.

My Mom grew up strict, Vatican I, Latin Mass Old School Czechoslovakian Catholic. Though always having a respect for the tradition, she stopped practicing her faith in her twenties. My Dad grew up fundamentalist, KJV only, no instrumental music, you have to be full-immersion water baptized to be saved, Church of Christ. He rejected that Church and became a hippie agnostic throughout the late sixties and early seventies.

So my parents raised me on New Age ideals, Beatles music, Joni Mitchell, a combo of 60's hippie ideals and 80's consumerism, and general morality and ethics. They always told me to look out for Christians, because many of them were fakes and phonies. My parents taught me that most, if not all Christians were out to brainwash people and rob them of their money and sanity.

My parents were unfortunately right about some "Christians" in this assessment! I learned later that there were two types of Christians- unrepentant hypocrites, and repentant hypocrites. But that's a whole other topic. Back to my upbringing...

In High School I partied. I smoked a lot of weed and took a lot of acid. I grew my hair long, played guitar, and wrote poetry. I lived a hedonistic lifestyle.

So when I first started to encounter Jesus and His people I certainly didn't look like your typical 1990's Ned Flanders Evangelical!

But nonetheless- despite my appearance, despite my crazy sins and behaviors, God was working powerfully in my life.

There have been many people that don't appear like they'd ever stereotypically "follow Jesus", and then God gets a hold of them!

Alice Cooper (born Vincent Damon Furnier; February 4, 1948) is an American rock singer whose career spans over five decades. With a raspy voice and a stage show that features numerous props and stage illusions, including pyrotechnics, guillotines, electric chairs, fake blood, reptiles, baby dolls, and dueling swords, Cooper is considered by many music journalists and peers to be "The Godfather of Shock Rock". He has drawn equally from horror films, vaudeville, and garage rock to pioneer a macabre and theatrical brand of rock designed to shock audiences.¹



Now I don't think that most followers of Christ would have taken a look at Alice Cooper and thought to themselves- "hey man, this dude is going to make a wonderful follower of Jesus someday!" I don't think Alice Cooper himself would have thought that!

But nonetheless, Cooper one day found himself using cocaine alone in his room at the height of his dysfunction.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice_Cooper

“He was snorting it, and he looked in the mirror, and he said, ‘I saw blood coming out of my eyes. I don’t know if it was a hallucination or if it was really happening, but all I knew was I was going to die.’”

At that moment, Cooper “called out to God,” and his entire life changed.

“He got off drugs, he reunited with his wife, and he’s been clean and sober for over 30 years,” “He gets up every morning, and he reads his Bible. ... He even gave a Bible to Marilyn Manson.”²

God loves to infiltrate the lives of seemingly messed up, wild, broken, lost people! He loves to meet them where they’re at and clean them up bit by bit, tame them in a beautiful way bit by bit without letting them lose their passion and edge, heal them, and ultimately find them and lead them to true relationship with Himself through Jesus!

And this is why I love Luke 5:27-32 and Jesus’ call of Levi!

Continuing a theme from the birth narratives, this account of Levi’s calling as a disciple identified Jesus with the marginalized. Jesus’ association with those on the fringes of Jewish society was part of His overall mission (see 4:17). Compare Matt 9:9–13 & Mark 2:13–17.³

27 After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, “Follow me.” 28 So, leaving everything behind, he got up and began to follow him. (Luke 5:27-28)

“Levi” was another name for “Matthew” (compare Matt 9:9), one of Jesus’ 12 disciples and author of the Gospel of Matthew.⁴ Levi was a tax collector. Being a “tax collector” in this context was a profession associated with corruption, greed, and sin.⁵ Luke did not mention Levi’s specific duties as a tax collector. But his position certainly alienated him from the religious community of his day (Luke 5:29–31). He was seen as one who betrayed his nation for material gain, for tax collectors gathered money from the Jews to give to the Romans, who were Gentiles, who then did not have to work (3:12–13).

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<https://www2.cbn.com/news/news/i-saw-blood-coming-out-my-eyes-alice-coopers-incredible-transformati-on-drugs-jesus>

³ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Lk 5:27–32). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁴ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Lk 5:27). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

⁵ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Lk 5:27). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Seemingly Levi would've been an unlikely candidate for a disciple of the One who claimed to be the Messiah.⁶ But Jesus loved to jump into unlikely people's lives and do amazing work of transformation and change! That's so much of what the ministry of Christ was all about!

And what did Jesus ask Levi? Did Jesus ask Levi to convert and "believe in Christ in his heart"? Did Jesus ask Levi to start reading papyrus scroll scriptures of the Old Testament and get his doctrine straight? Did Jesus ask Levi to get his morality lined up with his politics and the right political party? Did Jesus ask Levi to get some justice and empathy in his life and start doing good deeds? No. Jesus said "Follow me". It was an invitation to discipleship.⁷ Levi was where he was at, Jesus met Him right there, and basically said, "yo- give it all up and follow me fully."

In 1973, Hard Rock band Deep Purple's lead singer Ian Gillan left the band. Did they ask David Coverdale to become their fan? Buy all their albums? Memorize all their lyrics? Become a groupie? No. They asked David Coverdale to be their new lead singer.

Jesus asked Levi to get in the game and get on the mic. Jesus asked Levi to add to the music of the Kingdom of God. Jesus is asking all people who claim to follow Him to get in the game, get on the mic, and add to the music. He's not saying that people should just attend Church, give money to the Church and work of the Kingdom, volunteer to build the Church and build the Kingdom, be in a DNA Discipleship group, read their bibles regularly, develop a prayer life, get to intimately know the Holy Spirit, and tell people about Him. He's saying for us to "follow Him"! And when we follow Him, we'll do all these things and probably way more as we're compelled by the Spirit to live our whole lives for Him.

If we want marriages to flourish both spouses need Him, if we want our kids to flourish they need to follow Him based on the example of their parents following Him. If we want addictions broken we gotta follow Him. If we want hopelessness ceasing we gotta follow Him, if we want to come out of isolation we gotta follow Him, if we want to become generous we gotta follow Him!

And what did Levi do after Jesus called him to follow Him?

29 Then Levi hosted a grand banquet for him at his house. Now there was a large crowd of tax collectors and others who were reclining at the table with them. 30 But the

⁶ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Luke](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, pp. 217–218). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁷ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Lk 5:27). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Pharisees and their scribes were complaining to his disciples, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” (Luke 5:29-30)

Levi must have been a wealthy man, for a great banquet was prepared at his house and many guests were invited, including a large crowd of tax collectors.⁸ Not only was Jesus associating with these homies of Levi to whom the Pharisees objected, but He also was eating and drinking with them. Eating and drinking with others denoted a fellowship or camaraderie with them.⁹

Big point? When you truly encounter Jesus, it's not enough to follow him. You want others to know the joy of following him too.¹⁰ Levi had been deeply impacted by Jesus, and wanted to expose others to Him.

Now me and my wife love this show called “Kim’s Convenience” on Netflix. It’s hilarious. We gobbled up every episode in the five seasons that it ran, and were super disappointed when we finished them all. Me and her get a chance to watch TV together after our youngest daughter Madi gets to bed for like an hour. We could usually fit in a few episodes of Kim’s Convenience! I think we’ll even potentially watch the whole series again! It was that good!

So I got all amped up on Kim’s Convenience, and I told other people about it! I was dropping it in convos whenever someone started talking about TV shows they liked, especially about comedy shows!

So why in the world would I, a Christ follower... Someone who got rescued from death to life, from sin to salvation, from hell to heaven, from purposeless to purpose, from despair to joy, from greed to generosity, from selfishness to Godwardness, be all amped about some Netflix show and not be all amped to tell people about Jesus Christ?

Didn’t Paul the apostle himself write these verses?:

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes (Romans 1:16)

Don’t be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, or of me his prisoner. Instead, share in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God. (2 Tim. 1:8)

⁸ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Luke](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 218). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁹ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Luke](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 218). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

¹⁰ CSB Tony Evans Study Bible Copyright © 2017 by Holman Bible Publishers.

I wanna be more like Paul! I wanna be more like Levi! I wanna get people connected to Jesus somehow. I wanna get them in the orbit of Jesus somehow! I wanna get them over for dinner to build relationship! I wanna mow their lawn! (Well- not really...) I wanna feed their dog! I wanna text them an encouragement! I wanna get them a little present! I wanna blow their leaves with my leaf blower! I wanna throw a cookout and have them over! I wanna meet a need for em! And if or when I get the opportunity, I wanna “Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time, letting my speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that I may know how I should answer each person.” (Col. 4:5-6)

You wanna get people in the orbit of Jesus? Jesus already has you in His orbit if you belong to Him! Respond to Jesus! Get yourself in the orbit of Jesus, and then just invite people into your life whenever it’s possible and see what happens!

But the religious leaders didn’t like what Levi, his homies, Jesus, and His disciples were up to. They only wanted to be in the orbit of Jesus to try and hammer on Him. The religious leaders frequently criticized Jesus over His fellowship with people viewed as unrighteous outcasts (Luke 15:2; 19:7).¹¹

Funny enough, the Greek behind the word “complaining” often appeared in the Greek translation of the OT for the Israelites’ grumbling in the wilderness (Exod 15:24; 16:7–9, 12; 17:3; Num 11:1; 14:2, 27, 29, 36; 16:11; 17:10). Here the Jewish leaders likewise failed to recognize that God was forming his people into a new community.¹²

So again, imitating their disobedient ancestors, the religious leaders were huffing and puffing in the face of the true God and His true Son doing true redemptive work right in their faces.

Didn’t they realize that, in Jesus, they were dealing with the expert Himself on God, the very One they were seeking?

Back when I met my wife in 2002, she was a vocal performance major at Kent State University. This girl could SANNNNNNG!!!! She got trained how to sing opera. She could sing, with no microphone, standing next to a piano, and hit MONEY notes SUPER HIGH, and FILL the room with volume!

¹¹ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible* (Lk 5:30). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

¹² NIV Biblical Theology Study Bible Copyright © 2019 by Zondervan.

But me? I was an “artiste”. 😞

I was a songwriter. I was a drummer. I was a bass player. I was a producer. I was a guitar player. I was a lyricist. And yes, I sang. So of course, I knew everything about singing!

And then I met this woman, who had the audacity to tell me that I had no idea how to sing correctly! And then she **tells me** how to do it correctly! I was like “forget you!” And I kept on writing songs, playing music, recording music, and singing like the rowdy rocker that I was.

But I would blow my voice out regularly. I would be off pitch regularly. I couldn’t get a good tone out of my throat.

So one day, 13 years after I met her in 2015, I found this dude named Ken Tamplin on Youtube. I started taking his vocal lessons online.

And guess what, I finally learned how to sing better!

So I came to Sarah and told her- guess what? I’ve been taking these online lessons and I finally get it! I’ve been singing wrong all these years! She was like “I’ve been tryin to tell you!!!!”

These Pharisees were flexing their God skills in Jesus’s face, thinking that they knew God better than the Son of God Himself! I was flexing my music skills, thinking I knew music better than my wife, when she was a **professionally trained singer!!!** Jesus was **professionally trained by God the Father Himself in eternity!** These religious kats had no training on him, but they were acting like their religious training outdid His eternal training!

Man, we sure don’t want to be unteachable to God in areas that we need growth, do we? If we don’t know Bible knowledge, we gotta get with some Bible heads! If we don’t know how to pray, we gotta get with some prayer warriors! If we don’t have spiritual disciplines, we gotta get with some spiritually disciplined people! If we suck at Church attendance, we gotta get around faithful Church attenders! If we got anger problems, we gotta get with some calm & collected Christ followers! If we got greed issues, we gotta get around radically generous people!

May we not be like the Pharisees, snubbing their noses at the wonderful work of God! And may we never be so legalistic about our convictions that we don’t celebrate the

messiness of ministry and God moving in all different ways in the lives of many different people! If we ask Jesus to get people into our lives to help us grow in the ways He knows we need to grow, guaranteed He'll put those people in front of us! Will we step into those relationships and be open? Be humble? Be teachable? Be willing? Be repentant? Be willing to change and grow and flourish in Christ? I hope so!

Jesus didn't put up with any religious nonsense from these religious leaders...

31 Jesus replied to them, "It is not those who are healthy who need a doctor, but those who are sick. 32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." (Luke 5:31-32)

When Jesus was talking about "those who are healthy", He was referring to the Pharisees and scribes (teachers of the law), who were spiritually well in their own eyes.¹³

Listen man. Some of the worst people on the planet Earth are self-proclaimed followers of Jesus who don't think they need Jesus's help!

We **never** should be thinking that we're "spiritually well" in our own eyes! I'm not saying that we should forget that we're forgiven, loved, embraced, and delighted in by our Father in Heaven because of Jesus. But also, simultaneously, we have never arrived! The apostle Paul said it so well;

12 Not that I have already reached the goal or am already perfect, but I make every effort to take hold of it because I also have been taken hold of by Christ Jesus. 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and reaching forward to what is ahead, 14 I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus. 15 Therefore, let all of us who are mature think this way. And if you think differently about anything, God will reveal this also to you. 16 In any case, we should live up to whatever truth we have attained. (Phil 3:12-16)

Christ lives in us by the power of the Holy Spirit! Christ has fully forgiven us of every sin, past, present and future! Christ has pardoned us and bought us eternally for His Kingdom! Christ is the fullness of everything!

¹³ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Lk 5:31–32). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

Therefore, we'll never be as generous as Christ, as holy as Christ, as loving as Christ, as anti-racist as Christ, as disciplined as Christ, as supernaturally empowered as Christ, as righteous as Christ, as on-time as Christ! He is the fullness of all things, and pardons us, loves us, forgives us, gives us His full obedience to God as a sacrificial gift on the cross, His resurrection, His eternity, and His Kingdom an eternal gift for free, and then He gives us something to do- chase Him! We are invigorated and alive, and quickened, and emboldened to chase Him all of our lives! He pursues us fully and we pursue Him back because He is so good!

So we get invited to be like Levi's homies- the tax collectors, and be **sick**. It's better to be sick and have Jesus be our doctor, than to act like we got it all together and we're healthy and don't need His healing, resurrecting, sanctifying, saving power! Jesus is not interested in the self-righteousness of the Pharisees. Jesus is not interested in catering to our inner self-righteous religiosity either. Rather, He sought to redeem the outcasts of society and called them to discipleship.¹⁴

And notice, Jesus didn't call the righteous, not the self-proclaimed healthy ones, but sinners, and self-aware sick ones. And Jesus didn't call them to believe in Him in their hearts. Jesus didn't merely ask them to call Him their "homeboy". Jesus didn't give them a little checklist to fill out. Jesus didn't give them a get out of hell free card and tell them to go on their merry way, doing whatever they wanted to do.

Jesus came to **call sinners to repentance**. His point was simply that His mission was to those in need of "repentance"—a change of heart and a change of life (cf. 3:7–14). The Pharisees sensed no need for such a change. Because He had shown authority in the two healings which preceded this account, the implication is that He was also able to fulfill His mission to "sinners".¹⁵

So Jesus takes the alcoholic right where they're at and moves em towards sobriety. Jesus takes the junkie right where they're at and moves em towards sobriety. Jesus takes the sex addict right where they're at and moves em towards chastity. Jesus takes the money obsessed consumer right where they're at and moves em towards radical generosity. Jesus takes the jealous freak and moves em towards celebrating others. Jesus takes the lazy bum and moves em towards having a fire and purpose burning in their belly. Jesus takes the food addict and moves them towards desiring health and flourishing.

Jesus will take you right where you're at and change you. Are you willing to repent and give your entire life over to Him? Do it right now!

¹⁴ Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). [Faithlife Study Bible](#) (Lk 5:31–32). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

¹⁵ Martin, J. A. (1985). [Luke](#). In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 218). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.