

# COURAGEOUS

## CHRISTIANS

### HOLIDAY CLUB

#### **The Calling of Levi:** Courage to respond to Jesus' call

Levi the tax collector hurried back to his office down on the harbour. He drew his cloak in around him tightly so the people in the busy streets would not recognise him. They would all laugh at him if they knew he had been in the crowd watching and listening to Jesus of Nazareth. He couldn't believe what he had just seen! This Jesus was so different from all the other teachers, so kind, so warm, so... different!

Levi had been on his way to work when he noticed a crowd gathered around a house. People were laughing and talking excitedly. 'What's happening?' he asked some men who were waiting outside the crowded house.

'Don't you know?' they replied. 'Jesus of Nazareth is staying here at this teacher's house! He is speaking about God's forgiveness and His Kingdom!' Levi was intrigued. He often felt alone, different, guilty. He knew he was not forgiven or in the right place before God.

Just then, the crowd surged forward and there were cries of amazement. Peering around the doorway, Levi could see a man on a bed dangling in the centre of the room! He looked up and could see that above him, several men had removed the roof tiles and laying on their tummies, had lowered the man down using ropes. The man on the bed was now dangling right in front of Jesus! Levi recognised the man on the bed at once – he was paralysed and could not walk. Levi had often seen his friends, the ones up on the roof, carry him on his mat to the temple gates where he could beg for money as he was unable to work.

The man on the mat was grinning as Jesus spoke to him. As the mat was lowered to the floor, Levi watched as Jesus helped the man, the one who had never walked, stand up and begin to walk about. The crowd went wild, cheering and clapping. Jesus threw his head back in laughter as the man began to dance and jig. 'I'm forgiven!' he kept shouting. 'I'm free! I'm forgiven!' He looked so funny, but so happy!

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But just then, Levi noticed some teachers of the Law shaking their fists at Jesus. They were clearly angry at what they had just seen. Then a hush filled the room and everyone listened as Jesus began to speak.

'I can tell what you are thinking,' Jesus said to them. 'You're thinking that I have no authority on Earth to forgive as only God can do that. But I have been given that authority. And this is the proof!' Jesus turned to the man who had been paralysed and said, 'Pick up your bed, and go home!' Everyone gasped in astonishment. Levi felt a powerful rush of energy and his heart raced in his chest. He knew that he had seen something amazing. He felt like he was about to burst! He knew he wanted that forgiveness and that freedom too. But how? Jesus didn't know him. Jesus would never notice him, surely?

Levi pushed his way back through the crowds. He needed to get to work. The Roman authorities would know if he was late. The sun was already hot and the day stretched ahead of him. Levi was soon busy in the office counting money and writing up the daily accounts.

Later, Levi became aware that someone was calling his name. 'Levi! Levi!' the voice called. Levi went to the window and there, looking straight at him, was Jesus. 'There you are, Levi,' Jesus said, smiling and beckoning with his hand. 'Come. Come and follow me. We have work to do together. Come now!'

Levi felt that same powerful rush of energy and his heart began to beat wildly in his chest. He left everything and went outside. Jesus laid his arm around Levi's shoulders and listened as Jesus began to talk. They walked back to Levi's house and together they prepared a huge feast. Levi invited all his friends, many of them tax collectors like he had been. They ate, talked and laughed as they listened to Jesus. Levi felt like he had come home. 'People who are well don't need a doctor,' explained Jesus. 'I have come to help you all turn your lives back to God.'