

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

MORE ABOUT JESUS LESSONS **“Jesus—Friend of Sinners”**

Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

In the short life that Jesus lived upon this Earth, He became a Friend to many people. For example, in Mark 5 when Jesus exorcised the demons from a man who had been possessed by them, He told him in verse 19, “Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.” That man went and told everyone about his Friend, Jesus, and how He had cast the demons out of him. Jesus was a Friend to those who were hurting. He was a Friend to those who were sick. He was a Friend to those who had lost loved ones. He was even a Friend to those who did not treat Him as well as they should have. This is because Jesus is truly “a Friend of sinners.” Jesus was a Friend to the people who needed Him the most—those who were in sin. Mark 2:13-17 is a text that paints a beautiful picture of Jesus as the Friend of sinners. Notice what this passage says about Jesus.

“Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them. As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi’s house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, ‘How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?’ When Jesus heard it, He said to them, ‘Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.’”

This text tells us a great deal about the attitude of our Lord toward those who are in sin. Jesus was in the house with tax collectors who, by the estimation of some of that day, were “the worst sinners of all time.” Yet Jesus was in the house dining with them. And the text says, “there were many, and they followed Him.” This text not only tells us much about the character of our Lord toward those in sin, but it also shows us that if we apply the teaching of sinners ourselves, then it will help our relationship with the lost a great deal.

After viewing the friendliness of Jesus, it is little wonder that those people who listened closely to Him were the same people He spent a great deal of time trying to teach. The Bible says in Mark 12:37 that “the common people heard Him gladly.” One of the greatest compliments ever given to Jesus was actually intended to be a statement of derision by His critics. Notice the words of Matthew 11:19, where the critics said, “Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!” As you think about Jesus as a Friend to sinners, no greater compliment could be paid to Him. Here is a man Who is a Friend to those who need Him the most—those who are lost and dying in sin. As we think about Jesus as a Friend of sinners, there are three important questions that we are going to ask and answer that are directly related to this subject. Why is Jesus a Friend to sinners? The answer is simple. If Jesus was not a Friend to sinners, He would have been **friendless!** There would have been no friends for Jesus to have if He had not been a Friend to sinners. Why is that? It is because the Bible teaches that all have sinned. The text of 1 Kings

8:46 is the first time we learn about the all-inclusive nature of sin. Solomon said, "There is no one who does not sin." The writer of Ecclesiastes said in Ecclesiastes 7:20 that "There is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin." Sin is something that **every** person has to face. Even the most righteous people have to deal with sin. The Bible says in Romans 3:10 that "there is none righteous—no, not one." Why? Verse 23 of that same chapter tells us that "all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23), and we cannot be in a relationship with God if we have sin in our lives. "You are of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on wickedness" (Hab. 1:13). Jesus was a Friend of sinners because if He had not been, He would not have had any friends in this world. All of us need Jesus to be the Friend of sinners because we are all, at some time, in a life of sin. Paul said in Ephesians 2:1, "And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

Jesus was a Friend of sinners because of His great love for the lost. The love of Jesus was what motivated Him to be in Matthew's house with the tax collectors and the sinners where they were talking to Him about salvation. He did that out of love for their souls. John 3:16 teaches us, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." Think of the words of the apostle Paul in Romans 5:6-8.

"For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."

That is why Jesus is a Friend of sinners—because He loved them so much that He wanted them to go to Heaven. As the apostle John talked about the love of God, He said in 1 John 3:1, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!" And this we are. Who is the "us" in that passage? It is those who had formerly been sinners. Jesus had a great love for those who were lost. Do you remember what He said in Mark 2:17? He said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance." The text of 2 Corinthians 8:9 tells us a lot about the love of our Lord. Paul wrote, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." Jesus gave up everything so that we could one day have the hope of living with Him in eternity. Think of the words of Romans 8:39—"What shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord?" Why did Jesus become a Friend of sinners? It was because of the great love He had for them—love that motivated Him to tell them about the Gospel. Jesus is a Friend of sinners because they are the ones He came to heal of their sickness. Remember Luke 19:10? The Bible says that Jesus "came to seek and save those who are lost." It is those who are the sick who need the doctor's help, Jesus said. And thus we learn again that the disease of sin is what Jesus came to heal. Ezekiel 18:4 says, "The soul that sins shall die." The disease of sin is like a cancer or gangrene in someone's leg (2 Tim. 2:17). The psalmist said, "For my iniquities have gone over my head; Like a heavy burden they are too heavy for me" (Ps. 38:4). I think of the words of Luke 17:10 where Jesus said, "When you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.'" Isaiah 64:6 says, "All our righteousnesses are like filthy rags." Jesus said in Matthew 25:46 that the unrighteous, "will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." Jesus came as the Great Physician to heal those who are sick and to cure the sin problem. Jesus is the only Cure for the sin problem. In Acts 4:12, the Bible says, "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."

Jesus is the only Way. John 19:34 tells us that when the Roman soldier's spear pieced Christ's side as He was being crucified, "immediately, blood and water came out." It is the blood of Christ that was spilled on the ground at Calvary that saves men from their sin. Thus, we learn again to save and heal those who were sick with sin.

Jesus is a Friend of sinners because He came to teach them how to overcome a life of sin. Here is what is marvelous about Jesus being a Friend of sinners. Not only did He come to talk to them and to heal them, but once He healed them from their disease, He gave them the cure that could prevent them from ever getting involved in sin again. Think of the example of Jesus in Hebrews 4:15. Jesus was "in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." Jesus' example is what teaches us to overcome a life of sin. In Matthew 4:1-11, Jesus was tempted by Satan in the wilderness. Satan tempted Him with the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. Jesus overcame those temptations the same way every time. Do you remember what He said three times? "It is written," "It is written," "It is written...." Jesus teaches us by His example, and by the Word of God, that we can overcome a life of sin. We have to love the Lord more than anything else in this life, and then we can truly be right with God. We must hate that which is evil. Ephesians 5:11 says, "Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them." The things that are in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—John says those things are not "of the Father." And those who do the will of the world will pass away. We must hate that which is evil, follow the example of God and of Jesus Christ, and know what God's Word says so that we can overcome sin. Do you remember what the psalmist said in Psalm 119:9? "How can a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed according to Your word." The psalmist said, "Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You!" (vs. 11). Do we know the Word of God so that it can help us overcome a life of sin? Jesus did. And we know it that well also.

But **how** did Jesus show His friendship to sinners? We know that He dealt with sinners, because those were the very people He wanted to save. But how did Jesus show His friendship toward sinners? What did He do to show that friendship? Jesus did not show His friendship in the way that some people think we need to show friendship today. Jesus did not show friendship toward sinners by tolerating their sin. The woman at the well (Jn. 4) had been married multiple times, and was not in a scriptural marriage. Jesus said to her, "The man you have now is not your husband." Jesus taught her the truth. He did not tolerate her sin. He did not say, "Well, it's really not what God wants, but it's OK." Jesus said, "You are not in a right marriage." Jesus did not show His friendship by never offending anyone. Jesus was not afraid to speak the truth in love. And if it offended people, He still said what was right. In Mark 12:24, Jesus said to the Sadducees, "Are you not therefore mistaken, because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God?" Jesus did not show His friendship by having a "good old neighbor," "everything's OK," "you're OK, I'm OK" attitude or mentality that suggested, "Even though you are not living your life correctly, it will be all right." That is not the way Jesus showed His friendship. He showed His friendship by loving God with all His heart, soul, mind, and strength, and by saying what God had already said.

Jesus also showed His friendship to sinners through His sacrificial death on the cross. Do you want to know the greatest example of Jesus' love for sinners? It is found in His sacrifice for humanity on the cross of Calvary. The text of 1 Peter 2:24 says, "He Himself bore our sins in His own body." When John the Immerser saw Jesus coming in John 1:29, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." Isaiah, years before Christ came to the cross, said in Isaiah 53:5 that Christ was "wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." Peter said in 1 Peter 1:18-20,

“Knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you.”

It was the blood of Christ—that pure and spotless blood—that redeemed man from sin. And that is how Jesus showed His love for sinners. He showed His love for sinners by “tasting of death for everyone” (Heb. 2:9). Hebrews 10:12 says, “But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God.”

Jesus also showed His love for sinners by teaching them the truth about what God said. Jesus was not at all afraid to teach the truth. He knew that the only way He could help sinners be saved was by telling them what God had said. Jesus said in John 14:6, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” In His Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7, Jesus said many things that were hard to hear but that were nevertheless true. Jesus said that if people did not let their lights shine, then they would not be a good example to others. Jesus said that if people committed adultery in their hearts, then they had pretty much committed adultery. He said that if a person talked evil against his brother, then he had essentially murdered him. Jesus said that if a person did not seek the kingdom first, then that person would not be satisfied in this life. Jesus taught us that we must follow His will in every way. Thus, He showed His love for sinners by teaching the truth. The Bible says in John 1:17 that “the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.” The writer of the Book of Proverbs made a powerful statement when he wrote, “Buy the truth, and do not sell it” (Prov. 23:23). Whatever truth may cost you, it still is invaluable to your soul. That is why Paul said in Galatians 4:16, “Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?” Jesus showed His love for sinners by telling them the truth. Some people did not like that. And some people did not follow Jesus as a result. In fact, in John 6:66 we are told that “many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.” The rich young ruler went away sorrowful because Christ told him to sell all that he had, give the money to the poor, and follow Jesus (Mk. 10). Jesus spoke the truth because of the inherent value that it had to people’s souls. Jesus became a Friend to sinners by associating with sinners for the greatest cause in the Universe—the salvation of their souls. I think of John 4 where Jesus was with the woman at the well who was living in sin. She was not even a woman of Jesus’ nationality, yet He was there associating with her to teach her the Gospel. I think of the words of Mark 12:37, “The common people heard Him gladly.” In Luke 18:10-14, Jesus used a parable to teach us that righteousness does not come necessarily by thinking that we are religious, but by realizing that we do sin. Remember that two people went up to the temple to pray? One was a religious man who began to pray, “God, I thank You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.” The other fellow “would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner.’” Jesus said that the man who realized he was a sinner was the one who went to his house justified.

The question for us is this: How can **we** be a friend of sinners? We know that Jesus was a Friend of sinners and that He showed His friendship by dying on the cross and loving them. But how can we today be a friend of sinners? One of the most important ways that we can be the friend of sinners is by not having the mindset of the Pharisees. Do you remember what the Pharisees said in Mark 2? Jesus was eating with tax collectors and sinners, and they said, “How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?” In Matthew 11:19 they called Christ “a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.” Little did they know that Jesus was their Friend, too, and that they belonged in the category of sinners. They were hurling terms of derision at Christ—as though Christ

should not be hanging around with sinners. I am not suggesting that we live a lifestyle where sinners are our best friends and we follow in their steps. But we have to have the mindset of wanting to go and talk to those who are in sin in order to associate with them for the greatest cause in the Universe—the salvation of their souls. Proverbs 16:18 illustrates to us that we must not become proud or haughty like the Pharisees. “Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.” Do you remember what Jesus said about the Pharisees in Matthew 23? He over and over again said, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites.” He condemned them for acting like they were religious but living like they were not. Again, this teaches us that we need to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God that He might lift us up (1 Peter 5:6; Jas. 4:6-8). We need to make sure that we do not become too proud and too haughty, and say to ourselves, “I am too good of a person to go over there and teach the Gospel to this person who is living in sin.” That is the very person who needs the Gospel the most!

We can be a friend of sinners today by remembering that all of us have, at one time, been in a life of sin. We are no different than the sinners that we need to go and teach because at one time, we, too, have lived a life of sin as well. Ephesians 2:1 says (speaking to Christians), “And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” Do you remember Luke 17:10? “We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.” Paul wrote to Christians in Corinth who had been involved in immoral acts like adultery, homosexuality, sodomy, idolatry, and he said, “And such **were** some of you” (1 Cor. 6:11). He reminded the Christians, “Such **were** some of you, but you are washed and cleansed.” If we are going to be the friend of sinners, we must realize that we, at one time, were like these people. We were in a life of sin, but by thinking about the joy and the blessing that we can experience by coming out of that life of sin, we will want them to have the same blessing today.

We can be a friend of sinners today by taking the Gospel of Jesus Christ to those who are lost and dying in sin. This is what Jesus has commissioned us to do. In Mark 16:15-16 and Matthew 28:18, Jesus said, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” Ezekiel 33 sets a scene where there is a watchman. The idea is that if the enemy comes, and the watchman sees him coming and sounds the trumpet or blows the horn, then the people can prepare. If there are those who lose their lives after the warning, the watchman had blown the horn and given the sound, so their blood is not upon him. He did everything he could. But then, the role is reversed. If the watchman sees the enemy coming but does not blow the horn or give the warning and people die, they will perish, but their blood will be required of the watchman. The point is that if we know that people are lost and dying in this world, and we also know that the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the only way to save them, and we sit back and do nothing, God is going to require their blood of us. In Colossians 1:28, Paul said that we should be “warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.” We need to be like the church in Acts 8:4 where it says that those who were scattered because of persecution “went everywhere preaching the word.”

How can we be a friend of sinners today? Not only by teaching the lost can we be a friend to them, but we also can be a friend of sinners by faithfully living the Christian life. We can do no greater service to sinners than by standing up and living for the truth ourselves. In Matthew 5:16, Jesus said, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” Did you know that your life may be the only “Bible” that some people ever read? In 2 Corinthians 3:2, Paul said, “You are our epistle, known and read by all men.” Those Christians in Corinth were almost like a letter. They were an example of what a Christian should be. Today, our lives can be an example to peo-

ple? Do our lives encourage people to follow in the footsteps of Jesus? Paul said, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Do our lives say to people around us, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2)? Are our lives ones of transformation from sin to godliness? Do our lives encourage others to do the same as we do? Can we say with Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

Another way by which we can be a friend to sinners (and this may seem odd to some) is by speaking out against sin and ungodliness. If we are willing to speak out against sin and ungodliness, we can truly be a friend of sinners. We must remember that we never do anyone a favor by being silent about things that we know are wrong. When we speak out against abortion, when we speak out as Christians against homosexuality, when we speak out against denominational teaching, it is because we love people's souls and want them to go to Heaven. The writer of Proverbs put it this way in Proverbs 27:5, "Open rebuke is better than love carefully concealed." To say the truth openly is better than trying to around and conceal your love for someone." Ephesians 4:15 tells us to "speak the truth in love." This is why Paul could ask in Galatians 4:16, "Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth?"

We want you to know today that if you are a sinner, you are going to die lost in sin unless you come to Jesus Christ. We want you to know today that we have a sincere love for your soul. More than anything in all the world we want you to go to Heaven. God wants you to go to Heaven. Jesus came to be your friend and to lead you to Heaven. But you must allow Him to do that. Jesus truly is the Friend of sinners. He can be your Friend today if you will let Him. Jesus said, "I stand at the door and knock" (Rev. 3:20). Are you willing to let Him in? Are you willing to obey God's Word and do what He says? You can become a friend of Jesus by doing what He says. Do you know how to become a friend of Jesus? Jesus said in John 14:15, "If you love Me, keep My commandments." He said in John 15:14, "You are My friends if you do whatever I command you." You must be willing to hear God's Word so it creates a belief inside you of Jesus as the Son of God. Then, based on faith in Jesus, you must repent. Jesus said in Luke 13:3, "Unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish." You also must confess Christ as God's son (Rom. 10:10), and then you must be baptized for the remission of your sins to become a child of God. In 1 Peter 3:21 we are told that "baptism does also now save us." Jesus said in John 3:3,5, "Unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." May we be thankful today that Jesus was not like the Pharisees and the Sadducees, but that truly He was a "Friend of sinners"—for all of us fall into that category. May God help us to transform our lives to the image of Jesus Christ, the Friend of sinners.

Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:

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STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “JESUS—FRIEND OF SINNERS”

1. What specific thing did Jesus do in Mark 5 which showed that He is “the Friend of sinners”?
2. What did Jesus do in the context of Mark 2:13-17 which showed that He is the Friend of sinners?
3. What does Mark 12:37 tell us about the relationship that Christ had with most of the people to whom He spoke?
4. What important message is contained in 1 Kings 8:46?
5. What important message is contained in Romans 3:10?
6. What important message is contained in Romans 3:23?
7. Habakkuk 1:13 tells us that God cannot look on something. What is that “something”?
8. What information is contained in Ephesians 2:1 which shows us that Jesus is the Friend of sinners?
9. According to Luke 19:10, why did Christ come to Earth?
10. How does Romans 5:6-8 depict us?
11. What piece of evidence is contained in 1 John 3:1 which shows that God loves us?
12. According to Mark 2:17, why did Christ come to Earth?
13. What, according to Ezekiel 18:4, will happen to “the soul that sins”?
14. In Isaiah 64:6, the prophet compared men’s righteousness to something. What was that “something”?
15. What piece of information is contained within Hebrews 4:15 which shows that Jesus is the friend of sinners?
16. What, according to Psalm 119:11, is one way to keep from sinning?
17. In Mark 12:24, why did Jesus chastise the Sadducees?
18. What piece of information is contained within Isaiah 53:5 which shows that Jesus is the friend of sinners?
19. Ezekiel 33 describes a certain man who had an important job. Who was the man, and what was his job?
20. According to John 14:15, how do we know that we love Jesus?