

LESSON ESSENTIALS

WHO IS JESUS?

LESSON 5: THE FRIENDS AND DISCIPLES OF JESUS

Have you ever met someone that you really admire and look up to? If you have, you may remember feeling like it is hard to believe you are really there, talking to them and getting to know them. Sometimes we are shocked that this person who we admire is taking the time to meet with ordinary us. It seems unlikely that they would want to spend any time with us; we certainly wouldn't expect them to call us their friends!

The more we learn about who Jesus is, the more we stand in awe of Him. He is the most famous, most influential person to ever live. Yet, He does not stand far off from us. No, Jesus came to love the unloved. He came to save sinners and to befriend them. Let's study Jesus' relationships to learn more about Him and about His mission.

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You can tell a lot about a person by who they spend time with, and by how they relate to the people in their life. Some people make a point of only spending time with the most important people in their society. Some people think that those with the most money or the most power seem to be the most desirable of friends.

Many people in Jesus' day expected Him to befriend the rich, the powerful, and the influential. If we look at the relationships that Jesus maintained, we come to see that He lived contrary to all of those expectations. Instead, He spent time with the vulnerable, the unlovable, and the dishonourable. He treated them with compassion and called them friends. The lowliest members of society were the people that Jesus pursued. By looking at a few examples, we can get a fuller revelation of who Jesus truly is.

First, we see that Jesus spent time with women. And He valued them. Unfortunately, history has painted Christianity as an anti-woman religion. This could not be farther from the truth! When we read the Word carefully, and when we examine Jesus' interactions with women, we see that the Lord places high value and importance on women and on their role in the Kingdom of God. Once, Jesus was invited to dine at the house of a Pharisee. This should have been seen as a great honour to be invited to the home of a prominent church leader. However, Jesus very quickly shows us who He thinks is the guest of honour at this dinner. From Luke 7 we learn that a woman, who was known to be a sinner, came to the Pharisee's house to see Jesus. She washed His feet with her tears, dried them with her hair, kissed his feet, and then anointed them with costly ointment. Horrified, the Pharisee said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner" (Luke 7:39). Jesus rebukes the Pharisee that, even though he was a man of influence and authority, he did not treat Jesus with the honour He deserved. But this ordinary, outcast of a woman did. In return, Jesus honours her and forgives her sins.

There were men who were despised and dishonoured in Jesus' day, too. And even these lowly men were the friends of Jesus. One of the most unsavoury occupations in Jesus' day was the tax collectors. On many occasions, Jesus was found reclining with tax collectors, dining with them, and even calling them to follow Him

as His disciples! In Mark 2:15-17 we read of one such event.

“Many tax collectors and sinners were reclining with Jesus and his disciples, for there were many who followed him. And the scribes of the Pharisees, when they saw that he was eating with sinners and tax collectors, said to his disciples, ‘Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?’”

Jesus gives an answer to these grumbling Pharisees. They wanted Him to spend time with them because they felt important and powerful and wanted to spend time with Jesus so that they looked even more important. But Jesus explains that, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners.” Jesus wasn’t concerned with looking important. He wasn’t impressed with earthly power or influence. He came to be with the people who needed Him.

Speaking of need, Jesus spent time with the neediest members of society – the children. In Luke’s Gospel we read that “they were bringing even infants to him that he might touch them. And when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them. But Jesus called them to him, saying, ‘Let the children come to me, and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.’” (Luke 18:15-17) Imagine the shock of the prominent leaders who may have been listening! They would have expected that the powerful and the wise would gain the kingdom of God. Yet, Jesus teaches that these little children are the example that men should follow.

Maybe you are still unsure of whether or not Jesus desires to be in relationship with you. If you are poor, humble, afflicted, broken-hearted, or crushed in spirit, then you need to read Psalm 34. The Lord is near to the broken-hearted, it says. He delivers them, He watches over them, and He redeems them.

Do you see yourself now in any of these categories? Do you see that He has come to pursue and save you? Won’t you, like His friends and disciples, come and follow Him?

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IN REVIEW

- Jesus loved and valued those who society cared for the least, including women, tax collectors, and children.
- Jesus did not come to spend time with the ‘important’ people, but to come and save the lost.
- No matter how you view yourself, or how society views you, the Lord desires to be in relationship with you, if you are willing to turn to Him and confess your need of Him.

HAVE YOUR SAY

- During this study of Who is Jesus?, you should have developed a great respect and admiration for Jesus. Do you question whether or not someone of His prominence would want to spend time with you? Does today’s lesson help you to accept His friendship?
- If it is true that Jesus is the Messiah, and if it is true that He desires to be in a relationship with you, what would stop you from running to Him? Imagine: friendship with the one true God!
- Take time now to pray and tell the Lord how much you need Him, and how grateful you are to Him that, no matter what position you hold in society, He loves you and is inviting you to follow Him.

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