

"A Friend to Jesus"

Everyone needs a friend. And the best friend you'll ever have is Jesus Christ. Hello, I'm Phil Sanders. And this is a Bible study, "In SEARCH of the Lord's Way." Today we're exploring the friendship we have with Jesus. Stay tuned.

Welcome to In Search of the Lord's Way. We're here to search God's Word for the Lord's will. We go to God's Word, because we know God is our friend. He loves us fully and freely. His love is greater than we can imagine. Romans 8:32 says, that "He who did not spare his own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him graciously give us all things?" Few treasures in life exceed the value of friendship. Heaven is beautiful not only because God made it so, but more because of who will be there. The Lord yearns to be our friend now and forever. I know you're thankful for His love. Each week we come into your home with a Bible lesson, because we want to know everything we can about the God we love. We're always delighted when you spend this time with us. And we want to be a part of your life each week.

Someone said, that "A friend is one who knows all about you and still likes you." The Lord Jesus went to the cross for sinners. He gave His love freely to people who didn't deserve His love. Yes, He knows all our sins and our weaknesses. He knows our thoughts, good and evil. He knows all our secrets. And in spite of it all, He created us and gave Jesus for us to save us from sin. He loved us as sinners, but wanted to provide something better for us than the pleasures of sin.

The more we get to know God, the more we love Him. The more we love Him, the more we want to serve Him. The more we serve Him, the more abundant our lives become. Friendship with Jesus is the greatest blessing of life, so let's explore friendship with the Lord.

If you want to study more about this, we offer the information on this program free. If you'd like a printed copy or a CD of our study, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org. Or, you can call our toll-free telephone number. That number is 1-800-321-8633. We also stream this program on our website at www.searchtv.org.

The Edmond church will now worship in song, we'll read from John 21:15 to 17, and explore a friendship with Jesus.

Our reading today comes from the gospel according to John chapter 21 verses 15 to 17. Jesus is having a conversation with Peter.

"So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Tend My lambs.' He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Shepherd My sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love Me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend My sheep'."

Love is not just about saying we love someone, but also living it out in our lives. Let's pray together. Father we're so grateful that You have loved us and been a friend to us. Help us to be a friend to You. May Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

Throughout His days Jesus faced people who wanted to take His life and end His ministry. Matthew chapter two tells how Herod tried to kill Jesus as an infant after the wise men inquired about the birth of the king of the Jews. Sadly, Herod did kill many infants in Bethlehem, fulfilling Jeremiah's prophecy

that Rachel would weep for her children. Rachel, the beloved wife of Jacob, is buried in Bethlehem; and you can visit her tomb even to this day.

The New Testament tells of Jesus coming to His hometown of Nazareth to preach. The Lord taught things they didn't wish to hear. They had a hard time believing a hometown boy could be the Messiah. Luke 4:28 to 29 says, "When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. And they rose up and they drove Him out of the town and brought Him to the brow of a hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw Him down the cliff." Jesus was able to escape, but you can imagine His heartbreak and disappointment over the loss of His lifetime friends at Nazareth.

John chapter eight tells of the experience Jesus had in Jerusalem in the temple as He defended Himself before the Jews. Jesus spoke of Abraham's rejoicing to see His day. John 8: 57 to 59 says: So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" Jesus said to them, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.' So they picked up stones to throw at Him, but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple."

Again in chapter ten of John, Jesus revealed to the Jews that He and the Father are one. But this didn't set well with the Jews. They thought He was blaspheming by claiming to be the Son of God. So John 10:31 says, that "The Jews picked up stones again to stone Him."

John chapter eleven tells how Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. And when the report of this miracle reached the ears of the Pharisees and chief priests, they convened a council. And they said in John 11:47 to 49, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let Him go on like this, everyone will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation." Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said it would be better for one man to die than for the whole nation. So from that day on they made plans to put Jesus to death. Matthew 26 and verse 4 says that they plotted together to arrest Jesus by stealth and to kill Him.

The disciple Judas Iscariot, whom Jesus named an apostle and entrusted the money box, became greedy and was a thief. Matthew 26 verses 14 to 16 says "Judas Iscariot went to the chief priests and said, 'What are you willing to give me to betray Him to you?' And they weighed out thirty pieces of silver to him. From then on he began looking for a good opportunity to betray Jesus."

Well Judas led the mob who brought swords and clubs to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus frequently prayed. And Judas had even agreed with the Jews on a sign. He said "The one I will kiss is the man; seize him." Well the Bible says in Matthew 26 and verse 49, "And he came up to Jesus at once and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!' And he kissed Him." Ah, this kiss must have broken the Lord's heart. It was cruel and selfish. There was no love to be found in that kiss. Well they bound the hands of Jesus and they led Him away.

During His trials and crucifixion, they humiliated Him, they mocked Him falsely and they accused Him, and slapped Him, and scourged Him, they forced Him to carry His own cross. Pontius Pilate found no fault in Him worthy of death, so he tried to find a way to free Jesus by offering to release a prisoner the Jews wanted. Well the people refused to free Jesus and cried for Barabbas.

When Pilate asked what he should do with Jesus who is called the Christ, the people showed no mercy on Jesus. Matthew 27 verses 22 and 23 reveals that they all said, " 'Let Him be crucified!' And Pilate said, 'Why, what evil has He done?' But they shouted all the more, 'Let Him be crucified!'" Though Pilate washed his hands, and in front of this matter in front of the crowd, the people said, well "His blood be on us and on our children!" Well these bloodthirsty people callously called for the death of an innocent man because they were envious and they were afraid of what Rome might do.

So they led Jesus away to Golgotha, and there they crucified Him. While suffering on the cross, His enemies showed no mercy. They were not content just to do away with Him; they had to humiliate and slander Him as well. The Bible says in Matthew 27: 39 to 44: "And those who passed by derided him, wagging their heads and saying, 'You who would destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save yourself! If you're the Son of God, come down from the cross.' So also the chief priests, with the scribes and elders, mocked him, saying, 'He saved others; He cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him come down now from the cross, and we'll believe in Him. He trusts in God; let God deliver Him now, if He desires Him. For He said, 'I am the Son of God.' And the robbers who were crucified with him also reviled him in the same way."

Jesus endured terrifying physical pain on the cross; but when the crowds watching added insult to injury, it must have pierced his heart. Jesus could see a bigger picture. He went to the cross to save the very sinners who put Him there. The Lord endured evil against Himself without becoming ugly to others.

The Bible says in 1 Peter 2 verses 21 to 24, "For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in His steps. He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in His mouth. When He was reviled, He didn't revile in return; when He suffered, He didn't threaten, but He continued entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously or justly. He himself bore our sins in His body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds you have been healed."

Jesus blesses us and blesses all even when people do their worst to Him. He bore our sins, so that we might leave an old life of sin to live to righteousness. The Lord so befriended us, that He opened the way for us to have a new and better life, filled with faith, hope, and love. The Lord Jesus does not leave people where He found them. He heals what is broken in our lives. And He lifts up those who are down. He forgives our sin. He gives us hope that we can leave old habits of which we're ashamed and can have new lives filled with love and righteousness.

No one, I say to you, no one will ever be a better friend to you than Jesus Christ. Proverbs 17:17 says that a friend loves at all times. The Lord loves you for who you are and who you will become. Remember, God sees what we can become with His grace and help. By His grace He forgives our past, helps us day to day, and guides us to an eternal home in the future. His love helps us every step of the way.

Christianity is friendship, friendship with God and with everyone who loves God. The New Testament describes Jesus as the "friend of sinners" in Matthew 11 verse 19. You remember there Jesus called His disciples "friends" that's in Luke 12 and verse 4 and John 15 and verse 14. You see He wants everyone to stand with Him not against Him. He wants their friendship to be real, to be strong, and to last forever. He wants more than to just be an acquaintances or fair-weather friend. He wants people who will pledge their faith and loyalty to Him.

The Lord Jesus said in John 15:13 to 14, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." And then He said, "You are my friends if you do what I command you." Jesus was willing to die for you to save and bless you. Do you really think He would do anything to hurt you or to lead you astray? He asks that you befriend him by being obedient to His commands. The Lord wants you to obey Him because you love Him. But the Lord is not being overbearing or cruel to us when He asks us to obey Him.

The Lord is not trying to enslave us with His commands. Now this is crucial. Some hear the word command and they get the wrong idea. The Lord never gives us a command to hurt us, or to

manipulate us, or to subdue us. God's commandments don't enslave; they set us free. Some people don't like following the rules or being told what to do. Our Father in Heaven is indeed a loving Father to us. And He gives us His commands because He knows that His instructions will bless our lives and keep us from hurting ourselves.

Every commandment, in the word, leads to blessing. Every commandment helps us to avoid the pitfalls of life. Every commandment keeps us on the straight and narrow road that leads to an abundant life. Love leads us to do what is right, what is best, and what bring a blessing to all. The commandments of Jesus are designed to teach us how to do just that! And the more we walk in the Lord's way, the more we see how God was loving us through His commandments. God's commandments are God's gift to us.

In the Old Testament, Moses reminded Israel as they were about to enter the Promised land in Deuteronomy 4 verses 7 to 8, "For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God is to us, whenever we call upon Him? And what great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?" Well if that were true of the Law of Moses, how much more true is it of the teaching of the Lord Jesus in the New Testament? We have a great God who has blessed us with the way of righteousness. Oh what a wonderful gift!

The Lord has also blessed us with a spiritual family, the church, who are friends. The little epistle of 3 John ends with the words, "The friends greet you. Greet the friends by name." The Lord has blessed me with the opportunity to travel all over this country and into other countries to meet my brothers and sisters in Christ. And because of Christ, they are my brethren and also my friends.

The Bible calls us to rejoice with those who rejoice and to weep with those who weep in Romans 12 and verse 15. Friendship means that we care about others personally, sharing their joys and their pains. We take care of each other. Being a friend to Jesus means being a friend to His church and all the people who are in it. They are indeed family.

Being a friend to Jesus means that we'll take our stand with Him. We believe Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. And we pledge our lives to serve Him and Him alone. We lovingly, respectfully but firmly stand up for His teaching and for His teaching alone and for His morals. To be a friend to the Lord Jesus means we trust Him fully and freely. What He calls sin, we recognize as evil. What He calls false, we recognize as wrong.

Friendship with Jesus calls us to serve Him, to preach the gospel, and to sacrifice ourselves. Oh we do this with love, and joy and thankfulness for the opportunity. Are you the friend of Jesus? Let's pray together. Oh Father helps us all to love You from a full heart and to give ourselves fully and completely to You and may Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. In Jesus name, Amen.

As the gospel according to John closes, the Lord Jesus has his first personal conversation with Peter after the resurrection. Now only days before Peter had denied the Lord three times. John 21:15 to 17 says, "When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' He said to him a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.' He said to him, 'Tend my sheep.'

He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' and he said to Him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep'."

I've wondered if the Lord Jesus might ask that question to you or to me today, "Do you love me?" or "Do you love me more than these?" friend how would you answer? Can you say that you have been

faithful to the Lord, that you're attending church faithfully, you're reading your Bible, you're praying daily, and you stand up for what is true and right? Are you a friend to Jesus?

Now to become a friend to Jesus, the Lord said we should obey His commandments. You must believe; without faith it is impossible to please God, Hebrews 11 and verse 6. And then you must turn from everything sinful and offensive to Jesus and to turn to what is right and pleases the Lord. That's repentance. Confessing Jesus as the Son of God is also necessary and being baptized into Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins is also necessary just as the Bible teaches in Acts 2 and verse 38.

Well we hope that today's study of friendship has blessed you. If you want a free printed copy or a CD of this message, mail your request to In Search of the Lord's Way, P.O. Box 371, Edmond, OK 73083 or send an e-mail to searchtv@searchtv.org.

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We do ask this please worship with a church of Christ in your area. They're the reason we don't ask for money. And if you're looking for a church home, a sound biblical one, we'll help you to find one of those churches. Churches of Christ love and they want guests, and you'll be glad you went and worshipped with them. We'll be back next week, Lord willing. So keep searching God's Word with us and tell a friend about this program. As always, God bless you and we love you from all of us at In Search of the Lord's Way.