



Let's Be Friends

Focus We should be a “friend to sinners” in the same manner that Jesus was.

Open Would others say that you speak “straight-ahead” (*to the point, say what you mean*) or “diplomatically” (*soften your answers to be better received*)?

Read Jesus never had a “holier-than-thou” attitude towards others even though He was the only person who actually *was* “holier-than-thou!” Throughout the New Testament, we see that in spite of His pure holiness, Jesus was someone who sinners *liked* to be around. His response to the woman caught in adultery in John 8 was one of acceptance, not condemnation. He accepted her as she was, but rather than leaving her in that condition, instructed her to, “*Go and sin no more*” (John 8:11).

We’re to follow Christ’s example and be a friend to sinners—a friend who does not condemn or compromise, but is full of compassion.

- Talk**
1. Read Matthew 9:12–13. What was the difference between Jesus’ attitude towards sinners and that of the pharisaical leaders? What should our attitude be towards unbelievers and their sinfulness?
 2. There are generally two extremes regarding friendship with sinners: to compromise our own walk with God or values in the name of “being a good friend,” or to withdraw from unbelievers completely, saying we’re “being separate.” What are the problems and pitfalls of each of these approaches? How would you describe the approach that Jesus took and wants us to take?

3. Briefly describe a time when someone was trying to help you, but approached you in a way that sounded condemning. Were you open or closed to their input? Why?
4. In Matthew 9:36 and 14:14, it says that when Jesus looked at the people, He was “moved with compassion.” Why is compassion for sinners the key to relating to them without condemnation or compromise?

Live

1. How is your attitude towards others affected when you downplay your own sinfulness and/or your total need for Jesus’ forgiveness? How then, can we become more compassionate towards others?
2. Is there a person or people group towards whom you have felt angry or judgmental? Write down who it is. In pairs, take a few minutes to repent of your hardness towards them, and ask the Lord to change your heart so you can see them as He does.
3. Who will you bring with you to church next month? Write down their names, and make a commitment to begin reaching out to them this week.

Pray

Pray for the person/people you will bring to church with you next month. Ask Him to help you to see them as He does, and communicate His love and acceptance to them. Invite the Holy Spirit to change your heart towards sinners and to more fully understand the extent of the love and grace Jesus has extended to you.