

A FRIEND NAMED JESUS

Hebrews 4:14-16

This is a world that is interconnected with everyone. No longer are religious or political groups local but global in perspective. For example, when I was growing up I heard very little about the other religions such as Islam, Buddhist and Hinduism. Today that is not the case. On the political frontier who has not heard of the ongoing war between Israel and Palestine, the Sunni and Shiite struggle for power in the middle east, the rebellion against Bashar al-Assad in Syria, oil dropping from about \$120 to around \$30 a barrel, and one of the craziest political races for the Whitehouse in history? We are interconnected today in such a way that our community that we relate to has no geographic barriers. Bombarded with global news, Facebook, the internet and our handheld devices; most are in constant contact with massive numbers of people all over the world. Even though we are interconnected with devices that can send messages instantly, the communication sent and received is of such poor quality that genuine relationships rarely ever happen. Who has not seen a group of teenagers sitting together at a table and instead of spending time to develop deeper relationships with each other all they do is sit and text, ignoring each other.

No matter how evil people are I believe that every individual has a genuine desire to love and be loved by other people. Being created in the image of God (Genesis 1:27) who is pure love (1 John 4:8) it should not come as a surprise to us that we crave to have love extend from and us and to be received in return. Don't most of us seek to find a genuine friend that loves us unconditionally, regardless of the secrets they learn about us? Absolutely. I want to tell you a story about a man who sought and found a friend that dramatically changed his life!

His Name is Joseph Medlicott Scriven.

Joseph Scriven was born in 1819 of prosperous parents in Banbridge, Ireland. He was a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin. At age 25 he fell in love. He found his soul mate and best friend but on the day before his wedding day tragedy struck. While crossing a bridge to visit Joseph, his fiancé fell off her horse and drowned in the River Bann in Ireland. Can you imagine how broken you would feel, being so close to marrying your best friend only to have to bury her! Joseph of course was crushed so he sailed to Canada to forget his broken heart by starting a brand new life. He started his life in Canada and to his surprise fell in love again and got engaged the second time. All seemed to be going right in his life again. Finally, he was happy and about to marry his new best friend. But before he got married his fiancée got sick and four months later died of pneumonia. What would be the odds that this would happen twice? How could he ever recover and would he be forced to give up on finding a best friend? Would you at the second funeral sit there and blame God? This was not the end of tragedy for Joseph. His mother got deadly ill and he could not afford to return to Ireland. Heartbroken and helpless Joseph decided to write a poem to his mother so that she might receive some comfort. That poem has been sung in churches ever since: **"What a Friend We Have in Jesus."** Joseph never did remarry but he did find His very best friend – one that would never leave him and one who loved him unconditionally. His name was Jesus and there are 7 really good reasons why He is the very best friend any person can have!

Point 1: Jesus is a True Friend Because He loves us Unconditionally

They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes. ² When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. ³ This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. ⁴ For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. (Mark 5:1-4)

No one from his community wanted anything to do with this person. He was on the outskirts of society because he was violent and being controlled by demons. Many people in society are ostracized because they have made some bad choices in life like this person. Other times we kick people out of our social circle simply due to their personality being so different than ours. Regardless of the reasons the outcome is still the same: a person created in the image of God is not being loved. Most of you probably know of people you would never dream of extending the hand of friendship. For instance, do we love the prostitutes, tax collector, drug addicts, Islamic extremists and dictators or do we, like village of this man, choose to kick those people out of our lives?

⁵ Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones. ⁶ When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. ⁷ He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!” ⁸ For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you impure spirit!” (Mark 5:5-8)

Night and day this person cries out for the relief of pain. Why he cut himself we are not told but it could have been due to having no hope and no one to help him out of a really bad situation that he had created for himself. How many in our society dream of having someone to care for them while texting to the masses who only know the avatar or façade they have created of themselves? Way too many! In seeking out this man and helping him Jesus demonstrates to us today that no one is beyond redemption and as such all are worthy of our love. Jesus Christ is the great high priest who sympathises with our weaknesses (Hebrews 4:14). He unconditionally loves everyone (Romans 6:10), even His enemies. If we are to do what Jesus did, then we are to love all people including those bound to their sins who see us as their enemies. Adversity from another should not lead to withdrawal of friendship (Proverbs 17:17).

Point 2: Jesus is a True Friend Because He Rebukes our Sins to Encourage us to Repent

⁵ Better is open rebuke than hidden love. ⁶ Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses (Proverbs 27:5-6)

Psalms 139 states Jesus Christ knew you before you were born and has written your whole life experiences, thoughts and feelings down into a book. There are simply no secrets that you can keep from your Saviour! What does Jesus do with all the sin that we cherish? Often we see sins in other people's lives and choose to not mention it to them in fear that they will be offended. We expect our enemies to ignore our sins and puff us up but don't God's people have a responsibility to confess their sins to one another (James 5:16)? Jesus rebukes and disciplines those He loves (Hebrews 12:6). He simply does not want us to remain in bondage to our sins! A true friend does not ignore your sins but gently helps you repent!

Point 3: Jesus is a True Friend Because He Never Leaves us

²⁴ One who has unreliable friends soon comes to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24)

We all know what it is like to have people in our lives that say they are friends but when we really need them they are no where to be found. Ever have a sin exposed and all your friends head for the hills, never to be seen in public with you again? Jesus in the Great Commission promises that He will always be with us until the end of the world (Matthew 28:20). There is simply no where we can go where Jesus is not (Psalms 139)

Point 4: Jesus is a True Friend Because He Sacrificed His Life for Us

¹⁶ For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16-17)

I believe it is our very best friends that make time for us. When we need a shoulder to cry on they take the time out of their busy schedule to cry with us (Romans 12:15). When we are bed ridden and need someone to help us stack wood, clean garages or our homes; they make the time. Jesus not only made time for us sinners but did so at the expense of His very life. There is no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends (John 15:13). Jesus is the best friend we could ever imagine because when our many sins were seen by God day and day out He chose to sacrifice His life for us.

Point 5: Jesus is a True Friend because He Carries our Burdens and Renews our Strength

²⁸ “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30)

³¹ but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (Isaiah 40:31)

There are days that are so miserable that you make Eeyore from Winnie the Pooh seem like the life of the party. Maybe the news caster said it would be a hot sunny day of 77 and it ended up pelting freezing rain. Or you ran into an insurmountable problem that seems to have no remedy. Or maybe you dumped some precious cargo at work and now you are not sure how to tell your boss. Some times we just need a helping hand. Matthew 11:28 states that when we are weary and burdened Jesus will give us rest. He will exchange our yoke of turmoil for one that is easy and light. And when we are weary and exhausted Jesus promises us if we wait on Him He will give us the strength we need to soar like eagles (Isaiah 40:31).

Point 6: Jesus is a True Friend because He Mentors Us

¹⁵ For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. ¹⁶ Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. (Hebrews 4:15-16)

If you want to be a better person than you currently are then the experts recommend finding a mentor who is the very best of who you want to become. Hanging around with them and taking their advice is the best way to emulate their life style. Taking advice from another is much easier if they can relate to where you are and advise you how to incrementally move forward. Hebrews 4:15 states Jesus is our ultimate mentor because He was tempted to miss the mark of holiness like we often do but never did! Jesus understands how hard it is to live in this world but not become part of it (Romans 12:2). Jesus still loves us when when we fall down in our own sin and can’t get up! He is the ultimate mentor who always loves and provides the means of being forgiven (1 John 1:9) and restored to the narrow path of righteousness (Matthew 7:13)!

Point 7: Jesus is a True Friend Because He Provides the Path to our Adoption

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners (Isaiah 61:1)

Jesus has provided the only path (John 14:6) in which to be released from the bondage of sin (Isaiah 61:1) to embrace adoption as His children (Galatians 4:5). Romans 8:16-17 states: “The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs – heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.” Blessed be the name of the Lord for showing us sinners such tender mercy!

Conclusion

Since we are created in the image of God who is pure love we have in our souls a craving to love and be loved. We all need friends in life and I can think of no better friend than Jesus and here are 7 reasons why:

Point 1: Jesus is a true friend because He loves us unconditionally.

Point 2: Jesus is a true friend because He Rebukes our Sins to Encourage us to Repent

Point 3: Jesus is a true friend because He Never Leaves us

Point 4: Jesus is a true friend because He Sacrificed His Life for Us

Point 5: Jesus is a true friend because He Carries our Burdens and Renews our Strength

Point 6: Jesus is a true friend because He Mentors us

Point 7: Jesus is a true friend because He Provides the Path to our Adoption

Are you friends with Jesus?