

# JESUS THE FRIEND OF SINNERS\*

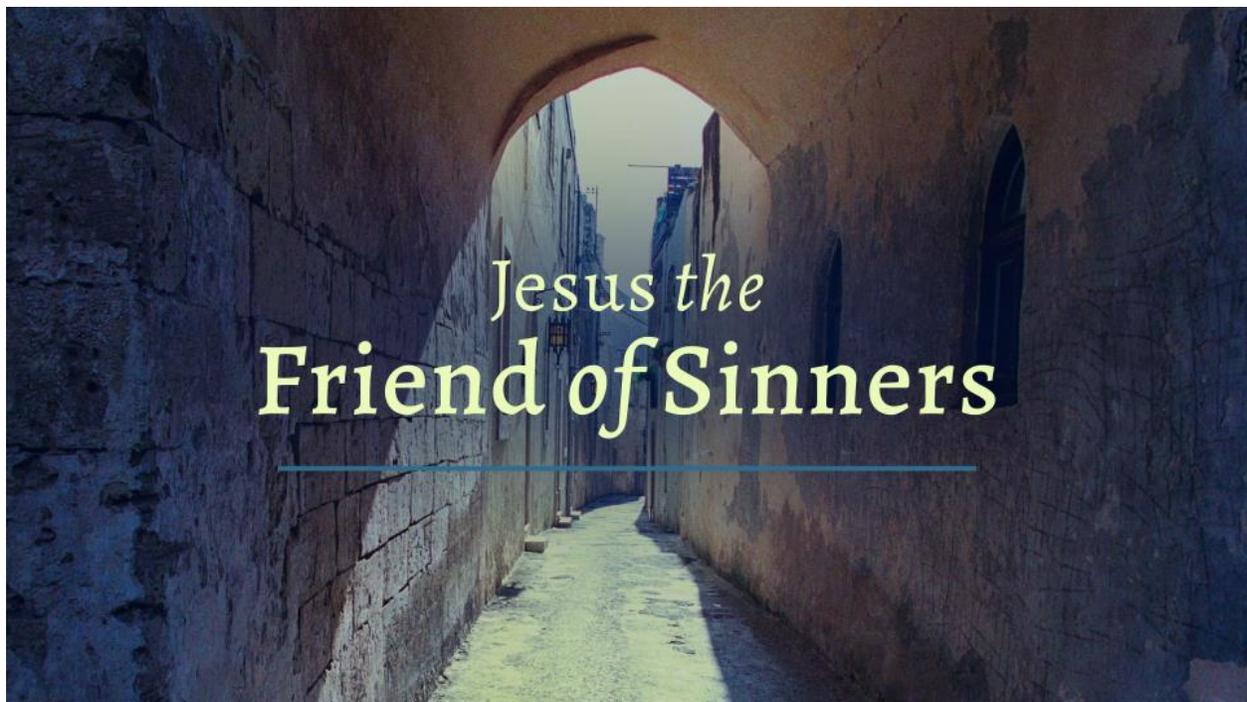
*Jesus was mocked as a friend of sinners. He called His disciples friends. Friendship with Him changes us.*

## SCRIPTURE†

Exodus 33:7-23<sup>§</sup>  
2 Chronicles 20:1-19  
Psalm 41; Proverbs 8:24  
Isaiah 41:1-10  
**Matthew 9:9-13**  
**Matthew 11:16-19**  
**Luke 5:29-32**  
**Luke 7:31-35**  
**John 11:1-44**  
**John 15:1-17**  
John 15:12-17

## MUSIC‡

Abide with Me  
As the Deer  
Come, Christians, Join to Sing  
Come, Lonely Heart  
**Come Unto Me (Achterberg) TTBB & more**  
I Am Thine, O Lord  
**I Could Not Do without Thee (Curry) SATB**  
**Jesus, Lover of My Soul (Koerts) SATB**  
Nearer, Still Nearer  
O God, You Are My God  
Our Great Savior  
What a Friend We Have in Jesus  
**When Love Came Down to Earth (Shackley) SATB**



**NORTHWEST VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH**

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\* Theme fits in **Ministry of Christ** series.

† Daily preparatory readings shown in **bold**.

‡ Published choral and vocal music shown in **bold**.

§ This and the other O.T. references address “friends of God,” an alternate angle on this theme.

# PRESENTING & PROMOTING THIS THEME

## NOT EMPLOYEES

**Matthew 11:19; John 15:1-17** | *Our definition of “friend” has become shallower because of social media, but Jesus defined the word Himself. Jesus’ friends were not treated like servants or employees (despite his true status), but as His loved ones. The Greek word for friend is philos, the nominative of phileo. His friends were those that He brought into His sphere of life and had a level of relationship with. The Pharisees used the term “friend of sinners” in a derogatory manner, calling Him a lover of these people: i.e. drunk-lover. Jesus didn’t just hang out with sinful people; His influence changed them to be more like Him.*

**Promotional Post:** Jesus was mocked for being a “friend” of even repentant sinners, such as Matthew the tax collector. But later He owns the title, as He calls His disciples “friends.” When we read the Gospels, it’s hard to miss this characteristic of Jesus: though He is clear in His call to repentance, He is willing to spend time with sinners.

This Sunday, we worship Jesus, the Friend of Sinners—and that’s us! Prepare for worship with these readings from the Gospels:

[Insert preparatory Scripture readings.]

## JESUS OUR FRIEND

*This theme builds on the theme of Jesus as our Rabbi. Jesus’ being our friend is a step closer than the student-rabbi or master-servant relationship. He calls us “friends” and allows us the privilege of being part of what He is doing. And in calling us His friends, He is also saying that He is our Friend.*

**Promotional Post:** [Social media post]

[Insert preparatory Scripture readings.]

Who are your friends? Maybe you think of the people you like doing things with. We have our “bowling crew,” our “board game friends,” and our “workout buddies.” Maybe you think of the people you can talk with for hours. A friend of mine used to say, “A real friend is someone you can sit with in total silence without it getting awkward.”

Friends are people you trust, the people you assume will come running when you have a need and rejoice when you are successful. Some of us are fortunate enough to have friendships like David and Jonathan’s—a friendship that’s a true gift from God. They shared a *friendship covenant* of loyalty and love and were committed to encourage and challenge each other in the faithfulness of God.

Last week we worshipped Jesus, our Master. But in John 15, Jesus moves beyond the master-servant relationship (which is still true). He calls His disciples—and by extension, us—His friends. In John 15, He says:

“This is my commandment, that ye love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you. Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.”

Who are Jesus’ friends, according to this passage? Those for whom He lays down His life—those who obey His call to salvation. He says the disciples are His friends because He shares with them His mind, His plans, Himself.

We might have hesitated to call Jesus our friend, had He not said it himself. But we, as His disciples, are in a friendship with Jesus. He laid down His life for us. He does not hold us at arms’-length; He does not dismiss us as mindless servants. He invites us to know Him and fellowship with Him, personally. (Caleb French)

## FRIEND OF SINNERS

*Jesus was called in a derogatory manner, the "Friend of Sinners." Believers saved from their sins have often owned this title of Jesus as a term of affection; this is good and natural, to a point. After all, Jesus called His disciples His "friends." But this term does not mean Jesus is just "hanging out" or dismissing sinners. We must balance God's holiness with the sweet fellowship He invites us to share with Him. He is our Friend. But it is a unique friendship unlike that with a human peer.*

[These words are adapted from an article by Kevin DeYoung\*\*.] Everyone who knows anything about the gospels ... knows that Jesus was a friend of sinners. He often drew [criticism from] the scribes and Pharisees for eating with sinners. ... One of the insults hurled against Him was that He was “a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!” As Christians, we love to sing of this Pharisaical put-down because it means that *Jesus is a friend to sinners like us*. We [are also] challenged by Jesus’ example ... not to turn away outsiders in a way that Jesus never would.

As precious as this truth is ... it needs to be safeguarded against ... error. It is all too easy ... to take the general truth that Jesus was a friend of sinners and twist it all out of biblical recognition. So, “Jesus ate with sinners” becomes “Jesus loved a good party,” which becomes

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\*\* “Jesus, Friend of Sinners: But How?” *The Gospel Coalition* (Edited by Caleb French)

“Jesus was more interested in showing love than taking sides,” which becomes “Jesus always sided with religious outsiders,” which becomes “Jesus would [shrug off] violations of [God’s Law]” ... [and] “Jesus hung out with drunks.” ...

If we are to celebrate that the Lord Jesus is a ... friend of sinners—and we should—we must pay careful attention to the ways in which Jesus actually was a friend to sinners. ... [There are] five main [places] in the gospels where Jesus is chastised for getting too close to sinners. ... What we see from ... these passages [when we take them together] is that sinners were drawn to Jesus, that Jesus gladly spent time with sinners who were open to His teaching, that Jesus forgave repentant sinners, and that Jesus embraced sinners who believed in Him. / Jesus was a friend of sinners not because He winked at sin, ignored sin, or enjoyed light-hearted revelry with those engaged in immorality. Jesus was a friend of sinners in that He came to *save* sinners and was very pleased to *welcome* sinners who were open to the gospel, sorry for their sins, and on their way to putting their faith in Him.

[Jesus did call His disciples His “friends.” If we are His followers, He is our faithful friend; we enjoy daily fellowship and communion with Him. Today, we *worship* Him—the Friend of sinners like us.]