

# More About Jesus, Week 30: Jesus loved people

by Paul Hammons

We don't learn a lot from the Bible about what Jesus' personal relationships look like, outside of his teachings to the apostles. But we do get hints of the fact that Jesus had friends - some of whom had deeper and more personal relationships with him than others.

We first read about the family of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in **Luke 10**, when Jesus visited their village and taught in their home, accepting their hospitality. And the exchange between Martha and Jesus would indicate that there was a close relationship there - enough for Martha to complain to Jesus that her sister wasn't helping her and expecting a response, and for Jesus to provide a gentle but firm correction.

And in **John 11**, we read that *"Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus"* (**John 11:5 - ESV**). When he learned of Lazarus' illness, he told his apostles, *"Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him"* (**v. 11**).

John's gospel more than the others tells us that Jesus not only loved people in general, but that he also had close, personal friendships. John refers to himself as *"the disciple whom Jesus loved"* (**John 13:23**), and we often see examples of Jesus taking his "inner circle" of Peter, James, and John with him when he only wanted a select few witnesses to one of his miracles.

Even in Jesus' early years, Luke tells us that he grew *"in favor with God and man."* It seems as if Jesus was well-liked and respected even before his ministry began. He was someone who had friends and was a friend to others.

It's possible that a lot of Jesus' sociability came from his mission to seek and save the lost. He was known to eat and drink with all sorts of people - tax collectors, sinners, even Pharisees! - and the Jewish leaders called him *"a glutton and a drunkard"* because he seemed to enjoy those opportunities to eat and drink with people (**Luke 7:34**).

In one instance, Jesus pointed out that his purpose was to call sinners to repent (**Matt. 9:13**), which meant speaking to them, taking an interest in them, and even spending time with them. And he instructed his disciples to have the same interest and association with the people they taught when they went out into the towns of Galilee and Judea:

*Acquire no gold or silver or copper for your belts, no bag for your journey, or two tunics or sandals or a staff, for the laborer deserves his food. And whatever town or village you enter, find out who is worthy in it and stay there until you depart. As you enter the house, greet it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it, but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. - Mt 10:8-13*

Jesus certainly took time to be alone in prayer, reminding us that our most important relationship is always with the Father. But for the most part, he was surrounded by people, having compassion for them when they were hungry (**Mat. 15:32**), in need of healing (**Matt. 14:14**), wanting to be taught (**Matt. 9:33**), or grieving (**Luke 17:11-15**).

He rarely missed an opportunity to start conversations with individuals, whether by a well in Samaria (**John 4:7**) or walking through a packed street in Jericho (**Luke 19:5**). John even gives two examples of Jesus actively seeking out men whom he had previously healed to speak to them again (**John 5:14, 9:35**).

And while we don't have specific examples, we know from prophesy that Jesus loved worshiping with people as well. Jesus felt a kinship with humanity - particularly those who love God.

*For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying, "I will tell of your name to my brothers; in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise."- Heb 2:11-12*

When we think about what it would be like to meet Jesus, we don't envision someone who would not want to be in our company, or who would be uninterested in taking time to speak with us or even coming to our homes and sharing a meal with us. We see someone who wants to befriend us - because in doing so, he brings us into fellowship with God as well:

*No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you. You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. - Jn 15:15-16*

If we want to be like Jesus, we must love people, and we ought to actively seek out time to be with God's people beyond just the assembly, *"abounding in love one for another"* (**1 Thes. 3:12**).