

What Jesus Felt About People



SABBATH—AUGUST 22

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: John 4:7–30, 39–42; Matthew 15:21–28; 2 Thessalonians 1:1–4; Romans 15:7; 1 Peter 3:15.

MEMORY VERSE: “But keep the Lord Christ holy in your hearts. Always be ready to answer everyone who asks you to explain about the hope you have” (1 Peter 3:15, ERV).



Jesus accepts people who feel awful guilt and have given up hope in life.

THE MORE WE STUDY JESUS' LIFE, the more we are surprised by His skill to accept people and make them feel that they have worth. True, Jesus scolds the religious leaders of His day. But Jesus also gladly accepts people who fight against sin. Jesus accepts people who feel awful guilt and have given up hope in life. Jesus gives them His grace. Grace is God's gift of mercy, forgiveness, and power over sin. Jesus gives His grace to the worst sinners. His forgiveness is deep. It goes deeper than their sins. Jesus' love has no limits.

Jesus has no pride in His heart. He does not behave as if He is better than anyone. He sees in every person someone that God made. Yes, humans are fallen, but Jesus came to save them from sin. No one is too far away for His love to reach. Jesus shows respect to everyone He meets. He causes people to want to join His kingdom because He believes in people. Their lives are changed by His life because He cares for them so deeply. So, people become what He believes they can become.

In this week's lesson, we will explore more deeply Jesus' thoughts and feelings about people. We will learn how to live this way in our own lives.

HEARTS THAT ARE OPEN TO THE GOOD NEWS

(John 4:7–30, 39–42)

Read Jesus' conversation with the Samaritan woman in John 4:7–30, 39–42. How does this conversation show the truth that all types of people are open to the Good News, even in places we do not expect?

Samaria is the last place that Jesus' followers expect to find anyone ready to accept the Good News. The Samaritans always fought with the Jews about correct teachings and worship. This disagreement went on for many years. Hundreds of years before, the Samaritans wanted to help build the temple in Jerusalem. But the Jews did not let them. Why not? The Samaritans married wives who worshiped false gods. Also, the Samaritans had wrong beliefs about religion. So, the Jews refused their help. Because of this, the Samaritans built their own temple on Mount Gerizim. No wonder Jesus' followers are more than ready to skip going to Samaria to share the Good News!

Jesus sees in Samaria what His followers do not see: hearts open to the Good News. John's story about the Samaritan woman at the well starts with these words: " 'So he left Judea and went back to Galilee. On the way to Galilee, he had to go through [into] the country of Samaria' " (John 4:3, 4, ERV). Jesus "had to" go into Samaria because the Holy Spirit told Him about people there who were open to the Good News. When the Holy Spirit opens our eyes, our vision changes. We see all the wonderful things that are possible where other people see only trouble.

Read Acts 8:4, 5, 14. What happens in Acts because of Jesus' visit to Samaria and the work He does there?

Jesus' followers wanted to pass by Samaria without giving the Samaritans the chance to know about the Good News. Jesus sees what His followers do not see. Jesus understands that the Holy Spirit helps the woman to be willing to accept the Good News. She gives her life to Jesus. It is a miracle that changes the lives of many people in that city. We will not always see fast or big changes happen from the work we do to share Jesus. But we must share the Good News with people anyway. We must plant the seeds of truth in their hearts. Then later on, when the seeds grow, these people will bring other people with them into God's kingdom.



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A HEART CHANGE (Matthew 15:21–28)



A mean and nasty spirit will push people away from you. They often will not want to hear anything you have to say, even if you share the truth.

Our thoughts and feelings often can change people's lives for the better. A mean and nasty spirit will push people away from you. They often will not want to hear anything you have to say, even if you share the truth.

But thinking good things about other people causes people to want to be with us. Kind words and acts help friendships to grow. Jesus makes this rule plain and clear when He says, "I no longer call you servants, because servants don't know what their master is doing. But now I call you friends, because I have told you everything that my Father told me" (John 15:15, ERV). Friends accept each other, even if they make mistakes. Friends freely share with each other their joys and sorrows.

Read Matthew 15:21–28 and Mark 14:6–9. These verses tell us about two women who are very different. Jesus does not act the same with both women. He is gentle with one woman. But He does not pay attention to the other woman at first. What do you see in each story that shows you that Jesus tries to save each woman and build her trust in Him?

The woman in Matthew 15 is a Canaanite. Jesus does not give her what she wants at first. But she continues to ask Him to help her. This causes her faith to grow. In the end, Jesus gives the woman what she wants. Then Jesus says something so surprising. No Jewish religious leader at the time would say this to a suffering Canaanite woman. Jesus says to her in front of everyone, "Woman, you have much faith" (Matthew 15:28, NLV). Jesus praises the Canaanite woman's faith. He says one of the best things a religious teacher could say to someone searching for truth. The woman's heart must have been filled with joy! For sure, Jesus' words changed her life in a big way.

The woman who washes Jesus' feet with expensive perfume is a Jew. She also is a woman that other people look down on. They do not think well of her at all because of her past. She has made many mistakes and sinned often. But Jesus forgave her. He changed her and made her new again. When other people talk bad about her, Jesus praises her actions. He says, "For sure, I tell you, wherever this Good News is preached in all the world, this woman will be remembered for what she has done" (Mark 14:9, NLV).

SHARING THE TRUTH IN LOVE (2 Thessalonians 1:1–4)

Friendship by itself does not win people to Jesus. We may have many friends. Friends are people we enjoy being with. They also enjoy being with us. But what if we never tell our friends what Jesus means to us? Or let them know how He changed our lives? Then our friendships will not help anyone find everlasting life. Sure, we may be fun to be around. But God asks us to be more than that because friendship is not enough to bring people to Jesus. Worse, unkind words and feelings can drive people away from Jesus.

Paul tells us to say “the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15, KJV). Friendship grows when we agree with people as much as possible. Friendship also grows when we show people that we accept them and praise them when they do something good. It is important that we make a habit of looking for the good in people. We must not look for the bad.

Read 2 Thessalonians 1:1–4. Make a list of some of the things that Paul praises the Thessalonians for.

There are some people who love to look for things that are wrong with other people. They feel joy when they can find something wrong that a person has done. It makes them feel better to think about the mistakes other people make!

Paul is different. He looks for the good in the churches he serves. Yes, Paul shows the churches their mistakes. Paul does not accept sin. But Paul wants to build up the churches that he started. One way that Paul does this is to talk about what the churches do right.

Ellen G. White also tells us that good friendships are important. “We must empty our hearts of pride. Then we must be kind and full of pity for other people. We must be nice to them and have tender hearts. If we do this, one hundred people will join the church where there is only one person who joins it now.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, volume 9, page 189, adapted.

Think about Ellen G. White’s quotation above. What will happen if the heart of every member in your church is kind, sweet, and full of mercy? What will people say about your church? Look into your heart. How can you do better in showing God’s love to other people?



Friendship grows when we show people that we accept them and praise them when they do something good.

THE BIBLE REASON FOR ACCEPTING PEOPLE AS THEY ARE (Romans 15:7)



Jesus knows about all the things in your life that other people may not know anything about. Yes, He knows all of that and accepts you anyway.

Read Romans 15:7 and Ephesians 4:32. As these verses show us, what is the reason for accepting other people as they are? What does it mean to have a heart that accepts other people?

In Romans 15:7 and Ephesians 4:32, Paul talks about the important rules that explain why we should accept each other. Jesus forgives and accepts each one of us. So, how can we refuse to forgive and accept each other? Because Jesus accepts us, we can accept each other, even if we have made mistakes or are not perfect.

Think hard about what this means. Think about who you really are. Think about some of the things you have done and are fighting against right now. Maybe these are things that only you know about. But you are scared at the thought about what will happen if other people know.

By your faith, Jesus accepts you anyway. He knows about all the things in your life that other people may not know anything about. Yes, He knows all of that and accepts you anyway. Not because of any good you have done. But because of His holy life and good works. Knowing all this, how should you think and feel about other people?

Accepting people means that we accept them as they are. We accept them with all their sins and bad habits. Why? Because God made them as copies of Himself. Because Jesus died for us “while we were still [anyway] sinners” (Romans 5:8, ERV) and “brought us back to God” (Romans 5:10, NLV).

First, we must build an accepting, caring friendship with someone. Then we need to share Bible truth with them in a loving way. If we do not do this, then we do not really love our friends. As friends, we care enough to share life-changing, everlasting truths with our friends.

Did Jesus say to His followers to “do whatever you want. It is all right. I will accept you anyway”? No. Jesus made it clear that “Even if you made mistakes, I will forgive you and give you power to change.” When we share Bible truth in Jesus’ spirit and with loving hearts, we will win hearts to Jesus and change lives.

How can we accept people and, at the same time, not accept their bad behavior or sin?

GOD ASKS US TO SHARE THE TRUTH IN LOVE (1 Peter 3:15)

Jesus did not fail to share the truth in love. If He had failed to share it, then that would not have been love. Love always wants the best for another person. There is no disagreement between love and truth. So, we must share the truth in a kind way with no pride in our hearts. When we do that, we show love. Jesus says, “ ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life’ ” (John 14:6, ERV). Jesus is the only way for us to be saved (Acts 4:12). Jesus’ mercy and loving-favor save us so that we can know His truth and live His life. Truth without love leads to obedience without any real spiritual life. “Love” without truth leads to a religion of feelings that cannot save you. That is why truth always must be shared in love. Then truth can lead us to a real Christian experience that gives us the true reason to live.

Read 1 Peter 3:15; 2 Timothy 4:2; and Titus 3:4, 5. How important is it for our hearts to be empty of pride when we share Bible truth? What words in these verses show us the answer?

The New Testament writers never put love above truth. The writers mix love and truth in a beautiful way, and mercy with the law, and being kind with being honest. Peter tells Christians to “Always be ready to answer everyone who asks you to explain about the hope you have” (1 Peter 3:15, ERV). You need to know what you believe and why you believe it so you can convince other people about your beliefs. But we can do this only if our hearts are empty of pride.

Paul tells Timothy to “Preach the word. Be ready to serve God in good times and bad. Correct people’s mistakes. Warn them. Encourage them with words of hope. Be very patient as you do these things. Teach them carefully” (2 Timothy 4:2, NIV). Paul tells Titus that God saves us because He is kind and loving. That is why we have new life in Him (Titus 3:5).

God also asks us to share the truth in love with a heart empty of pride. Our Lord has an end-time message for the people living on this earth. The Lord invites us to join Him in sharing His truth in love.

What if someone asks you, “Why are you a Christian?” What will you answer, and why?



God asks us to share the truth in love with a heart empty of pride.



As God's servants, we must talk about heaven's Gift: Jesus.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Jesus is as gentle as a shepherd. He is as loving as a parent. His mercy cannot be matched by anything. Jesus is our loving Savior. He shows us His blessings in the most attractive way. Jesus does not only want to tell us about His blessings for us. But He also wants us to want them with all our hearts. As His servants, we must talk about heaven's Gift: Jesus. The wonderful love of Jesus will melt hearts. His love will do what talking only about teachings and Bible truth cannot do. "Your God says, 'Comfort, comfort my people.' 'Zion, you have good news to tell. Go up on a high mountain and shout the good news. Jerusalem, you have good news to tell. Don't be afraid; speak loudly. Tell this news to all the cities of Judah: "Look, here is your God! . . . Like [the same as] a good shepherd, he takes care of his people. He gathers [holds] them like lambs in his arms." ' Isaiah 40:1, 9–11 [ERV]."—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pages 826, 827, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① It is sad that some people try to feel better by talking about the mistakes other people make. How can we be sure not to fall into this same trap?
- ② A friend of yours comes back from a funeral. He says to you, "I am so glad my aunt is up in heaven looking down at me. It makes me feel so good." From what we learned this week about how to share the truth, how will you answer?
- ③ "The act of looking for evil in other people causes evil in the ones who look for it. When we think about the mistakes of other people, we are changed. We become the same as them. But when we look at Jesus and talk about His love and perfect life, we become changed. Then we start to become the same as Jesus is. When we think about the beautiful holy life Jesus lived, we shall become holy and pure in heart. We shall live with God. When we live with God, a light shines from our lives that brightens the life of everyone who is connected with us."—Ellen G. White, *Gospel Workers*, page 479, adapted.

19-year-old Simo Vehkavuori started to think that maybe he had made a big mistake in life. This thought came to him when he visited his Seventh-day Adventist uncle and aunt in Sweden. Three years earlier Simo had made a decision at a summer camp to follow God. But Simo didn't keep his promise to God. Now Simo was worried. He wondered, "Have I lost God's loving-favor?"

One night, Simo went to the garden behind his uncle and aunt's house. He knelt by a large flower bush. Tears wet his face. "Jesus, will You please accept me? If tonight is the right time to give my heart to You, please show me a sign," he cried. "Maybe You will let a star fall."

Simo stood and looked up. A large star fell in the night sky.

Then Simo left his aunt and uncle's house and went back home to Finland. Soon the whole farming community heard about Simo's decision to follow God. Some people made fun of Simo. Simo started to wonder if maybe he should not be so bold about sharing his faith with people.

One evening, a government manager came to check on his family's farm. The government manager had heard that Simo had given his life to Jesus. She made fun of Simo as he milked the cows in the barn.

"I hope you did not become a Christian in Sweden," she said. "You should go to dances and movies with other young people and just have fun."

Simo looked up at the woman. "Dear friend, I met Jesus as my personal Savior in Sweden. I want to go wherever He leads me."

Just as he finished talking, a loud bang shook the barn. Lightning struck the ground. The lightning exploded between Simo and the cow that he milked. The cow dropped dead. The other cows fell on their knees. Then the cows started to moo wildly. Simo's rubber boots had kept him safe from the shock.

The government manager did not move. Her face was pale. Her work equipment fell in the nearby gutter filled with cow poop. At last she said, "Simo, can you forgive my careless words?" She no longer made fun of him. "Stay on your chosen road." After a pause, she asked, "How can I get on the same road to God as you?"

Simo made up his mind not to be shy or afraid about sharing his faith ever again. In his room that night, he prayed, "Take my whole heart and life. Let me follow wherever You lead me."

INSIDE *Story*

by ANDREW MCCHESENEY

TALKING BOLDLY IN FINLAND



**Simo stood and looked up.
A large star fell in the
night sky.**



**Simo is now 84 and
retired. He worked for
many years as a pastor
and church leader
in Finland.**