

# I'd Like You to Meet a Friend of Mine

Message for Sunday, September 8, 2013  
by Bruce Fraser

**Scripture:** John 4:4-30, 39-42

**Children's Message:** John 1:35-42

There was this girl in a church youth group named Allison. She grew up in a home where they didn't go to church or talk about God. She was a pretty messed up kid who hung around a tough crowd of girls. But another friend brought her to youth group once and she heard about a mission trip to Mexico where they were going to work with poor people. Allison liked helping others, so she signed up for the trip.

When she got there she was astonished with the poverty. Allison grew up in a home where she had everything. She had tons of clothes and tons of spending money, even enough to support her little drug habit. But here in Mexico she saw little children covered in dirt, playing in the same clothes every day. Despite their surroundings, these children had the biggest smiles on their faces. Allison spent the week with them, watching these children come to the small church in the village and laugh and sing songs, praising Jesus' name. Allison couldn't understand why these poor children were smiling. What did they have to smile about? Allison did understand one thing. She had everything she wanted, and she DIDN'T have a smile like that. But she wanted it. So right there in Mexico, she got down on her knees in the dirt and gave her life to Jesus.

When she got back to school her friends began to notice a change in her. They asked her what was different. So she told them. "You see I went down to Mexico and saw all these poor children who had absolutely nothing. But there was something different about them. They all had a huge smile on their face. And do you know what the smile was from?"

All her friends nodded their heads no. "No- what was it?"

"It was Jesus. They all had Jesus in their life. And I know this might sound trippy, but I have him now too. And look!" Allison smiled bigger than she ever smiled in her entire life.

Her friends chuckled at first. "Are you serious?"

Allison quickly replied, "Serious as a heart attack! I found Jesus!"

"Well . . . is he in Mexico?"

"No . . . you can find him here too. Come, I'll show you."

That next Tuesday Allison walked into youth group with four of the SCARIEST LOOKING GIRLS you've ever seen. They had on combat boots and piercings where no-one should have piercings. They came in saying, "If this is good enough for Allison, this is good enough for me."

Those girls started coming to that church, just because Allison:

- Jesus came into her life
- She told others about it
- She invited them to come and find out more.

Do you have friends that you can invite to come to church with you next Sunday? Will you do it? I hope so.

**Sermon:** "I'd like you to meet a friend of mine"

Invite people to greet one another (a lot have been away for the summer). After they've had a good chance to do that, say, "Stop! Look around – who's missing? Who do you sometimes see at church, but that person isn't here today? Write down their names on your bulletin. Later today, give them a phone call. You're not the attendance patrol asking, "Where were you this morning? You weren't at church!" Instead, you're part of the church family: "I missed you this morning at church. Is everything alright?"

While we're still mingling around, I'd like you to pair up with someone. If you can't find a partner, then make a triplet. Everyone find someone? Good.

Now ask your partner, "The very first Sunday you came to this church, what was your reason for coming?" I'm not talking about why you *kept* coming; just simply, "Why did you come that very first Sunday?"

Take a minute right now to do that. Each of you should get a turn to tell your reason.

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Now I'll do a little survey of your answers. How many said:

- I came with my parents when I was growing up
- Someone invited me to come
- I saw the ad in the newspaper
- I saw the sign out front
- I was just curious
- Other?

When they've done this survey in other churches, those first two items are usually the top two. And in some

churches, “someone invited me” accounts for 90% of the people.

My goal in this message today is to encourage you to make a commitment to invite someone new to come with you to church next Sunday. In fact, at the end of this message, I’m going to ask you to stand up with me, as a sign that you are making that commitment. So for the next few minutes, while you’re thinking about what I’m saying, the back part of your brain can be thinking, “Whom could I invite to church?”

### 1) Experience Jesus and his love and forgiveness

I’m looking at the passage of Scripture in John 4:5-42. Jesus meets this woman drawing water from a well. Jesus asks her for a drink, which opens up a conversation about water and being thirsty. Jesus finally says, “I’ve got some water you can have – if you drink it, you’ll never be thirsty again.”

Of course, she’s intrigued by this. She more or less says, “Give me some of this spiritual Gatorade.”

But then Jesus does a 180 degree turn. He turns the conversation to her love life; he says, “Go and get your husband.” Of course she doesn’t have a husband; in fact, she’s living common law with some guy. This places her in danger: a strict rabbi could order that she be killed for sexual immorality.

So she doesn’t lie, but she doesn’t tell the whole truth, either. She says, “I don’t have a husband.”

How many of you have ever done that? You’ve got into some kind of trouble, and you are giving your side of the story. You don’t exactly lie, but you tell the story to make yourself look as good as possible. I’ve done that; anyone else here done that?

Here’s a glimpse of the divinity of Jesus: he’s never met her before, and yet he knows all about her. “You have had five husbands, and the man you live with now is not your husband.” She’s astonished that he knows all this. But the really astonishing thing is what happens next: Jesus still offers her new life. Despite her sinful life, he still reveals himself as the Messiah, God’s Saviour. She experiences Jesus and his grace: she receives forgiveness and love which she doesn’t deserve.

If you’ve experienced Jesus and his forgiveness and his love, you know what I’m talking about. It’s the most incredible, wonderful experience in the world.

If you’ve never experienced that, you literally don’t know what you’re missing. You know something’s missing, but maybe you’ve never been able to put your finger on it.

Everyone hungers for grace or forgiveness. There’s a story from Spain about a father and son who exchanged angry words – the kind of words which are spoken without thinking, and then you think of nothing else from then on. The son ran away from home. The father was filled with regret and heartache and went searching for his son. He travelled for months all over the country, but to no avail. Finally, in a last desperate effort to find him, the father put an ad in a Madrid newspaper. The ad read: “Dear Paco, meet me in front of this newspaper office at noon on Saturday. All is forgiven. I love you. Your Father.”

By twelve noon on Saturday, there were over 800 young men named Paco in front of the newspaper building.

Forgiveness and love is something which all of us hunger for. Jesus is the answer to that need. If you’ve never done that, you can do that right now. Pray with me like this:

**Jesus, I’m like Paco. I’ve said things and done things that were not right. I’d like a fresh start. So I come to you and ask forgiveness for all the wrong things in my life. I turn away from them, and I follow you instead. I surrender my life to you. Amen.**

First step: she experiences Jesus forgiveness and love. That led to:

### 2) Tell someone else the good news

Let’s go on. After this, the woman goes back into the village, and starts telling everyone what happened to her. In verse 39 she says, “He told me everything I have ever done!”

Can you just see some of the guys in the village, with their eyes growing wide? ... “*Everything?!!*”

And her nodding with wide eyes. “Yes – everything! But he forgives me for it all!”

“All of it?”

“All of it!”

Jesus offers each one of us forgiveness for all that we’ve done wrong. Are you excited about that? Now if you’ve never experienced Jesus and his love, you have nothing

to talk about. But if you have, you've got the greatest news in the world.

There was one more thing she did, something that we can do as well.

### 3) Invite them to come and see for themselves

She invited them to come and find out for themselves. They probably had questions she couldn't answer. But she knew that if they met Jesus, that would change everything. In verse 29 she says, "Come and meet a man who told me everything I ever did!"

Do you sometimes wish you could talk to your friends about what Jesus means to you, but you're afraid to because you don't know to answer their questions? Maybe you just get all tongue-tied.

You can do what she did: invite them to come and see for themselves. Invite them to come to church with you. Experience what it's like to worship God. When people talk with God, sing to God, listen to the truth of God's word, and just are open to the Holy Spirit to touch their lives – there's something about that which is beyond words. You can simply say to your friends, "Why not come and see for yourself?"

That's it: just three simple steps:

- 1) Experience Jesus and his forgiveness and love
- 2) Tell someone else about it
- 3) Invite them to come and see for themselves.

A few minutes ago, I asked the question, "Who's missing?" We looked around and saw people that are sometimes here, but not here today. But there are still more people missing. I'm thinking now about people who have never come to church, this one or any other – or least not for a good many years. They are missing out on the greatest part of life, knowing Jesus and his forgiveness and love. Think about your neighbours... your friends... your coworkers. What would it be like if you said to one of them, "Would you like to come with me to my church next Sunday morning? It's meant a lot to me, and you might like it, too."

**Next Steps:** I'm going to ask you to do four things.

- 1) Think of someone you'd like to invite to come to church with you.
- 2) Write down the name of that person(s).
- 3) Pray for that person – right now, take a moment to do that.
- 4) Are you really going to go and speak to that person, and invite him or her to come to church with you?  
I'm asking you to make a visible sign of your commitment to do this, by standing up with me.

Pray with people standing. Give out invitation cards to everyone.