

# Jesus our Friend / Showing Compassion

Message for Sunday, July 27, 2014  
by Bruce Fraser

## Part 1: What makes a friend?

A group of friends went deer hunting and paired off in twos for the day. That night one of the hunters returned alone, staggering under an eight-point buck. “Where’s Harry?” he was asked.

“Harry had a stroke of some kind. He’s lying on the ground a couple of kilometres back up the trail.”

“You left Harry there, and carried the deer back?!”

“Well,” said the hunter, “I figured no one was going to steal Harry.” Some friend!

QUESTION: What is a friend like?

*Pair up with someone, and tell about a friend. Tell a story of exactly what that person did as a friend. Do that in pairs; no more than three in a group, or you won’t all have time to tell your story.*

So what is a friend like? *Based on those stories, ask people for one-word or one-sentence descriptions of what a friend is like. Write these on a flip chart.*

Much of what it means to be a friend is in the little things, the day to day things. Only occasionally does it involve the big things – like what Jesus did:

**John 15:13, New Revised Standard Version:**  
“No one has greater love than this, to lay down one’s life for one’s friends.”

I read an article on by a marriage counsellor, on the topic of marriage preparation. She said that the couples she works with who are preparing for marriage are so full of love for one another, that many of them say, “I would do that. I would give my life to save my wife/husband.” Well, we’re not likely to face that kind of situation. But here’s what you can do: you can take out the garbage; or clean up the mess the dog made on the floor, rather than waiting for the other person to notice it and do it. That’s what love is made of.

*Go over the list that people gave and ask, “Does Jesus fit these criteria? What kind of a friend would Jesus be?”*

Go over the items on the flipchart. I expect to find that all of them can be applied to Jesus. In fact, often he is a better friend (according to these criteria) than I am.

When you were telling stories, you may have been thinking about someone who is a close friend, maybe your best friend. But how well do you really know that person? For instance, do you know how much money they have in the bank or in investments? Even though you are friends, there are still secrets between you.

Jesus isn’t like that, though. This is what he said to his disciples:

**John 15:15, New Living Translation:**  
“I no longer call you servants, because a master doesn’t confide in his servants. Now you are my friends, since I have told you everything the Father told me.”

Jesus doesn’t hide any secrets. Here’s an example: the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke all tell about the time, just when Jesus was starting his work, that he was tempted by the devil. Now “tempted” means he was seriously thinking about doing something wrong. Otherwise it’s not a temptation. For example, I have been tempted to do many things in my life, and sadly there are too many where I gave in to the temptation. But I can honestly say that I have never in my life been tempted to pound my head with a hammer. I’m capable of doing it; but I’ve never been tempted to do it.

So the gospels tells us that Jesus was tempted. How do Matthew, Mark and Luke know that? No one else was there; there were no witnesses. How, then, did Matthew, Mark and Luke know that this happened? The only way is because Jesus himself told them. He kept no secrets from them.

Jesus offers to be your friend. Would you like to do that?

**John 14:23, Today’s English Version:**  
“Those who love me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and my Father and I will come to them and live with them.”

## Part 2: Follow Jesus’ example of compassion

Earlier in the service, we were talking about friends. We often get together for coffee or a meal with friends. That makes them companion. The word “companion” is made from two words: *com* means “with” and *pan* means “bread.” So a companion is someone with whom you share bread.

A similar word is *compassion*. *Passion* means “feel or suffer.” So the word compassion means “to feel with, or suffer with someone.”

Having compassion is a good thing. Jesus is a perfect model for us to follow.

### a) The ministry of touching and healing

Mark 1:40-42, New International Version:

A man with leprosy came to Jesus and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."

Filled with compassion, Jesus reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!" Immediately the leprosy left him and he was cured.

Jesus loved this person with leprosy. There are many ways to communicate love — helping with tasks, giving money, place to stay, talking, just being with them. Jesus did even more: he touched this person. No one touched people who had leprosy.

Whenever I visit people in a nursing home, I always try to give them a hug. It may be the only touch they've had in days.

We're going to do an exercise now which will help you get some practice at sharing your feelings with someone else. We'll need to get into lines to do this. I will show the person at the end of each line a drawing. You draw that image on the back of the next person. Then that person, who *felt* the drawing, will *share that feeling* by copying it onto the back of the next person, and so on. The last person in the row will copy it onto paper. Then we'll compare the original drawing with the final one.

Here are the two "drawings" we used:

- 1)  2) *Print your first name*

### More examples of what compassion looks like

#### b) Helping someone in need

Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan. A man travelling alone on a road in a remote area is mugged and left lying on the ground. Some religious people see him, but walk by and offer no help.

Luke 10:33-35, New American Standard Bible:

"But a Samaritan, who was on a journey, came upon him; and when he saw him, he felt compassion, and came to him and bandaged up his wounds, pouring oil and wine on them; and he put him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn and took care of him. On the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper and said, 'Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I return I will repay you.' "

#### c) Forgiving and welcoming someone who has gone wrong

Jesus told the parable of the prodigal son. This young man wasted his life and came back home, hoping to become one of the servants. At least they had a better life than what he had.

Luke 15:20-24, New International Version:

"So he got up and went to his father.

"But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him.

"The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.'

"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate."

#### d) Taking time to be with someone

Jesus was exhausted, both physically and emotionally (John the Baptist, his colleague, friend and cousin had just been executed). He desperately needed some quiet time.

Mark 6:31-34, New American Standard Bible:

He said to [his disciples], "Come away by yourselves to a secluded place and rest a while." (For there were many people coming and going, and they did not even have time to eat.) They went away in the boat to a secluded place by themselves.

The people saw them going, and many recognized them and ran there together on foot from all the cities, and got there ahead of them. When Jesus went ashore, He saw a large crowd, and He felt compassion for them because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

We've seen four examples of compassion from Jesus; either what he himself did, or his teaching: touching, helping, forgiving and welcoming, and being with someone. We did a silly game with the story about touching. But showing compassion is most definitely not a game. It's about being real. It's about taking this thing we call "love" and putting it into practice.

Compassion is what friends do naturally with one another, and that's a good thing. Jesus calls us to go beyond our circle of friends, though, and share this compassion with others.