

Q3 L09 - **Developing a Winning Attitude** - 2020-08-29

Luccas Rodor: Hi friends, it's so good to be here with you for another "Sabbath School Study Hour." Today, we have a very great study prepared for you. We're studying this quarter's lesson, which is "Making Friends For God." And today, we'll be setting lesson number nine, which is "Developing a Winning Attitude." This lesson promises to be very good, it promises to bring a lot of insight into the best attitude that we can have when we want to make friends for God.

But before we get there, we do have a free offer for you, and the name of the free offer is "From Stress to Joy." So, if you would like to receive this free offer that we have to mail to you, then all you have to do is call 866-788-3966. Or you could send a text to SH031, and you'll send that to 40544 for a digital download. And I'm sure that you will have a lot of enjoyment coming from this free offer.

But before we begin the actual study of this lesson, we have a special song for you. It's a beautiful song, I'm sure that you'll enjoy it a lot. Don't go anywhere because right after, we have our lesson of this, we have the study of this lesson.

♪♪♪

♪ Sometimes, the tempter tries to take my joy ♪
♪ And all my dreams in life he would destroy ♪
♪ But I've a friend in heaven who is listening to me, ♪
♪ ready to respond to my heart's plea ♪
♪ I believe in prayer, that the words of my mouth reach ♪
♪ the heart of God ♪
♪ Jesus is waiting there, the intercessor of my prayer ♪
♪ And He goes to His Father on His throne, ♪
♪ takes all my burdens, makes them His own ♪
♪ In a moment of despair, never forget the power of prayer ♪
♪ Morning, noon, and night, to Him I'll pray ♪
♪ a fervent prayer with faith in Jesus's name ♪
♪ And someday, I will see the path He chose for me was ♪
♪ made a little brighter when I prayed ♪
♪ I believe in prayer, that the words of my ♪
♪ mouth reach the heart of God ♪
♪ Jesus is waiting there, the intercessor of my prayer ♪
♪ And He goes to his Father on His throne, ♪
♪ takes all my burdens, makes them His own ♪
♪ In a moment of despair, never forget the power of prayer ♪
♪ Across the miles, beyond the sky, ♪
♪ through time and space, past heaven's gates, ♪
♪ Jesus cares and He hears my prayer ♪
♪ I believe in prayer, that the words of my mouth ♪

♪ reach the heart of God ♪
♪ Jesus is waiting there, the intercessor of my prayer ♪
♪ And He goes to his Father on His throne, ♪
♪ takes all my burdens, makes them His own ♪
♪ In a moment of despair, never forget the power of prayer ♪
♪ Never forget the ♪
♪ power of prayer ♪♪
♪♪♪

Luccas: All right, what a beautiful song. I hope you enjoyed that. Before we begin, we will start with a word of prayer. Dear Father God, thank You so much for Your blessings and for bringing us here today. Thank You so much for the Sabbath School lesson, Lord, where we can learn important lessons about how to live, not only the lessons that we extract from the Bible, but how to apply those lessons in our day to day life. Today, Lord, as we talk about developing a winning attitude, we ask You to truly help us to withdraw and to extract from the Bible the meaning and the lesson that You have for us today. Please bless everyone at home, wherever they may be. Please use them, Lord, throughout the rest of this week. And just guide us as we open Your Word and understand Your truth for us right now. I thank You and I ask You in the name of Jesus, amen.

All right, as I already mentioned before, this week's lesson, lesson title is "Developing a Winning Attitude." You know, friends, a lot in life has to do with our attitude. Someone once said that you can't really control everything or really anything much that happens to you. The only thing that you do have in your control is how you're going to react to that, what your attitude is going to be regarding that that happened. Now, there are many examples, very good examples in the Bible about people who had winning attitudes, winning characters, people who did things, who reacted the right way. And on the other side, we do have some examples of people that did not have winning attitudes that we can learn from. But if we really want to take the best example, the best lesson, we have to begin at Jesus.

We have to begin with Jesus, who was our very best example. He was the one that we can truly learn from, and this week's lesson opens with that. You know, even though 2,000 years have passed and 2,000 years have gone by, Jesus's life continues to intrigue us. His leadership style remains amazing to this day, relevant and intrinsic to the Christian walk. And it may be applied to our day to day, practical life, to our day to day, practical interactions with people that we have and that we meet at home, at school, at work.

You know, Christ's method of dealing with people, of treating people, of interacting with them continues to be the true model for the Christian-- for Christian witnessing. If we want to learn how to be good witnesses, if we want to learn how to make friends for God, truly we have to imitate Jesus's example in that, because His example was truly the best. The way that He dealt with people, the way that He treated people was always the best. He would approach them, He was kind, He satisfied their necessities. And then He extended His incomparable call, which was "Follow Me, follow Me."

Jesus was relatable, He was compassionate. He sincerely cared for people. This is perhaps one of the most important lessons that we can learn from His life. He cared for people, He was compassionate about them, He felt--He felt what they were feeling. And we understand that when Jesus came to our world, that's exactly what He came for. He came to live our life, to suffer our hardships, to shed our tears, to shed our blood, and eventually to die our death. So, Jesus was relatable, He could relate to what we go through on the day to day. He became part of the human family. Have you ever thought about that? Jesus became part of the human family. Actually, one of His most well-known titles, Emmanuel, it means exactly that. He became one with us, God with us. He became part of the human family to guide people, independent of their origin, independent of their social status, independent of

their religion. And this is one of the major characteristics that He provided within a context toward leadership.

The leadership in Jesus's day depended or demanded dominion over people, dominion. But Jesus opened another path. He provided another way of leading, of loving, and of guiding people. Actually, guiding people was what Jesus did throughout His whole life. That was one of His major callings, to guide people, leading their minds and their hearts, awakening in them a hunger for what they could be in Him. And this is something that we have kind of repeated throughout the whole quarter is that Jesus, He didn't see people for what they were, He saw them for what they could be, transformed by His grace and by His love.

Jesus made no distinction between those who sought Him for help or for advice, or even for those who simply wanted to know Him. And we have a few of these people in the Bible that just approached Jesus because they wanted to know Him. There was something different about Him. You know, Jesus had a very magnetic personality. Wherever He went, people wanted to meet Him, they wanted to know Him. His message always found a way into the hearts of those who heard Him.

Contrary to the rabbis of His days, contrary to the religious leaders of His days that thought that sanctity, sanctity demanded distance from people and to distance people from themselves. Jesus, who was the only one that was God, the only one that was truly holy, Jesus manifested another attitude. He was approachable, He came close to people. And that kind of attitude, friends, is what makes friends for God.

Jesus always used the best way to communicate to each individual. He treated crowds as though He were speaking to just one individual, speaking to them, loving them through metaphors and through parables that to this day remain powerful in their effect upon the different types of people, and help them comprehend themselves and their hope of salvation. And this provokes a desire of deep change.

These stories, this impact, this way that Jesus worked, that's really what provoked in people and evoked in people this desire for change, this desire to be someone else in God. We have many examples. For example, Nicodemus, the rabbi of midnight, the midnight rabbi who came to Jesus and, upon hearing that he needed to be born again, he was memorized by who Jesus was, by what Jesus was saying. And this was something way beyond all the--all the mechanical formulas of tradition that he was used to.

You know, Nicodemus was a rabbi, he was trained in the--in the discourse, in the knowledge of the rabbis. And yet, something was missing, something that only Jesus could provide. You know, friends, to Jesus, leadership had nothing to do with declarations, but with actions, capable of transforming. Even foreigners, despised within the context of the first century Israel, were received, they were accepted, they were treated as creatures of God. And what that truly teaches us is that no one is excluded from the kingdom. None are excluded, except those who decide to exclude themselves.

Jesus sought out new paths and opportunities to reach people. Jesus used anywhere, He could be anywhere, a synagogue in Capernaum, on the countryside of Galilee, on the margins of a lake, a small Samaritan village. He would arrive with the breath of God, healing paralytics, healing lepers, healing the blind, and leaving behind the fingerprints of God. I remember when He healed the son of the Roman official, blind to the difference that that man had within His context, the Gentiles, seeing them as creatures of God, seeing them for their needs, coming to their aid, treating them as royalty of heaven. That's who Jesus was.

When it came to people, Jesus was an extraordinary optimist. Those who everyone else saw as failures, Jesus saw as opportunities for the glory of His Father. No one else ever wagered so much on humans as Jesus. You know, Christ forever led us to hate who we are, to only then fall in love with who we can become in Him. He demonstrated that forgiveness is the greatest transforming force in the universe. And in this way, He exercised an influence, He exerted an influence that no one else ever had. He saw the marks of God on humans. His name, friends, still brings tears to people's eyes, making us eternally unsatisfied with those things that diminish, that dehumanize, that superficialize, and that materialize us.

As our Father, He established a powerful connection between creature and creator, connecting us and linking us into that irresistible father-son relationship. Jesus freed us from the farce of the persona to recreate in us His original plan, to transform us into real people without masks or disguises. And to be just like Him, to be more compassionate, to be more real, and to reflect His attitude. And that's where this week's lesson comes in. Because this week's lesson is all about reflecting Christ's winning attitude and reflecting the attitude that He provoked in people, the attitude that people who came into contact with Christ had when they came into contact with Him.

So, the study, this study, this week's lesson studies--study focuses on various moments of His ministry here on earth, people that He interacted with. And really one of the--or perhaps the first story that this week covers is the story found in John chapter 4, which is the study of the Samaritan woman.

You know, Jesus--and this is something incredible about the character of who Jesus was, His attitude. He spoke to the unspeakable. He touched the untouchable. He listened and He heard the unheard. And that is something already revealed through His genealogy. When you look back at Jesus's history, we find people such as Ruth, the Moabitess. We find people such as Rahab, the prostitute from Jericho. And this is just a small example of the people in Jesus's pedigree in a society. In a context where pedigree was everything, the lineage was everything, the genealogy, the blue blood was everything, Jesus allowed it to be tainted with people such as this, showing us forever that He sees people for who they truly are. And that's what really matters to Him.

You know, in John chapter 4, verse 4, we read that Jesus told His disciples that He needed to go through Samaria. The text says, "He needed to go through Samaria." Now friends, that need, it wasn't a geographical one. There were other, better ways to arrive where He was going. No Israelite would go through that route, right through Samaria. But the text tells us that Jesus needed to go through there. You see, to Jesus, there were hearts that needed to be reached. The disciples had deep--had deep set prejudices that they needed to overcome, preparing them to proclaim the gospel. You know, the Jews and the Samaritans were extremely religious people, and that demonstrates and teaches us that there are often very deep prejudices between religious people, or at least supposedly religious people.

In general, you know friends, and this is something that has to do with us, this is something that happens to us today just as it happened to them in those days. We often like to talk about other people's prejudices, other people's fanaticisms, or other people's problems. How different would the world be if people could actually just recognize their own problems, their own prejudices, their own fanaticisms, and work on that instead of extending that and placing the blame on someone else? All of us have these problems.

I remember this one time, it's really a story that my father tells me. When he was a young pastor in Brazil and he was studying--actually, he was teaching in a school, he was the chaplain of a school. And when he went there, he saw this young boy who was extremely--it was a mixture of sadness and of anger. And he asked the boy, you know, he taught that boy in high school and he knew--he knew him, and so he said, "Well, you know, what's the matter? What's going on, why are you so angry?" And the boy said, "Well, the school told me that if I don't cut my hair, they're going to kick me out." You see, this is a boarding school in South America, and it had very strict rules. You know, much like many military schools, they had very strict rules. And one of the rules was that the boys needed to cut their hair very short. And this boy had long hair, and he was very angry that they were demanding him to cut his hair. And he said, "This school's full of fanatics and this school is--they're all full of prejudice against me."

And my father said something, and later telling the story to me, I'll never forget it. He said, "Look, there are the fanatics of long hair just as there are the fanatics of the short hair." And in that way, friends, there are all different kinds of fanatics, there are all different kinds of people with prejudice, the prejudice of this kind of food or that kind of food, the prejudice of this kind of clothes or that kind of clothes, of this place of the world or that place of the world. And truly what we have to try to do is understand what is our problem, what is our prejudice, how do I work on that? I can't change someone else, but I can change myself. That has to do with my attitude regarding these things.

Now, in this story, part of the context, part of the--part of understanding Jesus's winning attitude here is understanding who the Samaritans were. You know, today when we speak about Samaritans, there is this other word that automatically almost pops up. I mean, when you think about the Samaritan, what word comes before the Samaritan? It's the word "good." When we think about Samaritan, we automatically think about the good Samaritan. But in those days, in Jesus's days, that was an oxymoron. That was a--these were two words that would never go together. Good and Samaritan, they were conflicting terms. No one would say--there were no good Samaritans, not to the Israelites. There were no good Samaritans. They were considered to be a kind of hybrid race since the times of the Assyrian invasion in 722 BC, so there was millennial hostility. They were considered to be hybrid Jews, they were seen as enemies.

You know, the Samaritans were not accepted as proselytes. Their food was more unclean than eating pig's flesh or pork flesh to the Jews. Sitting beside them was seen as being so impure that it was thought that you could contract or you could get lethal diseases just by sitting beside a Samaritan. Their witness had no impact, it was worthless in the Jewish-- in the Israelite legal system. A Samaritan could not adopt a Jewish orphan. Samaritan women were seen as unclean or impure vermin.

That's how--that's how difficult this battle, this fight between the Samaritans and the Israelite was. A Jewish man would never speak to a Samaritan woman considered to be unclean and a vermin. So, by asking for water, which was seen as an almost religious duty among the ancient Middle Easterners, Jesus reveals an extraordinary sense of closeness. This was a very politically incorrect meeting that Jesus was having here. He asks for a small favor, but one that spoke volumes amidst the hostility, the hatred, the prejudice of their people.

By asking this woman for water, Jesus was breaking millennia of hostility, of hatred, of prejudice. When denied because the woman denied His request, Jesus rises above that denial, creating an opportunity to make the greatest--the greatest offer possible.

You know, in the beginning of their encounter, it was Jesus who was thirsty, and it was the woman who had the water. But by the end, the tables turned. And at the end, it was the woman who had the thirst, and it was Jesus who had the water.

This Samaritan woman, my friends, she's not only an example of a typical Samaritan, but she's an example of a typical human. She had sought out satisfaction in superficial, empty relationships, cheap sex, five husbands, five wounds, five deceptions, five princes that had become frogs. It's not surprising that she comes to that well at noon, alone, precisely at the hottest hour. It was the custom of the women to go together for protection, and to go either in the beginning of the day or more towards the end of the day, when the day wasn't as hot. But this woman comes alone at noon because she wanted to avoid exposure. She knew that people would talk about her, people would gossip about her, they would point at her, they would accuse her and judge her, and so she didn't want to deal with that, and she comes precisely at the hottest hour of the day.

But here, Jesus offers her something above and beyond any of her previous searches, anything, above anything that she could have hoped for. What she really wanted was something that only Jesus could offer. Chapter 4, verse 14 tells us that the--Jesus told her that, "The water I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." And that's what she wanted. She wanted water that would never end. Jesus then asked her to bring her husband. And hearing that, she said, "I can't, I don't have a husband." And hearing her answer, Jesus in verses 17 and 18, He says, "You have said well, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the only--and the one whom you now have is not your husband."

Jesus already knew. He knew that she couldn't carry out what He asked, so the question is, why did He ask her? Why did Jesus ask this woman to do this thing if He already knew the answer to it? Well, it's because He wanted to give her the opportunity to confess. Or alternatively, He wanted to give her the opportunity to run away from that encounter. It would be very easy for her to say, "Okay, I'll go get him,"

and then she would go and not come back. She could have run away. She could have not exposed herself. But I imagine this woman there before God and, you know, Jesus, this is one of the only encounters where Jesus point blank says that He was the Messiah. To this lonely woman in Samaria, Jesus made one of the greatest declarations of His ministry. So, He gave her the opportunity either to confess her sin, or to run away and avoid that confrontation with her reality.

The effect that Jesus had upon this woman was astounding. Leaving her jar behind, she ran back to her village, forgetting the exposure, forgetting the embarrassment, and she went back telling everyone, "Come, see a man who told me everything that I have done. Could this be the Messiah?" This is how people react and how they behave when they drink from the living water.

This is the attitude that we have when we become sources of living water. The eyes of the disciples then in this encounter, they were open to the great harvest, to the great field that Jesus had for them. His impact was incalculable. And friends, so can ours be when we reflect His attitudes and His actions.

You know, they say that our attitudes are more important than any other human emotions. Martin Luther, the great Protestant reformer, he used to say that our attitude determines of what spirit we are. And it will also determine the limits of our influence upon other people. The lesson puts it this way, and this is in Monday's lesson.

Our attitudes often determine our ability to influence others. A harsh, critical, and unfriendly attitude is going to drive people away from you. And even if you are able to witness, your words, no matter how truthful, are much less likely to be received. In contrast, a positive attitude and a belief in others draws them to us. It creates a bond of friendship. Jesus stated that--Jesus stated this principle beautifully when He said, "No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing. But I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father, I have made--I have made known to you." That's in John 15:15.

Friends accept one another in spite of their weaknesses and mistakes, and freely share their joys and their sorrows. So, we find this reality portrayed in the life of the Samaritan woman, and also portrayed in the next few stories that the lesson brings to teach us about Jesus's winning attitude and how He would win people over for the kingdom.

The next story that we find in this week's lesson is about the Canaanite woman found in Matthew chapter 15. She is to all appearances treated very harshly by Jesus. I'll admit that studying the story when I was younger, I tried to relate or to conciliate the Jesus that I knew from the rest of the gospels to this story. Why did Jesus act this way? Why did he talk to this woman, why did he speak to her so harshly? What was going on? Who is this Jesus?

Later on, I understood what was happening here in this story. Her request to Him, the request that this woman made to Jesus, was for the healing of her daughter possessed by an evil spirit. According to Mark, this woman is a Syro-Phoenician woman. And according to Matthew, she was a Canaanite. They are both--they're both synonyms. Syro-Phoenicia was the land--was a land in Canaan. Jesus's words in the story, they seem hard, they seem harsh. But to the woman, they didn't seem that way, at least not enough to dissuade her of her mission. The words that Jesus speaks to her, they don't--they don't offend her, they don't make her give up asking for that blessing.

You know, to the modern reader, it might seem inconsistent with His character. When we analyze Jesus's ministry, his ministry of healing was mostly confined in Palestine to the Israelite nation. The question that arises here in this story is, why didn't this woman feel offended by what Jesus said? Because what Jesus says to her request is, "It's unfair to take, you know, the bread of the children and throw it to the little dogs." Who wouldn't be offended by something like that? Was Jesus calling her a little dog? What kind of comparison is that? Why did Jesus act this way? But we know that this woman, despite what Jesus said, she did not give up, and she was determined to claim the blessing that she was seeking.

Now, while we don't truly know the attitude of Jesus's words here, I mean, he could've said these words

with a wink in his eye, encouraging her to persist, not to give up. And this is something that we have to remember about the whole Bible, friends. The written word preserves the spoken word, but it can't communicate the tone of the words, the inflection, the subtleties. Perhaps his tone encouraged her to persevere. He said it in a way that sounded that He wasn't really telling her to go away as the disciples wanted, but He was encouraging her to exercise her faith.

You know, I remember growing up watching many of the--of the portrayals of Jesus and His ministry, movies about Jesus, and they're--one thing that's interesting about these kinds of movies, you know, the word for word movies, not the ones that kind of create stories and drama, the romanticized or the novel stories about Jesus's life, but the word to--the verse by verse sorts of movies about Jesus's life is that in many of these versions of these movies with different actors and different people playing the different parts, they kind of bring to life something that I had only read before.

And I'll admit that I quite enjoy watching some of these movies because it brings to life the tone, the inflection, the tears in Jesus's eyes, for example, in Matthew chapter 23, when he's calling out the Pharisees, "Woe to you, Pharisees, you hypocrites." You know, sometimes you read those words and they sound one way, but when spoken out loud and in an environment like that, and you can see the tears in Jesus's eyes as He said that, or you know, in other moments, the smile on his face when dealing with people, that brings to life certain emotions that the written Word can't portray. And so--and so, that is something that we don't have here in this story.

We have what Jesus said, but we don't have the tone, we don't have the subtlety of the inflection of His voice. Because this woman was not dissuaded of claiming that gift. You know, when we analyze what Jesus says here, the Greek word for dogs--and this is very harsh. When we read it in English, it sounds very harsh, He's calling her a dog. That's horrible, you don't do something like that. That's offensive, that's horrible. In the Greek, the word that appears here, it appears in the diminutive, in a diminutive term of-- or term of endearment. It's like a little pet, a beloved family member almost. And that softens the blow of his statement here.

So, what we see here in this story is another moment where Jesus teaches, He educates his disciples by saying something to this Gentile woman that no other rabbi at that time would say. What Jesus tells this woman, what He talks about or how He describes her is something that no rabbi at that time would say about this woman or about someone like her. Because in Matthew chapter 15, verse 28, Jesus says, "Oh woman, great is your faith." No Israelite rabbi would say that about a Gentile, but Jesus says it to her.

And here again, He teaches His disciples that all are called, all are chosen for the kingdom. Her faith in Him provided an immediate cure for her daughter. And as in other instances where we find a faith found in the synoptic gospels, or Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the synoptic gospels, as for example the centurion in Capernaum, this healing happens without a direct contact, over distance because their faith in Him was so great.

The contrasting story on the same day of the lesson, the contrasting story to this woman from Syro-Phoenicia is the story of the woman that anoints Jesus's feet. So, differently from the woman, from the Syro-Phoenician woman, from the Canaanite woman, this woman was Israelite, she was Jewish. And this story is also full of context. Jesus had been invited to eat at the house of a Pharisee named Simon.

The hospitality of those days, and think about this, all right? This is something big. Maybe this isn't something that would be considered so important in our day, but in those times, in that culture, the terms or the rules of hospitality demanded a kiss of welcome, water to wash the feet, and oil to anoint the head. And none of these small details had been offered to Jesus when he is invited to the house of this Pharisee. Did this perhaps reveal the contempt that this host had for Jesus, had for Christ? Did this perhaps reveal where his heart was really at? We don't know. But we know that the woman in the story, she comes into scene, and she comes into scene as a woman of ill repute. At the feet of that enigmatic rabbi, she weeps uncontrollably. She anoints Him with an expensive perfume, but what's more, she anoints His feet with her tears. And I imagine that there in that room, you know, and as we read this, we

have to--we have to forget what we see sometimes in movies and things like that.

Jesus, He wasn't sitting down on the chair. The way that it would happen in those days was they had a low table, and people would sit down on one arm with their feet backward. And so, this woman, she came out unannounced. She's all the way in the back. Jesus's feet is to the back, and she begins to wash His feet and to cry. Jesus had probably healed this woman, freed her from evil, from illnesses, and she was so thankful that this was the only way that she could think of repaying him and of thanking him. And so, she is there weeping, I imagine confused. She tries to dry His feet then with her hair, which was the most glorious part of the body according to 1 Corinthians 11. And she dries His feet, which is the most--or the least dignified part of the body.

And what is simply astounding in the story is Jesus's reaction, his attitude. He rises above any sort of political incorrectness, above any sort of taboo or religious prejudice. His freedom here is incredible. Jesus was absolutely free here in this situation. His acceptance of this embarrassing offer is of an intense beauty. His question to the Pharisee, who is judging Him--because that's what's happening here. This woman is there, you know, washing Jesus's feet, crying over Him. That Pharisee is judging Jesus, saying, "Well, how is this man a rabbi? How does He not know that this is horrible? This can't be happening. I can't believe this is happening." And Jesus's answer to him transcends the sublime, friends.

In Luke chapter 7, verse 44 that also records the story, Jesus asks the Pharisee, "Do you see this woman?" And truly, the answer is no. He didn't see the woman, not the real woman, not the real person in need of acceptance, in need of grace, in need of forgiveness. Enclosed within his religious formalism, Simon the Pharisee truly could not see her. He couldn't see the real woman. But Jesus transcended the Pharisaic religion, not allowing the idolatry of forms to destroy His opportunity of revealing the character of God in His infinite grace. And to this woman, to this unnamed woman here in this story, He gave the utmost gift when He said, and this is in Mark 14:9, He said, "Wherever this gospel is preached in the world, what this woman had done will also be told as a memorial to her."

This is the only person that Jesus actively, that He really said something like this. Wherever the gospel's preached, her story will be told. What an amazing gift, this is spectacular. This is the attitude of Jesus. His optimism in seeing people, in seeing the best of people, that's who Jesus was. He saw the best in people. He didn't see them for who they were, He saw them for who they could be in Him, transformed by Him.

You know, friends, friendship is truly a powerful force. But in any friendship, all right, and this is also something that comes--that comes as an example from Jesus's--from Jesus's teachings and His way of life, His attitude. Friendship is a powerful force, but if there is no missionary focus, if that friendship has no intent, if it's--if there is no missionary focus in that friendship, it leads nowhere. It's really worthless. Actually, without intentionality, not a lot can be achieved. And this involves two crucial elements: prayer and planning. To be a friend or then to have friends, it may very well mean nothing.

If you're just a friend to people, just a friend, but there is no intention, if there is no desire to tell them or to talk to them about the greatest thing in your life, which is your relationship with Jesus, well, then what is that friendship about? What is it for? Where will it go? And what will you say when that person in the end perhaps comes and says, "Well, why didn't you tell me? Why didn't you tell me about this better way to live, this better life to be had that you knew about, but you never told me?"

Many people are ashamed, or simply afraid, or simply uninterested, and they don't share anything with their friends. They act as if they were secret spies, camouflaged Christians, good at hiding their faith. Someone once said that the Christians living in this generation, in this period of time are the most well camouflaged group of pilgrims ever to be seen in the history of the world. And unfortunately, it's true. Many of us act as though we're camouflaged in society and in the world.

You know, the basic element, as we've already discussed in a previous lesson a few weeks ago, is the authenticity of sharing what Jesus has done for us in the past, what He represents to us today in the present, and the hope that He provides for our future. So, doing this involves an attitude of tolerance, of patience with our friends. Many people think that when we become Christians, we need to cut all ties

with previous relationships.

Friends, this is wrong, it's completely wrong. That's the wrong ideology. We need to understand first-- and for you to understand what I'm trying to convey here, please don't take me wrong, what I'm trying to convey is, first of all, accepting a person does not mean that we accept what they do. Do you see the difference? God loves the sinner, but he does not love the sin. So, in the same way, I can accept a person without accepting what they do. You see the difference?

And secondly, we need to take into account that the real heart of the matter is not if our relationship with an unbeliever, with someone that doesn't believe or live as we believe that you should live, we have to understand that the heart of the matter is not if that relationship is right or wrong. But in that relationship, who is influencing who? And that's what Jesus did because Jesus walked with all sorts of people. He walked with prostitutes, he walked with the tax collectors, with the sinners of His days, but Jesus was not influenced by them. It was the other way around, He was the one that influenced them.

And so, in the same way today, I have to realize any given relationship, who is influencing who? Am I being influenced, or am I exerting a position of influence? Am I influencing for good? These are things that cannot be forgotten.

Being intentional with our friendships means to value the strong points in them, to help them see themselves under positive light. We know that Jesus was the master in this, seeing the best in people, and helping them to see themselves. This is something that we find in the other biblical heroes. For example, with the Apostle Paul, he did this constantly. 2 Thessalonians chapter 1, verse 3 and 4 says, "We are bound to thank God for you always, brethren, as is fitting, because your faith grows exceedingly. And the love of every one of you all abounds towards each other, so that we ourselves boast of you among the churches of God for your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure."

The lesson, it observes that Paul encouraged his church, reminding them of their positive qualities. And of course, this doesn't mean that he ignored the things that needed to be corrected, their mistakes, but he didn't allow that to be the only thing that define them. In the words of Ellen White in "Testimonies for the Church," volume 9, page 189: "If we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tender-hearted and pitiful or full of pity, there would be 100 conversions to the truth, where now there is only one."

Isn't it ironic, friends, that many times we want to win people over to transform people, when what would really be more effective is to allow ourselves to be transformed by Christ? What would this mean on a practical level? In our church, to be kind and courteous, tenderhearted, and full of pity. Wasn't this precisely Jesus's method? You know, Ellen White, she observes in the following passage, she observes that kindness and sympathy were always imprinted on Jesus's face.

Why is it that in some circumstances and in some situations, not all, all right, hopefully not where you are at or where I am at, but sometimes the Christian church is identified as judgmental, as inflexible, as grouchy, as bad humored, as incapable of relating to people. The church has sometimes been seen, and in some, again, in some circumstances, in some places, as the only institution that kicks those who are already on the ground. Why does it seem that way? And look, friends, this has nothing to do with an institution, this has to do with people. You and I are the church. So, why does this happen sometimes? Shouldn't we be the contrary? Shouldn't we be lifting people up, encouraging to get back up?

You know, friends, the real problem in life isn't truly--and this is something that we find again and again in the Bible. The problem or the main problem, it's not falling. The problem is when we start liking the floor. It's when people start liking the floor and they don't want to get up anymore. So, we have to encourage people not to like the floor, to stand back up. That's what we should be doing.

Dwight Moody tells the story of this little boy, a street urchin that lived on the streets. And one day, this very kind, tenderhearted man comes to him and treats him with kindness, gives him some food, you

know, talks to him. And before leaving that meeting, before leaving that encounter, the little boy, he turns back and he says, "Mister, are you Jesus?" And the man with a smile on his face, he answered him, "I'm not Jesus, but I am one of his good friends."

Oh, my friends, how I wish that we could say, we could all say that, that we are His good friends, that we're Jesus's friends, one of His friends. So, as such, how should we represent Him among our other friends? How do we represent Jesus as one of His friends to our friends? Now, an important thing to remember is that when we accept Jesus, we don't stop being us, okay? When we accept Jesus, we don't stop being us. We do not stop being either educated or uneducated, or poor or rich, or tall or short. We don't stop being Brazilian, or American, or Japanese, or Nigerian. We don't become an alien. We don't become someone who we weren't before. That's not what happens. No, the change is on a deeper level.

We receive a new identity that makes us all absolutely alike and equal in what is essential and fundamental. We become citizens of the kingdom of God, sons and daughters of God. And in that way, we become brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ. That's why we are brethren, that's why we call each other brother and sister, it's for this reason. And this new identity in Christ, this new identity in God as the citizen of the kingdom, that identity goes beyond and transcends all other smaller identities seen by the external and superficial differences.

Oh, my friends, how better would the world be if people could understand that what defines them is not where they're from, it's not the color of their skin, it's not their social status, it's not their academic status, what defines them is that they are children of the Most High God. When we understand that this identity is what truly defines us, what truly identifies us, all the rest will stop being an issue. It will stop being the problem because we understand that the identity goes and is defined by--on a much deeper level.

And here now, what I'm going to tell you now is something very serious. If you have not yet understood this, if you haven't understood this reality yet, then you haven't understood anything about what it becomes to be--what it means to become a disciple of Jesus.

If we don't understand that our identity is provided by our kinship to heaven, then we haven't understood anything else about what it means to be a disciple of Christ.

You know, the term "one another" appears none--not less than 54 times in the New Testament, 54 times, always with an emphasis on fraternal relationships. If we could put into practice at least half of them, we would witness an extraordinary transforming--transformation among us.

Notice some of these occurrences here in the New Testament. For example, "Do not judge one another," that's Romans 14. "Do not lie to one another," Colossians 3:9. "Do not speak evil with one another," James 4:11. "Do not grumble against one another," James 5:9. "Love one another, receive one another, serve one another, care for one another, bear one another's burdens." Friends, fraternal, fraternal relationships, fraternal love reveals who we are as Christians. John chapter 13:35 says, "By this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

True disciples are not known for their great ideas, for their brilliant sermons or discourses. No, true disciples, they're known for their love. That's what this text is saying. And on the other hand, if on one hand, if on one hand, our fraternal love reveals who we are, it also reveals where we are. For John 3:14 says, "We know that we have passed from death to life because we love the brethren." Have we passed from death to life? Where are we on our spiritual journey? Or do we remain in the kingdom of darkness and of death? And also, what is the basis of the acceptance of one another? What's the basis?

Why do we accept one another? How do we--how do we understand that or reason that inside the rationale of being a disciple and of having a winning attitude? Well, the foundation is that Jesus has forgiven and accepted us. Those who are conscious of this, of the fact that Jesus has forgiven them of so much, they cannot live any other way.

Now again, please remember that accepting someone does not mean accepting everything that they do.

And this is a very common misconception, and it's the basis for a lot of Christian indifference. So, the lesson puts it this way. Jesus's attitude was not, "Do whatever you please, it's all right, I still accept you." That was not Jesus's attitude. His attitude was rather, "No matter what you have done, I am still willing to forgive you and provide you with power to change." Biblical truth presented humbly in Christ's Spirit with a loving attitude when--these attitudes win hearts and change lives.

Friends, the salvation that Jesus offers is salvation from sin, not salvation in sin. We've run out of time. Perhaps the last thing that I would like to tell you in the study of this week's lesson, it comes from "The Desire of Ages." And this--these words, they're beautiful and they sum up very well the winning attitude that we should have. This is where we read, "In Christ is the tenderness of the shepherd, the affection of the parent, and the matchless grace of the compassionate Savior. His blessings He presents in the most alluring terms. He is not content merely to announce these blessings, He presents them in the most attractive way to excite a desire to possess them. So His servants are to present the riches of the glory of the unspeakable gift. The wonderful love of Christ will melt and subdue hearts when the mere reiteration of doctrines would accomplish nothing."

Friend, my deep desire for you is that you may have this winning attitude that Jesus had, that you may reflect it. And that while dealing with others and loving them, you can reflect the person of Jesus and be called a friend of His. I loved having you here with me today for this "Sabbath School Study Hour."

Please do not forget our free offer, "From Stress to Joy." If you would like to receive this, a physical copy, again call 866-788-3966. Or if you want the digital download sent to you, you can send--you can text SH031 to 40544. May God bless you, and I hope to see you again here for another "Sabbath School Study Hour."

Announcer: Don't forget to request today's life-changing free resource. Not only can you receive this free gift in the mail, you can download a digital copy straight to your computer or mobile device. To get your digital copy of today's free gift, simply text the key word on your screen to 40544, or visit the web address shown on your screen. And be sure to select the digital download option on the request page. It's now easier than ever for you to study God's Word with "Amazing Facts" wherever and whenever you want, and most important to share it with others.

Announcer: Amazing Facts: Changed lives.

Female: It wasn't my choice to be a Catholic. It was my parents' choice. My mom, she's very, very religious. My father, he was made the presidential troubleshooter during the martial law. I guess having seven kids would not be able to make my mother to be--you know, be there for each and every one of us. But what is really very hard for me was I was always told to be the ugliest, to be the darkest. You know, here in the Philippines, you're beautiful if you're white. But if you're brown or a little bit darker, which I was, you're ugly.

All of us had about seven maids, one for each child. The maids would say, "My baby," or the one she's taking care of, "is a lot better than yours," referring to me. I believed because I was ugly, I believed I was stupid. I believed I was good for nothing, so I attracted all the bad things in my life. I had to believe that God is fair, so I said maybe that's because I was bad in my previous lives. So, I believe in, of course, reincarnation. And when I was young, my mom told me that I could really see ghosts. I went into a lot of seance. And there was even a time when we did a ouija board. And then in front of me really--it really happened for the four of us, the glass, which is a wine glass, it just--you know, it just went up.

So, because this is my life, I do believe that I was attracted to the wrong man. There's anything that really happened very good was to have my two adorable children, but I was really abused in all areas: physically, emotionally, of course spiritually. And you will think, "Where is God?" I began to search, and unfortunately my church doesn't have a Bible study. So, I was able to go to a Baptist Bible study, and there I had a classmate, her name is Lu. She gave me the DVDs, and that is where I learned about Pastor Doug and "Amazing Facts." That Baptist church saw my eagerness, so when I started asking for the Sabbath worship on a Saturday, they took me out. They even got a meeting and they said that I was a

stumbling block, me and Lu, and that is how we left. Our friends are all from the Baptists, and we love them dearly, but the truth cannot be compromised.

So, that is when we started having a Bible study, every 4 o'clock at Club Filipino, and I invite all my friends. It pains me to think that I was really lost. Why is it that I'd find teaching through a foreigner, from Pastor Doug? What if nobody gave me the message? Because my growth happened because of the DVDs that I watch every night, every morning. And even my friends, who happened to have master's degree, they say, "Why are you so much better? Maybe your teachers are good." Yes, my teachers are from the Amazing Facts. I owe my salvation really to all the teachings that I've learned from your DVDs and from your books.

Doug Batchelor: So, what is the brightest light in the world? Well, naturally you'd say the sun, but we're talking about the brightest manmade light in the world. It's the light that shines out of the roof of that pyramid-shaped hotel in Las Vegas called the Luxor. There in the cap of that hotel, there's a room that contains 39 washing machine-sized xenon bulbs. And each of those bulbs requires about 7,000 watts. All together, they produce about 40 billion candle power of light. Can you imagine getting that electric bill at the Luxor Hotel every month?

That light is so bright that planes can see it 250 miles away. They are shooting light ten miles up into space, meaning if you happen to be floating by, you could read a newspaper up there. And as you might have guessed, that bright light has become the world's best bug attractor, bringing in moths and bats and owls, creating its own ecosystem there at night above the hotel.

But the sad thing about the brightest light in the world is, especially when the night air is clear, without any particles, the light doesn't hit anything and it's invisible. It shoots up into empty space. The brightest light in the world illuminates nothing.

You know, the Bible tells us that there's another great wasted light, and that's the light of God's Word. It says in Psalm 119, verse 105, "Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path." And yet, so many people are walking in darkness. "Furthermore," Jesus said, "if you do have that light, make sure you don't put it under a bushel, but you let it shine and illuminate the lives of others." Jesus said, Matthew chapter 5, "Set your light up on a hill like a city so that all might see it."

Light only benefits others when it reflects off of something. God wants our lights to illuminate the lives of others, so are you glowing for God? Remember, Jesus said, "Let there be light."