



The Barrier of Consequence

Bottom Line: We engage unbelievers with both the depravity of their sin and the freedom of the Gospel, calling them to repent, and being willing to support them through whatever consequences their repentance may bring.

How has this series, *Friend of Sinners*, affected the way you consider your relationships with those who are far from God? How has it affected the way you consider Jesus' relationship with you?

This has been an eye-opening study so far that has caused us to search our hearts deeply. Hopefully, you will walk away from this study understanding more about yourself, the heart of God, and your responsibility to befriend those who are far from Him. Even though we have spent considerable time unpacking what it means to be a friend of sinners, there are still a few lessons we can learn from Jesus' example that will help us to be more effective in building relationships with outsiders.

Read the account of the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-11.

What excuses did Jesus make for the woman's sins? (Hint: the answer is NONE!)

It is important to understand that the liberating work of Jesus in the unbeliever's life does not mean the excusing of sin, but instead the covering of it by His blood. By defending her from the harassment of the Pharisees, Jesus did not justify or condone the adultery of the woman, instead, He told her to "go and sin no more." Jesus was a friend of sinners, but no friend of sin. Jesus' invitation to follow Him is an invitation to live *from this point on* in devotion to Him. We should have the same attitude and intention in our relationships with sinners. We call people *away* from sin and *toward* Jesus, calling their sin for what it is, and presenting Christ as better than their sin. We do this with love and gentleness, but also seriousness and boldness.

How can leniency with other's sin distort their understanding of the Gospel? How can harshness with other's sin distort their understanding of the Gospel? In light of this, what kind of wisdom is involved in confronting unbelievers with the Gospel? How do we balance being relational with being missional in our relationships with unbelievers?

What are ways that we can "defend" sinners in a manner similar to the way Jesus defended the adulterous woman?

Read the account of the calling of Levi (who is also called Matthew) in Luke 5:27-32.

What all did Levi have to give up for the sake of following Jesus? How significantly do you think these sacrifices affected Levi's everyday life?

FRIEND OF SINNERS

For some people, following Jesus will require sacrifices beyond anything we have had to give up. For some unbelievers, repentance may mean giving up family ties, leaving them alone and unsupported. For others, repentance may mean giving up a certain career or putting a stop to money acquired through immoral activities. Repentance for some may even include confession of certain sins that involve legal consequences. Some instances are more severe than others, but if we are to befriend sinners and call them to repentance, we must recognize the potential sacrifice that many unbelievers may have to make in order to follow Christ. This should lead us to have patience and empathy for them.

How can we encourage and support the repentance of unbelievers, even in the face of drastic consequences?

Have you had to make any significant sacrifices for the cause of following Christ? How does this help you sympathize with others who may be in the same or worse positions?

Who did Levi invite to the banquet to meet with Jesus?

Levi had a life-changing encounter with Jesus that caused him to repent of his sins, leave his profession, and follow Christ as His disciple. Naturally, as is the case with most believers who are saved in such a dramatic way, Levi wanted to tell others about Jesus, so he threw a banquet, or a party, at his house. Levi invited all of his friends, which just so happened to be other tax collectors and sinners. Levi had common ground with these people, and he used this to reach out to those who were still caught in the same sin that Jesus had freed him from.

Consider who you were before you came to Jesus. What community of people do you have an “inroad” with that you could use to minister to them? How has your past provided you a testimony? What would you tell somebody who is going through what you’ve gone through about Jesus?

Do you see relationships with outsiders more as dangers or opportunities?

If dangers, what spiritual growth do you need to experience in order to alleviate your fears? Do you need to grow in holiness so that you won’t be tempted to sin? Do you need to grow in knowledge of the Word so that you can have a more firm foundation to stand on? Do you need to grow in assurance of salvation and the wonders of heaven so that fear won’t control you?

If opportunities, who can you approach to begin a relationship with? Do you believe this person will be receptive to what you have to say? How will you make the Gospel central to that relationship? Who can you partner with to help you as you engage unbelievers and outcasts?

Let’s close with the following quote from David Mathis:



“Christian holiness is not the avoidance of darkness at all costs. It includes going into the darkness, letting our Light shine without compromise, and bringing people back from the darkness by the power of God.

Jesus’s true followers are not only crucified to the world, but also raised to new life and sent back in to free others. Let’s die to every sinful desire in us for bad company, and yield to the holy impulse to befriend some of the world’s worst for Jesus’s sake.”

Announcements:

Constitution revisions are available for you to pick up at Connections. If you are a covenant member of FBCnl, please carefully read through the Constitution and if you should have any questions, you can submit them in one of the following ways:

- 1) Write your questions on the provided cards in the lobby and drop those cards off in the box.
- 2) Go to fbcnl.com/questions and submit your question

Be sure to include your name, as no question submitted without a name will be addressed.

On Sunday, February 11, following the evening Prayer Gathering, the Constitution team will be addressing questions that have been turned in. And on Sunday, March 4, at the quarterly Members’ Meeting, members will vote to adopt the Constitution.