

Episode 3 Who were Jesus' Friends?

Penny Jones



1. What was the community that Jesus formed like?

Imagine you were part of this first century community. What would draw you to Jesus?

What is it about you that would catch Jesus' eye? What strengths do you have that could be useful to Jesus as he builds his community?

Imagine that Jesus was someone you met at work. What would Jesus have to say to you to convince you to leave your current job and follow him as he preached and taught around the area?

Then there is Zacchaeus (Luke 19: 1-10) who was a collaborator with the Romans, a Jew who worked collecting taxes from his own people, to pass on to the occupying force. He kept a cut for himself. Why would Zacchaeus respond to Jesus?

What was it about Jesus that appealed to those who already were well off and comfortable?

2. Tell us more about the role of women in this community.

We can accept that women in that time and place were not in the position to write their impressions of Jesus in ways that were valued or preserved. We can guess that they talked about Jesus! What might the women have said about Jesus? His teaching? His lifestyle?

Mary Magdalene was the first witness of the resurrection and the first who spoke of it to others. In what ways is this significant?

Who are the people in our own society whose voices are not heard, whose stories we do not record?

Read one of the stories of Jesus' interaction with women. (See some examples below) Remember that he often crossed boundaries – social, religious, and ethnic – to talk with people. Imagine yourself in conversation with Jesus where he is:

- moved by your pain (John 11:33-37).
- taken off guard by your words (Matthew 15: 21-28)
- overwhelmed with affection for you
- impressed by your faith (Matthew 9:22)
- grateful for your attention (Matthew 26: 6-12)

3. What do we know about those people who followed Jesus?

Crowds often followed Jesus around as he ministered. They drew close to Jesus because he met their basic needs of food, family, and advocacy. Reflect on the needs that you have, that make Jesus irresistible.

4. Jesus did not choose people based on ideas about purity and righteousness. Why was that important in those days?

Identify some of the social divisions that our society, or social group, or family maintain today. What fears do these arise from?

Identify those social barriers that a) you are most aware of b) come up against most frequently c) frustrate you the most.

5. So why was it a big deal that Jesus didn't fuss about purity linked to righteousness?

Tell of a time when you ignored social barriers. What motivated you? The results?

What advice would you give to a young Christian who wants to be like Jesus to people?

6. Jesus was accused of hanging out with disreputable types... was this true?

Jesus did not turn away from, or turn people away. This inclusion was essential to Jesus.

- What is it to be hospitable?
- Who do we entertain?
- Who entertains us?
- Who do we exclude from our table?
- Describe a time when someone was radically hospitable to you.
- Describe a situation in modern life where there's power to be had in deciding who is in and who is out.
- Where in your life can you welcome an outsider?

7. Why did Jesus hang out with those of lower status?

Penny talks enthusiastically about Jesus as someone who just assumed others would engage, one who sees every person as a fellow human. What would it take for you to be a bit more like that? Is it too much to ask?

What is your greatest challenge when it comes to accepting others like Jesus did.

8. The broader culture seems obsessed with sin, but this didn't bar Jesus from associating with people. In what ways did this approach threaten authority?

In what circumstances do you find yourself judging others?

What is your response to the idea that Jesus did not judge others? Can you do the same?

9. What appeals to you about the way Jesus approached people?

Jesus didn't bother about status, only about how we are with God. In what ways does this allow you to be yourself?