

# Session 4: Who Did Jesus Hang Out with, and Why?

## SESSION GOALS

Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.

**Main Idea:** In the person of Jesus, our desire to be fully known and loved is fully satisfied.

**Head Change:** To know that Jesus sees us, including all our flaws and sins, and loves us completely.

**Heart Change:** To feel satisfied being known and loved by God.

**Life Change:** To embrace the presence of God as a place of safety by talking honestly to him in prayer.

## SESSION'S QUESTION AND ANSWER

*Who did Jesus hang out with, and why?*

Jesus spent his time ministering to sinners because he came not to reward the perfect, but to extend grace to sinful, broken people.

## REVIEW LAST SESSION

In our last session, we explored the question, “What did Jesus say and do?” We touched on

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his role as a teacher, miracle worker, and deliverer, and how he continues in these roles still today. Before diving into today's session, let's discuss the Deeper Walk exercises you chose. **Which one did you pick? How did it go?**

**OPEN**

**Who is your closest friend? On a scale from 1–10 (one being least and ten being most), how deeply does that person know you?**

Our lives are made up of many different relationships of varying depths. We interact with strangers, acquaintances, neighbors, family, friends, spouses, and more, and each relationship has a unique degree of depth. The more intimate a relationship gets, the more risk we're exposing ourselves to, which makes our closest relationships incredibly rich and, sometimes, incredibly scary.

In this session, J.D. will show us that no one knows us at a deeper, more intimate level than Jesus. And yet, no one loves us more completely and extends more grace to us than he does. We are exactly the kind of people he came to hang out with.

**WATCH**

Before viewing the session, here are a few important things to look for in J.D. Greear's teaching. As you watch, pay attention to how he answers the following questions.

**What two things does the apostle John say Jesus is full of?**

**What two people did J.D. highlight to show us the kinds of people Jesus came for?**

Lined writing area consisting of 20 horizontal lines for taking notes.

**What dilemma does J.D. say we all feel deeply in our hearts?**

**What did J.D. say it is like being exposed, in all your sin, in God's presence?**

Show Session 4: *Who Did Jesus Hang Out with, and Why?* (11 minutes).

**DISCUSS**

J.D. opened this session by pointing out what John wrote in John 1:14, that Jesus was "full of grace and truth." J.D. said that "truth without grace is deadly fundamentalism," while "grace without truth is just empty sentimentality." But Jesus was (and is) filled with both. Read John 1:14. **What's your reaction to Jesus being full of grace and truth? In what ways does it comfort you that Jesus is full of both grace and truth? For what reasons?**

Being filled with grace and truth, according to J.D., meant that Jesus's life "had two remarkable characteristics." First, people from all walks of life gravitated toward him. Secondly, after encountering him, these people's lives changed—they were transformed by him. **What first drew you to Jesus? In what ways did your encounter with him transform you? In what ways is he transforming you now?**

*To help comprehend Jesus's love for people from all walks of life, see Practice 3 in the Deeper Walk section at the end of this session.*

Lined writing area for student responses.

J.D. used two examples from Scripture to show the kinds of people Jesus spent time with and the effect he had on them. The first is a story from John 8. Read John 8:2–11.

After interacting with the scribes and Pharisees who'd brought to him a woman who'd been "caught in adultery" (v. 3), and seeing them off, Jesus told the woman: "Neither do I condemn you . . . Go, and from now on do not sin anymore" (v. 11). Grace and truth. **Have you ever been met with grace when you deserved punishment? How did you react in the moment? In what ways did your experience with grace change you?**

*To complete a prayer journal exercise, see Practice 2 in the Deeper Walk section at the end of this session.*

J.D. pointed out the order in which Jesus interacted with the woman. Jesus offered grace first and then truth. Most of us, if we're honest, reverse the order: we extend "grace" only after we've bludgeoned someone with truth. But that's not what Jesus does. **For what reasons is it impactful that Jesus leads with grace? Why do we so often do the reverse? What could you do to mimic the way of Jesus by offering grace to people (or to yourself) before you ask them to "go and sin no more"?**

*To complete an exercise to help practice the habit of grace and then*

Horizontal lines for writing.

*truth, see Practice 4 in the Deeper Walk section at the end of this session.*

J.D. suggested that maybe the reason why this woman had pursued a life of adultery was because her soul felt empty, which he said is "what drives a lot of people to sin." Whether it's unhappiness or dissatisfaction, there's often an emptiness in us that can only be filled by God.

**Have you ever felt the soul-emptiness that J.D. alluded to in this session? How would you describe what that was like? What did you try to fill that emptiness with? How long was it before those attempts proved unsatisfying?**

Often, we think of grace merely as our being pardoned for sin. But J.D. made the point that "God's grace is the power that liberates us from sin," meaning his grace doesn't just pardon us; it empowers us to change. Read 1 Corinthians 15:10.

**To what extent did the apostle Paul see God's grace as something that empowered him? In what ways have you seen God's grace empower you? What changes have occurred in you because of God's grace?**

The second story J.D. highlighted occurs in John 4, and it involves another woman with a difficult past whom Jesus encountered. Read John 4:1–30, 39–42.

Having been married several times, and now living with a man who wasn't her husband—shameful in those days—this woman was an outcast. On top of that, she was a Samaritan, a group Jews considered their enemies. And yet Jesus engaged with her. **Are there people in your life—either "outcasts" or so-called**

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**enemies—that you find yourself reluctant to engage with? For what reason would you say you’re reluctant to engage with them? What could it look like for you to grow a relationship with them?**

In their interaction, Jesus pointed out the woman’s relationship woes, which may seem insensitive or harsh to us. So, J.D. asked: “Why would Jesus expose her like this?” He answered that to heal her wounds, Jesus had to reveal them first. **Do you have any wounds you’re trying to conceal from Jesus or others? What do you use to hide those wounds (habits, behaviors, etc.)? For what reasons do you try to conceal your wounds? What do you think could happen if you opened yourself to Jesus by letting him expose your wounds and heal them?**

J.D. suggested that this woman is a picture of all of us. “We’re born thirsty. We’re born looking for something to satisfy us.” And we seek our satisfaction in sources other than Jesus—relationships, career, wealth, stuff, etc. But Jesus’s “love is the only thing that can satisfy [us].” **Why do you think we’re prone to seek satisfaction apart from Jesus? In what ways has Jesus’s love exceeded all your attempts to find satisfaction elsewhere?**

Many of us may ask: How can someone like us, with such a sinful past, be loved by Jesus? We assume our sins disqualify us from his love, especially in light of his perfection. According to J.D., that question brings us to the heart of the gospel because “Jesus did not come to reward the perfect, but to extend grace to sinful, broken people” like us. Read Luke 5:31–32. Jesus is clear: he came for the “sick” and the “sinners.”

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**Do you ever feel like you're disqualified from Jesus's love? For what reasons? How do you react to the idea that Jesus came to give grace to people just like you?**

*To recite a prayer that will help prepare you to bear witness about God's love, see Practice 1 in the Deeper Walk section at the end of this session.*

J.D. said, "the gospel of Jesus Christ resolves the dilemma that we all feel deeply in our hearts: [the] desire to be fully known and fully loved." Being fully known but not loved is rejection, while being fully loved but not known is shallow. But Jesus offers both in full measure. **Have you ever been rejected by someone because of something you did or "loved" in a way that felt shallow? What emotions did you experience as a result? In what ways have you been affected by that experience?**

As J.D. pointed out, "There is no one who has ever seen your sin more clearly but loved you more intensely than [God]. There is literally nothing about you that could ever be revealed that God has not already seen and sent his Son to redeem." What does that mean about our relationship with God? It means that in his presence, we are safe. **Have you ever thought about the presence of God as a place of safety? In what ways does God's safe presence compel you to bring your sin to him instead of concealing it?**

In Jesus, we find the love our souls long for. Known completely. Loved completely. Satisfied

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## SESSION'S QUESTION AND ANSWER

*Who did Jesus hang out with, and why?*

Jesus spent his time ministering to sinners because he came not to reward the perfect, but to extend grace to sinful, broken people.

## DEEPER WALK

This section is designed to help you practice different ways to interact with God and reflect on what you've learned in this session. Pick at least one activity to try before the next session.

### **Practice 1: Memorization**

Sharing God's love and grace with others—offering it to them as a gift—sounds easy in theory. After all, why wouldn't anyone want such a priceless gift? But it's a lot more challenging (and intimidating and overwhelming and scary) in practice than it seems. So, to stir confidence, courage, and *power*, we need to pray for God's help.

Spend a few minutes reading, memorizing, and praying Acts 1:8 as you prepare to bear witness to God's love and grace with the people you encounter in the days ahead.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

Consider praying this prayer:

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Father,

You have called me to go and bear witness to others about you,

And to make disciples of your Son.

But that’s not something I can do on my own or in my own strength.

I need the presence and the power of your Spirit.

So, as you’ve promised, will you go with me and empower me to share your love and grace with others?

Amen.

Remember, wherever you find yourself, God has sent you there. Use this passage and prayer as a reminder and a prompt to bear witness to Jesus wherever you go.

**Practice 2: Prayer**

One of the disciplines that has a long history in the church, especially in the last few hundred years, is keeping a prayer journal. Prayer journals give us the opportunity to record our prayers and keep a record of God’s faithfulness over the years and seasons of life.

For this exercise, make a list of 3–5 people in your life who aren’t Christians—people who might be considered “outcasts” or “enemies.” Then, commit to praying for each person by name every day, recording those prayers in your journal. Do it for the long haul. Do it until you see God bring them to the point where they’re ready to receive the gift of his love and grace. Make sure you remember to write down how God answers your prayers.

**Practice 3: Bible Study**

Lined writing area for notes and responses.



If possible, set a weekly appointment with this person (or whatever frequency works best) for a phone call, a meal, a coffee, or even a video call. Talk with each other, pray together, confess your sins to one another, ask questions—and do it all in an environment of grace. Make it your ambition to emulate Jesus’s grace to this person and pray that God would use that grace to empower each of you to conform your lives to the way of Christ.

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Why Does Jesus Matter? STUDY GUIDE

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