



Week 2: Jesus Will Never Cast Us Out

Based on “Gentle & Lowly” by Dane Ortlund
NCAC Adult Sunday School
January 23, 2022

What’s the difference between knowing *about* someone and actually *knowing* someone?

Course Goal: To reflect on not just what Jesus has done or is doing, but on who he *is*—and to then find encouragement, strength and rest as we delight in the deepest affections of Christ for his people.

Want to Read Along? *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers* by Dane Ortlund (Crossway, 2020)

- January 16: Chapters 1-3
- January 23: Chapters 4-7
- January 30: Chapters 8-12
- February 6: Chapters 13-16
- February 13: Chapters 17-21
- February 20: Chapters 22-23

The one place in the Gospels where Christ reveals his heart: After Jesus launched his ministry, called his disciples, and announced that the kingdom of heaven was at hand, people responded to him in different ways: Many religious leaders opposed Jesus, while many ordinary people sought after him. Yet, few (if any) truly understood him. As Matthew 11 comes to a close, Jesus warns those who reject him and welcomes those who believe in him, while revealing his deepest heart for sinners and sufferers:

“²⁸ Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30, ESV)

What misconceptions is Jesus correcting when he describes himself as “gentle and lowly in heart”?

What might happen if we view Jesus as something other than “gentle and lowly in heart”?

What are some examples in the Gospels of Jesus demonstrating he is “gentle and lowly in heart”?

Though now seated in heaven, Christ is still as open and tender in his embrace of sinners as he was while on earth: *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.” (Hebrews 4:15)*

What should this “solidarity” with Christ mean for our everyday life?

If Hebrews 4:15 tells us *what* Christ is doing in his priestly role, Hebrews 5:2 tells us *how* Christ is fulfilling that role: *“He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness.” (Hebrews 5:2)*

Though this verse is describing how a human high priest should deal with sinners, the writer goes on in Hebrews 5:5 to say Christ deals with us in the same way. In fact, Christ does this perfectly!

From this, what are we meant to know about the heart of Christ?

Noting Christ’s concern for us, Goodwin suggests that Christ’s joy rises “when we come to him to draw from the riches of his atoning work.” Why would this be true? What does this mean for us?

How does Christ feel about his body, the Church? *“For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.” (Ephesians 5:29)*

Can we really make Jesus happier? Though understanding exactly how God feels or experiences emotions is a mystery to us, Scripture teaches we *can* do things which do affect God. For example:

We can **grieve** God: *“And do not **grieve** the Holy Spirit of God.” (Ephesians 4:30)*

We can **please** God: *“Finally, then, brothers, we ask and urge you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us how you ought to walk and to **please** God, just as you are doing, that you do so more and more.” (1 Thessalonians 4:1)*

WATCH VIDEO: SESSION 2

How would you summarize what was being said about Christ’s heart for his sinning people?

Why do we sometimes resist (or at least struggle to believe) this truth?

John 6:35-39 offers another wonderful glimpse into the heart of Christ:

³⁵ Jesus said to them, “I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen me and yet do not believe. ³⁷ All that the Father gives me will come to me, and **whoever comes to me I will never cast out.** ³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will but the will of him who sent me. ³⁹ And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose nothing of all that he has given me, but raise it up on the last day.” (John 6:35-39, ESV)

What are some reasons we (or others) may give for why we think Christ should cast us out?

How should Jesus’ words in John 6:37 calm our fears?

“No, wait”—we say, cautiously approaching Jesus—“you don’t understand. I’ve really messed up, in all kinds of ways.”

I know, he responds.

“You know most of it, sure. Certainly more than what others see. But there’s perversity down inside me that is hidden from everyone.”

I know it all.

“Well—the thing is, it isn’t just my past. It’s my present too.”

I understand.

“But I don’t know if I can break free of this any time soon.”

That’s the only kind of person I’m here to help.

“The burden is heavy—and heavier all the time.”

Then let me carry it.

“It’s too much to bear.”

Not for me.

“You don’t get it. My offenses aren’t directed toward others. They’re against you.”

Then I am the one most suited to forgive them.

“But the more of the ugliness in me you discover, the sooner you’ll get fed up with me.”

Whoever comes to me I will never cast out. (p. 63-64)

WATCH VIDEO: SESSION 3

“If you are part of Christ’s own body, your sins evoke his deepest heart, his compassion and pity. He ‘takes part with you’—that is, he’s on your side. He sides with you against your sin, not against you because of your sin. He hates sin. But he loves you... This is not to ignore the disciplinary side of Christ’s care for his people. The Bible clearly teaches that our sins draw forth the discipline of Christ (e.g., Heb. 12:1–11). He would not truly love us if that were not true. But even this is a reflection of his great heart for us. When a body part has been injured, it requires the pain and labor of physical therapy. But that physical therapy is not punitive; it is intended to bring healing.” (p. 71)

Hosea 11:7-9 offers another glimpse into the heart of God for his people, even when they've sinned:

*⁷ My people are bent on turning away from me,
and though they call out to the Most High,
he shall not raise them up at all. (Hosea 11:7)*

What would we naturally expect of a holy God when his people become “bent on turning away”?

*⁸ How can I give you up, O Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, O Israel?
How can I make you like Admah?
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?
My heart recoils within me;
my compassion grows warm and tender.
^{9a} I will not execute my burning anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim... (Hosea 11:8-9a)*

What do we learn here about the heart of God towards his people, even when they have sinned?

*^{9b} for I am God and not a man,
the Holy One in your midst,
and I will not come in wrath. (Hosea 11:9b)*

What does God want us to understand when he says, “For I am God and not a man”?

*“The Bible says that when God looks at his people’s sinfulness, his transcendent holiness—his God-ness, his very divinity, that about God which makes him not us—is what makes him unable to come down on his people in wrath. We tend to think that because he is God and not us, the fact that he is holy renders it all the more certain that he will visit wrath on his sinful people. **Once more, we are corrected; we are brought out from under our natural ways of creating God in our own image, and we allow God himself to tell us who he is.**” (p. 74)*

Why does all this talk of God’s incredible grace sometimes make us uncomfortable?

How do we then avoid taking on the attitude that we can just “continue in sin that grace may abound” (Romans 6:1)?