

Brave Enough to Follow
Part 4
Knowing God
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If you have your Bibles you can turn to Mark Chapter 2:13. We will be reading from there in a minute.

A number of years ago there was a popular worship song and the chorus repeated a statement where you would say, “Show Your power Oh Lord our God.” And I remember being in a worship service and we were singing that chorus over and over and over. And I was caught up in the passion and the emotion of the worship service. I was having what I described as a Holy Ghost moment where I was just caught up with who God is.

I was thinking of the Scripture verse in Isaiah 6 where Isaiah the prophet sees God in the temple and it says, “The train of His robe fills the temple” and Isaiah is caught up. And the angels are covering their face and they are crying out, “Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God Almighty; the whole earth is full of His glory.”

And when Isaiah is witnessing them say that, the doorposts and thresholds shake of the temple in heaven.

And I was caught up in this worship service. I am singing, “Show Your power, oh Lord my God, oh Lord our God.” And as I am caught up in this moment I felt as though the Spirit is saying to me, “You want to see My power?”

And I am like, “Yes, Lord, show Your power, oh Lord my God.”

And He is saying, “You really want to see My power?”

And I am like, “Yes, Lord, give it to me. I want to see Your power.

I don’t know what I was expecting – to be hit by lightning or something like that, or fire in His bones to be blazing outside of me – I don’t know; I was just waiting for this spectacular moment to take place.

And then as I am worshiping and the Spirit is saying, “Do you want to see My power?” and I’m like, “Yes Lord, show me Your power”, I had a vision of Jesus in a manger. I had a vision of Jesus having to flee for His life from Herod the Great. I had a vision of Jesus being baptized alongside sinners in the Jordan River. I had a vision of Jesus washing the disciples’ feet.

I noticed in Scripture Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane crying tears of blood. I had a vision of seeing Jesus nailed to a cross.

And the Spirit said to me, “You want to see My power? I think your definition of power and My definition of power might be handled in a different way” because I was looking for some mighty display of power and He was displaying His power through laying down His life for others.

What I want to talk about this morning is knowing God. We can know a lot about the message of Jesus but we may miss the heart of Jesus.

We can have the mind of Christ but we also need to have the heart of Christ.

And Jesus is training His disciples and He is continually revealing to them the power of Christ, His authority. But He is also revealing to them the priorities of Christ, His activities.

And Jesus, as we looked at last week, has just declared that He is God among us. He has just healed a paralyzed man and forgiven his sins. We talked about that being a mic drop statement where Jesus displays His deity to the crowd in Capernaum.

And Jesus, who has just declared that He is God among us, does something completely unexpected that I am certain would have shaken the disciples and the village of Capernaum to the core.

In Mark 2:13 we read this:

“Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them.

“As he walked along, he saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector’s booth. ‘Follow me,’ Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him.

“While Jesus was having dinner at Levi’s house, many tax collectors and ‘sinners’ were eating with him and his disciples, for there were many who followed him.

“When the teachers of the law who were Pharisees saw him eating with the ‘sinners’ and tax collectors, they asked his disciples: ‘Why does he eat with tax collectors and ‘sinners’?’

“On hearing this, Jesus said to them, ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.’”

What we are going to look at in our time together is how Jesus calls the lost, confounds the religious and cures the sick.

Let me just tell a little bit of a history story so that you can appreciate the religious and political climate in New Testament times in Israel. We all have heard about Herod the Great. When Rome occupied the nation of Israel, when they came and took over the land in 63 B.C. they appointed Herod the Great as king over the land.

Now Herod the Great was not so great. He was a ruthless dictator carrying out the wishes of the Romans. He is the one who had all the children two years old or younger in Bethlehem put to death when the magi came from the east looking for the king of the Jews that had been born, looking for Jesus.

Jesus fled to Egypt and Herod issued a decree that any children in Bethlehem were to be put to death. Herod did all kinds of heinous acts like that.

The Romans had erected their symbol, the Roman Eagle, within the temple. And one evening a bunch of Jews gathered together. It was an abomination to them that this be in the temple so they climbed to where the Roman Eagle was set up and they cut it down with an axe.

Herod the Great did a careful investigation to find out who did that and arrested 40 young people and two prominent teachers from within the temple and had them put to death.

Now the state punishment by the Romans was crucifixion. Josephus, who was an early church historian, talked about how people who would try and rise up against Rome were constantly crucified.

In fact, the roads would be lined with crucifixions.

So when Herod the Great eventually died, his kingdom was split amongst his three sons – Herod Archelaus, Herod Antipas and Herod Philip.

Now where Herod Archelaus who ruled in Jerusalem and the surrounding region came into the kingdom after Herod the Great had passed, he met with some of the Jewish citizens in Jerusalem, and they were very upset about the two teachers and the 40 young people that had been put to death by his father.

And they were crying out for justice. They wanted the soldiers who had carried out that command to be punished for what they did to those two teachers and 40 youth.

Archelaus didn't want to concede to their demands so he went and had a feast with his friends, as he was celebrating becoming the new ruler in the region (and this was the time of the Passover festival).

So as more and more Jews entered into the temple in preparation for Passover, there was a growing discontent for Herod the Great and his now ruler son Archelaus.

Archelaus heard the Talmud, the crowd and the uprising within the temple so he sent in some soldiers to reason with the people. They stoned the soldiers to death.

So what Archelaus did next is he unleashed the entire Roman army into the temple and 3000 Jews were put to death by the Romans when this took place, this uprising took place.

So, as you can see, the cultural climate, the political climate in New Testament Israel in the Middle East at the time of Jesus was on fire. The Jews hated and despised the Romans.

And Levi was a tax collector for the Romans and he served under Herod Antipas who ruled in the region of Galilee.

Now Herod Antipas is the one who had John the Baptist arrested and thrown in prison and subsequently beheaded. How popular do you think Archelaus was or Herod Antipas was in the time of Jesus?

Levi, who was collecting taxes for the Romans and for Herod Antipas, would have been despised by the people of Capernaum. Religion was political in Jesus' day. If you were a friend of the Romans, you were an enemy of Israel.

And if you were an enemy of Israel you were despised and rejected by God.

That was the dominant theological view of the day in New Testament times. And Levi, as he is collecting taxes, I am certain would have been a social outcast, would have been completely hated by his fellow Jewish brothers and sisters for what he was doing.

He would have been viewed as a betrayer to the covenant and the Israelites taught that God was their King, and so in serving Herod Antipas he would have been despised.

And Jesus has been preaching around Galilee. Jesus has been healing all kinds of people. John the Baptist declared of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world."

Jesus has just healed a paralytic and declared that He has authority to forgive sins, and in so doing, revealed that He is God among us. And God among us has just walked up to someone who is in cahoots with the Romans and called him to follow Him.

This would have been astounding to the Pharisees, to the experts in the law, to those who were theologically trained, but also to the common everyday Israelite in Capernaum. Even the disciples themselves included must have been challenged by what Jesus just did in calling Levi, a tax collector, to follow Him.

The reason I entitled this series "Brave Enough to Follow" and "Faith Enough to Follow" is because that's exactly what it would take to follow Jesus, because Jesus seemingly is going against all the social, political, theological understanding of the common everyday Jewish person in New Testament Israel.

Walking with Jesus requires faith mixed with bravery because you will find yourself in unlikely uncomfortable places. We see that still today.

We just watched a video of Peter and Hyon Chu who, because they were walking with Jesus, because they were following Jesus, were led to Galmi, Niger. Peter describes it as being an

overwhelming traumatic experience, one in which he couldn't talk for months afterwards. It was actually following Jesus and walking with Jesus that led him into that moment.

Following Jesus requires bravery and faith. And it still does so today.

As I was looking at this passage and I looked back over this series and even over the series we did in the summer, we have covered about half of Jesus' public ministry.

And there is a pattern that you notice in Jesus' ministry when you study the Gospels. It is a repeated pattern. It is almost as though He is taking His disciples through the same lessons over and over and over.

And what I noticed is Jesus was captivating to those who were on the fringes of religious society. Look at the people who are captivated by Jesus. We have the Samaritan woman, the sick and the diseased, the leper that Jesus touched, the paralytic whose sins He had forgiven.

And now we have the tax collectors and sinners that Jesus sits and has table fellowship with.

And then as I looked over that half way through Jesus' ministry moments you also note the people that are frustrated by Jesus. He had overturned the temple system, so He had upset the temple priests and the leadership in Jerusalem.

The whole town of Nazareth wanted to throw Him off a cliff and kill Him at the end of His sermon. The experts in the law, the scribes, the Pharisees, those who were theologically trained, were frustrated by this Jesus.

Why? Because He is doing all these miraculous signs and wonders; God is clearly doing extraordinary things through Him. Not just that – He is declaring Himself “God among us” but He is hanging out with the dregs of society, the social underclass.

It's as though Jesus has it all backwards. He is making enemies with the religiously clean and He is befriending the people that good people don't associate with.

Why is Jesus doing this repeatedly with His disciples? And what is this doing to their reputation, let alone their theology, because the dominant theology of the day is those were the exact people that God wanted nothing to do with.

And here you have Jesus consistently captivating the crowds who were on the fringes of religious society.

Have you ever been stretched by how big and vast God's grace is? Have you ever thought to yourself, “Really, Lord, really? That person? Seriously, Jesus? You can transform that person?”

That's exactly how they would have felt when they see Levi called into ministry. That's why I think they were prepared in the book of Acts when Saul who was a terrorist to the early church met Jesus on the road to Damascus and became one of the greatest missionaries of all time. I

think they were ready for that because they had seen Jesus repeatedly transform lives out of the most unlikely places and the most unlikely people.

God's grace is amazing and it should always, always, always astound us.

We just sang a song "Amazing Grace". It is written by John Newton who used to be a slave trader. He worked on slave ships.

And so when we look at those hymns and we sing those hymns do we think of the story behind the hymn and are we amazed and captivated by the grace of a Savior who calls the most unlikely candidates to be on His ministry team, to call the most unlikely candidates to write our worship songs?

And I imagine Levi growing up in New Testament Israel just like all the other Jewish boys and girls, went to synagogue, went to school when he was a young person, probably learned all the books of Moses. He knew the covenants. He knew that they were waiting for the Messiah. Maybe he even heard about this Jesus who is doing all kinds of miracles in and around Capernaum.

And I wonder was Levi, who we also know as Matthew the tax collector, was he at home remembering his childhood, hearing about Jesus, thinking to himself, "Lord is it too late for me? Lord, would You accept someone as messed up as me? Lord, I know that all my brothers and sisters despise me and I know what Your Word teaches and I hear of this Jesus, I hear the claims He is making, I have heard Him teach as I am here gathering taxes for the Romans and for Herod Antipas. And I know how wicked they are. Lord, it is too late for me?"

Imagine how Levi would have felt when Jesus walks up to him, this Jesus who is the Savior of the world, this Jesus who John the Baptist pointed to, this Jesus who just declared to be "God among us" who has the authority to forgive sins, looks at him and says, "Follow Me."

That must have been overwhelming for Levi because everybody else despised him and taught that God wanted nothing to do with him. And now the Son of God calls him to relationship.

And we are told that Levi gets up and he leaves everything behind him, displaying his repentance, displaying his willingness to sacrifice all so that he can walk with Christ. He probably took inventory of his life up to that moment, looked at who his master was, looked at who he was serving, and when he hears the call of Christ, drops everything, leaves it all behind and enters into relationship with Jesus.

Now we have noticed in the Gospels that Jesus can cure leprosy in an instant. Jesus can heal a paralytic by just speaking to him. And we also need to realize that Jesus can cleanse us and forgive us and give us a completely new heart in an instant. And that is what He does with Matthew by saying, "Follow Me" in an instant all of Matthew's transgressions, all of his sins, are forgiven and he begins to walk and follow Jesus.

He can heal your heart in an instant. So if He is here today by His Holy Spirit saying to you, “Follow Me” and you are feeling that press into your lives, do one thing: say “Yes, Lord, I will follow You” and He will transform you from the inside out.

And Matthew knows that the call to follow Jesus isn’t just a call into relationship, it is also a call into mission.

And that’s why Matthew sets right to evangelism. We are told that he throws a huge dinner party and he invites all his tax collecting sinner friends – literally they are called in Scripture, “tax collectors and sinners”.

Now “sinners” was anybody who was put out of the synagogue by the Pharisees or the experts in the law, whether of their immoral lifestyle and choices, how they were living, or if there were deformities, some of the sick, some of the lepers and other things were viewed as sinful and weren’t welcomed in church; for New Testament times they weren’t welcomed in synagogues. So they are just called sinners within the Gospels.

And so Matthew throws a party for this people group. And where do we find Jesus at this dinner party? Jesus isn’t distanced from the unclean and the sinful; no, Jesus is right in the heart of this party. This would have been something scandalous in Capernaum because you don’t go to those kinds of parties.

But Jesus doesn’t distance Himself from the unclean; He is incarnated amongst them.

And texts like this and certainly looking at Jesus’ ministry and the repeated pattern in the Gospels, it makes me wonder sometimes as a church in Christendom we can get to this place in our lives where we are surrounded by people who believe the same thing as us.

As we continue on as Christians, we enjoy fellowship and gathering together and there is nothing wrong with that; we’re supposed to do that; we’re commanded to do that. We are to encourage one another. We are to congregate together.

But there is a time where we are so congregating together that you can get to this place in your Christian life where you are living within a Christian bubble. You actually don’t have any meaningful relationships or friendships with people who don’t believe the same thing as you.

And that is not the Jesus we encounter in Scripture. He is consistently leading His disciples into situations where they are mixing with people who don’t necessarily understand who Jesus is.

And we are called to be salt and light in those places, but as a Christian community sometimes we can so set up our lives that we even start our own sports leagues, our Christian sport league. You know, we start the Christian softball league and the Christian hockey league.

And sometimes they are worse than the secular leagues. I played in a Christian hockey league for years. Some of the pastors were banned from the league for fighting so much! Myself and another missionary for Urban Promise – actually I would be having a plank in my eye if I didn’t

tell you this – myself and another missionary from Urban Promise had to serve a three-game suspension for an altercation we got in (it was all their fault; it was nothing to do with us).

But we can so build these systems and structures to separate ourselves out of relevancy. And Jesus is doing something scandalous. Brennan Manning, in his book “The Ragamuffin Gospel”, spends a chapter talking about the scandal that this would be. And he writes this:

“It would be impossible to overestimate the impact these meals must have had upon the poor and the sinners. By accepting them as friends and equals, Jesus had taken away their shame, humiliation and guilt. By showing them that they mattered to Him as people He gave them a sense of dignity and released them from their old captivity. The physical contact which He must have had with them at table and which He obviously never dreamed of disallowing must have made them feel clean and acceptable. Moreover, because Jesus was looked upon as a man of God and a prophet, they would have interpreted His gesture of friendship as God’s approval on them.”

What Jesus is doing would have been completely theologically earth shattering in New Testament times.

Tony Campolo, who is a friend of mine, told a story about a church in Philadelphia; a number of years ago he told me this story. And this church was a prominent church in the city but it was in a difficult community, a lot of homeless people around the neighborhood.

And so the pastor and the ministry team started a feeding program - a food bank and a feeding program for many of the homeless people.

And as that program grew and was engaged in by many homeless people, they started to come out to service on a Sunday morning, to their 11 a.m. service.

And one of the deacons wasn’t a fan of these people coming to service on a Sunday morning and he went up to the pastor and he said, “Pastor, do these people have to be here with us? Can’t they have their own special service?”

That was coming from a place where he was uncomfortable to be sitting beside someone who hadn’t showered for a while, maybe had some mental health issues, and just wanted to distance himself from those people.

And the pastor looked at him and he said, “Well, I think everybody should have a chance to meet Jesus face to face.”

And the deacon said, “So do I, but I think it’s better if they have their own special service.”

And the pastor looked at the deacon and he said, “I wasn’t talking about those guys. I was talking about you.”

See in Matthew 25 Jesus says, “When I was hungry you gave Me something to eat, when I was thirsty you gave Me something to drink, when I was naked you clothed me. What you did for the least of these, you did for Me.”

When we care for people on the fringes of society, the poor, the marginalized, the vulnerable, we are told by according to Matthew 25 we are loving and caring for Jesus Himself. When we spend our lives on behalf of those who are on the fringes of religious society we are loving the Lord Himself.

When you serve the poor you are encountering Christ Himself through the people that you are loving and caring for. And we see this truth in the Gospels – Jesus is always leading His disciples into these situations that would have been uncomfortable, would have been unlikely, but that is where God’s heart is. To know God is to be in those places.

And Jesus is described as a friend of sinners. And Jesus comes for the hurting, the broken and the rejected.

And the Pharisees, witnessing this scene, seeing this big party take place; Matthew with all his tax collector friends and all these sinners gathered together and Jesus in the midst of them. They look at this scene and they ask His disciples in Verse 16, “Why, why does He eat with tax collectors and sinners?”

I don’t blame them for that question. That is the thing that the angels long to look into. We’re told in 1 Peter that the angels long to look into these things. Why does the Holy, Holy, Holy of Isaiah Chapter 6, the One to whom we have to cover our eyes to behold His glory; why does the Holy, Holy, Holy clothe Himself with humanity, get baptized alongside sinners and allow those who He formed and spoke into existence nail Him to a cross so that they may be forgiven of their sins?

Why does He do these things? Why is His grace so amazing? That’s the question of the ages.

And I love Jesus’ reply to why God would do these things.

“On hearing this, Jesus said to them, ‘It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.’”

Isn’t that good news? Isn’t that good news?

It’s good news if you acknowledge that there is something wrong with you. You seek out a doctor when you know you have a disease. And you will seek out Jesus when you know you have a disease that the Scriptures call sin because He is the Good Physician that can set you free from your disease.

He is the One that can remove the disease from your life and impart His righteousness and you become a new creation.

And Matthew has experienced this and all he wants is his friends and his co-workers and his family, whoever he knows in his social circles, to experience this same reality of what Jesus has already done in his life.

And it's as though Jesus is saying to the experts and the Pharisees and those theologically trained in His day, "I haven't come for the righteous, I haven't come for those who think they have it all figured out. You Pharisees have all kinds of rules that you live by and you think that you have earned God's affection because of your holy living. And therefore I have nothing for you. But if you would acknowledge that there is something wrong with you, if you would acknowledge that you are a sinner before a holy God, I am the Good Physician who can heal you of your disease."

Pauline Phillips said the following:

"The church is a hospital for sinners, not a museum for saints."

It's so true. Jesus the Good Physician has come to remove the disease from the patient.

And in Matthew's Gospel, the Gospel that bears his name – remember Matthew is Levi; it's two names. In Matthew's Gospel Jesus quotes to the experts from the book of Hosea. In Matthew 9:13, recalling this event, Jesus says,

"But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice. For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.'"

Jesus is actually quoting from Hosea. And it is important for us to understand because it helps us learn what Jesus is actually saying to the experts in the law who are Pharisees.

Hosea's Gospel, the whole book of Hosea, outlines how Israel, because they are humans, are unfaithful to the covenant. They are actually likened to an adulterous woman, "not someone that you Pharisees would want to relate with in the New Testament times."

So Jesus is saying, "Remember Hosea's book. You are the covenant people but you have been like an adulterous woman and you consistently go wayward."

Now God promises in the book of Hosea that He is going to send His Prophet who will heal their sicknesses and diseases and He is doing this solely because He is a compassionate merciful God.

That's the whole story of Hosea. So it is interesting to note that Jesus quotes from that book to experts in the law who would know that book. But He says, "I desire mercy not sacrifice."

And one of the causes listed in Hosea that leads to the waywardness of God's people and rebellion is that they lack knowledge.

In Hosea 4:6 we read this:

"My people are destroyed from a lack of knowledge."

And this is one of the keys to the book of Hosea. And the Hebrew word for knowledge is built from the root word *YADA*.

When I first read that Hebrew word I thought of Stephen Zodege because when you are talking to him, he will talk to you and then in mid-sentence go, “Yada, yada, yada,” and I thought this man is the most godly man I know. He is always saying, “Yada.”

YADA in Hebrew, when it is used of God, speaks in relational tones. You can have knowledge about someone and not *YADA* them, not know them. So what Jesus is saying to the Pharisees through the book of Hosea is that “You know a lot about God but you don’t know Him, you don’t know God. You know a lot of information about God. You can memorize Scripture, you can be an expert in it, but that doesn’t mean you know God. You don’t *YADA* Him.”

And these Pharisees and these experts in the law who had drawn sharp social boundaries; when they see God among them loving the sinner, loving the unclean, this God who hasn’t come for the righteous but sinners, they were anticipating that He would come for them, come for the righteous.

So when He is doing all these things, all they are displaying is that they know a lot about God but they don’t know His heart, they don’t know Him.

And our theological head knowledge also needs to have a measure of His theological heart knowledge. We are to have the mind of Christ but also have the heart of Christ.

And Pharisees were so caught up in all the rules and observing sacrifice that they missed the point of God’s heart which is mercy, compassionate treatment of those in distress. You cannot know God; you cannot *YADA* God and not feel compassion for the needs of others.

This past week a spiritual giant of the Peoples Church passed away. Last Monday morning early in the morning David Duraisami passed away and his funeral was held here at the church on Thursday evening. It was one of the most powerful services I have ever witnessed. I have never seen more people at a funeral. There were about 600 people in our sanctuary remembering and celebrating this man’s life.

And afterwards when there was a reception in the gymnasium, I was talking to a number of folk. And people, person after person, would come up and share their story of David’s impact on their life.

And person after person talked about when they arrived as a newcomer to the city of Toronto and filled out a connection card and gave it into the church, without fail, David Duraisami would show up at their door a couple days later and find out where they were living. This is people who have traveled a great distance – new immigrants – to get here, not knowing anybody in the city.

And David would show up at their door and he would ask them, “Is this where you are staying?”

And they would say, “Yes.”

And then he would look at them and he would say, “No, it’s not. You and your family are going to come and live with my family until you get established here.”

And he would welcome them into his own home. Who does that?

And it wasn’t just one or two people that I met. Person after person relayed stories about how David Duraisami made them feel so welcome, so loved, so cared for, people who oftentimes feel on the margins of society, who feel outside the dominant social group, were welcomed into his home.

And at great cost they would put on meals for others, they would celebrate occasions for others. He was a man that *YADA-ed* God. He was a man that knows God – doesn’t just know a lot of information about God, but knows God and walks with God.

It was a beautiful service to witness someone who knows God and walks with God.

To know God is to have compassion - even your enemies. Jesus teaches this in Matthew Chapter 5 where He describes enemy love in the Sermon on the Mount and talks about how God sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

And Jesus calls the church to be this place that loves its enemies and prays for those who persecute you. You cannot know God and hate your enemies. Somewhere you have left Jesus if you have done that.

And the Pharisees knew a lot about God. They were experts in the Book but they didn’t know God, they didn’t *YADA* God. And we are to be a people who are characterized by mercy and compassion – that’s what it means to know God.

Let me close with this story. Many of you will remember a number of years ago back in the 80’s. Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker led a ministry called “Praise the Lord.”

And in 1986 “Praise the Lord’s” income was 129 million dollars. It included a religious theme park, a hotel, a shopping mall in North Carolina. And their religious programs were aired on about 1200 channels.

Jim Bakker had an affair with the church secretary, Jessica Hahn in 1980 and resigned seven years later when it became known about her and that he had paid her \$279,000 in black mail money so that she wouldn’t tell anybody.

After his resignation from “Praise the Lord’s” ministry, it was discovered that they had been taking large amounts of money from the ministry fund including hundreds of thousands of dollars in salaries for he and his wife, insurance, property and other fees. The IRS investigated

and discovered that the couple had diverted at least 4.8 million dollars from the ministry for personal use.

Part of that sum came from fraudulent thousand dollar partnerships where people could pay and have a time share at the hotel where the theme park was. And they had defrauded about 1500 people a month for a number of years. It is estimated that they defrauded 158 million dollars.

And Jim Bakker was indicted for fraud in 1988 and sentenced to 45 years in prison and fined half a million dollars.

When the scandal broke, Bakker's Christian friends quickly deserted him. He became an outcast in the Christian world and when he was sentenced his wife Tammy divorced him.

Six months into his sentence Bakker was mopping the latrine in the prison (and you can image how dirty that work was) and as he was mopping the latrine, a prison guard came into the washrooms and told Bakker that he had a visitor.

And he didn't want to see anybody at the time so he declined a visit, and the guard looked at him and said, "No, you need to come and see who it is."

When Jimmy Bakker walked through the door, he saw Billy Graham standing there. And as Billy Graham walked up to him, he wrapped his arms around him and he hugged him. And Jimmy Bakker just broke down in tears weeping because he knew that he was probably the most despised televangelist and he was being hugged by the most respected televangelist.

And it was such a display of YADA. It was such a display of the compassion of God being exercised by Billy Graham.

Graham replied and stated to Jimmy Bakker that he was his friend in good and in bad times. And now when things were bad he would stay by his side. And Billy Graham was true to his word. When Jim Bakker's sentence was eventually reduced on appeal to ten years and when he came out of prison on parole he had nowhere to stay. And the Graham family welcomed him to stay in their home until he could get back on his feet.

Ruth Graham took him to church with her that Sunday after he was released from prison and introduced him to the congregation at the church as her friend, Jimmy Bakker. To the pridefully religious, Jesus says, "Go and learn." To those who are broken and contrite, to the sin-filled, Jesus says, "Follow Me."

May we be a people that YADA God, that know His compassionate, never-ending, abounding, amazing grace for others.

Let's pray.

Father, we thank You for Your amazing grace that has touched our own lives. And Lord we acknowledge that many ways we look at others and we struggle. Give us eyes to see with Your

eyes. Lord we want to be a people that know You, that YADA You, that walk with You. And so we pray that You would take us by the hand this week and lead us into the places, maybe even the unlikely places this week.