



# What a Friend

Take it to the Lord in Prayer

## SERIES OVERVIEW

Series Overview: Jesus himself warned his followers that they would encounter troubles in this life. But along with his warning he made sure to remind them of the hope that was theirs through him, "Take heart," he said, "for I have overcome the world." John 16:33. In this series we will take a look at a well-known and beloved hymn "What a Friend We Have in Jesus." Written by Joseph Scriven, a man well acquainted with deep sorrow. How could a man who had experienced such immense pain and loss pen the words to one of the most hope-filled and encouraging hymns of all time? And what can this song teach us about the importance of prayer and the strength to be found through our friendship with Jesus?

## WEEK 1 - VERSE 1: WHAT A FRIEND WE HAVE IN JESUS OVERVIEW

Overview: "What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear. What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer! O what peace we often forfeit! O what needless pain we bear! All because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!"

Joseph Scriven had written this song as a poem to encourage his mother who was ill. But he, himself, had suffered 2 tragic losses, and faced physical ailments of his own. Yet despite all the sorrow he faced in his lifetime, his primary focus was serving others in need, and walking humbly with his God. For Scriven, prayer was an anchor in a very tumultuous sea! What inspiration can we draw from Scriven's example? In John 15:15, Jesus said, "I have called you friends." Are we living lives of prayerful intimacy with our Savior and friend? Are we truly taking everything to God in prayer?

*Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.*

**Philippians 4:6-9**

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How familiar is the song, "What a Friend We Have in Jesus" to you?
2. Would you call yourself a friend of Jesus? Why or why not? How could you be a friend of Jesus without "unhallowing" his name, as Maron said? (see [John 15:14-15 NKJV](#))
3. What is your comfort level with prayer and praying out loud? Has it always been that way?
4. What do you think [Psalm 27:7-8](#) says about prayer?
5. Read [Philippians 4:6-7 NLT](#), [Psalm 103:10-14 NLT](#), [Jeremiah 31:34 NIV](#), and [Isaiah 53:4-5 NKJV](#). Do you take EVERYTHING to God in prayer? Are there certain things that you do not or would not pray about? Why or why not?
6. Eugene Peterson said, "Prayers are tools, but with this clarification: Prayers are not tools for doing and getting, but for being and becoming."
  - a. What do you think this means?
  - b. Why would people *not* pray?
  - c. Maron challenged us to ask ourselves these two questions (share with your group if desired):
    - i. Who am I becoming?
    - ii. How does my prayer life reflect who I am becoming?