

# Loved

Jesus saves all who come to Him in faith.

LUKE 7:40-50



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5:1-3 Gennesaret was an alternate name for the sea of Galilee, which is also called the sea of Tiberias (John 6:1). The boat Jesus chose belonged to Simon Peter's mother-in-law. He had recently healed (Luke 4:38-41). Jesus **sat down** in the boat; this was the normal posture of a teacher (see note at 4:19-21).

5:4-7 In spite of the fact that his night labors had been fruitless, at Jesus' command Peter responded in faith

# 12

## What impact has someone's forgiveness had in your life? How did you respond?

Most of us have been given a second chance. When we made a big mistake, there was a person in our lives willing to see past that mistake and to help us move forward. That individual's offer of forgiveness, assistance in moving forward, and opportunity to prove ourselves caused us to appreciate and love that person in a deeper way. Similarly, we should respond to Christ's forgiveness by loving Him in return.

# UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

After His Sabbath confrontations with the Pharisees, Jesus continued to minister in the area around Capernaum. His teachings and healings drew crowds and allowed Him to teach about the kingdom of God. For example, He spoke to one large crowd on a level area of ground (Luke 6:17-49). This sermon—sometimes called His Sermon on the Plain—resembles the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5–7.

Following His sermon, Jesus demonstrated His messianic identity with two miracles. In the first, He healed the servant of a Roman centurion from a distance (Luke 7:1-10). The soldier, understanding the power behind Jesus' authority, showed incredible faith by trusting Jesus to heal the man without ever entering the centurion's home.

In the second miracle, Jesus raised the son of a widow in the village of Nain (7:11-17). Jesus' compassion led Him to break with convention in two ways. First, He ministered to a woman who held little significance in the eyes of many in that culture. Second,

He reached into the coffin to touch the dead man as part of the miracle.

As stories about Jesus began to increase, so did His popularity with the crowds. One person particularly interested in Jesus' ministry was His cousin, John the Baptist. Upon receiving messengers from John, Jesus challenged them to report what they had witnessed. He also reminded the crowds of the prophetic power behind John's ministry—and warned them to take his message of repentance seriously (7:18-35).

Luke closed this portion of his Gospel by returning to the theme of forgiveness. Invited into a leader's house, Jesus was anointed by a woman. She poured perfume on His feet, mixed with her tears, and wiped it with her hair. Many in the house were shocked, but Jesus turned it into a teachable moment about the depth of God's love and the surety of His forgiveness.

# LUKE 7:40-50

**40** Jesus replied to him, “**Simon**<sup>A</sup>, I have something to say to you.” He said, “Say it, teacher.” **41** “A creditor had two debtors. One owed five hundred **denarii**<sup>B</sup>, and the other fifty. **42** Since they could not pay it back, he graciously forgave them both. So, which of them will love him more?” **43** Simon answered, “I suppose the one he forgave more.” “You have judged correctly,” he told him. **44** Turning to the woman, **he said to Simon**<sup>C</sup>, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no **water for my feet**<sup>D</sup>, but she, with her tears, has washed my feet and wiped them with her hair. **45** You gave me no kiss, but she hasn’t stopped kissing my feet since I came in. **46** You didn’t anoint my head with olive oil, but she has anointed my feet with **perfume**<sup>E</sup>. **47** Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; that’s why she loved much. But the one who is forgiven little, loves little.” **48** Then he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” **49** Those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this man who **even forgives sins**<sup>F</sup>?” **50** And he said to the woman, “**Your faith has saved you**<sup>G</sup>. Go in peace.”

## Passage Outline

Love’s Intensity  
(Luke 7:40-43)

Love Demonstrated  
(Luke 7:44-47)

Love and Faith  
(Luke 7:48-50)

## Key Words

- A. The Pharisee who was hosting Jesus (vv. 36-39), not Simon Peter.
- B. A denarius was a day’s wage. Therefore, the difference was roughly between a year and a half versus a month and a half of pay.
- C. It went against polite convention for Jesus to call out Simon’s inhospitality, which suggests Simon’s actions were intentionally rude.
- D. Only low-ranking servants would wash feet, but any decent host would provide water for the washing. Simon did neither.
- E. The perfume was “very costly” (Matt. 26:7, NASB).
- F. Only God can forgive sins (Micah 7:18).
- G. Jesus emphasized that it was her faith, not her actions, that saved her.

# EXPLORE THE TEXT

The Sabbath controversies had convinced religious leaders that Jesus could not be trusted. Yet, a Pharisee named *Simon* invited Him to his house for a meal (v. 36). While Simon's intention may have been to scrutinize Him, Jesus used the occasion to teach the Pharisee a lesson about Himself.

**DID YOU KNOW?** One denarius was a typical day's wage for an ordinary laborer.

Jesus told a brief parable about a creditor and two debtors. The two men in Jesus' story had fallen into debt to their lender, but to different degrees. In the story, neither man could pay his debts, but the lender *graciously forgave* both. Jesus concluded the story with a simple question. Given the situations of each man and the act of the generous lender, which one would *love him more*? Simon immediately provided a response. Jesus affirmed Simon's response.

**What are some ways we might measure a person's love for another person? How do their actions factor into how we measure the depth of a person's love?**

While Jesus acknowledged Simon's accurate answer, He also knew that his host was miles away from understanding the parable's true meaning. Still addressing Simon, He turned toward the woman at His feet. Simon saw a sinner far from God, but Jesus saw a person who understood her need for Jesus. To drive this point home, Jesus began listing ways the despised woman had shown hospitality that His esteemed host had missed. Her humble sacrifice did not escape Jesus' notice.

**What do the emotions expressed in the actions by the woman reveal about her understanding of who Jesus is?**

After drawing the contrast between Simon and the woman, Jesus returned to the meaning of His parable: forgiveness. Like the debtor who owed so much, those who understand most deeply the degree of their forgiveness are typically the most grateful. The woman was showing her gratitude.

**KEY DOCTRINE: God the Son**

Christ is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man (Gal. 4:4-5).

**How does a failure to recognize Jesus as God get in the way of receiving forgiveness? What role does a person's pride play in finding forgiveness?**

Turning away from Simon, Jesus addressed the woman at His feet and told her that her *sins are forgiven*. As often happened, Jesus' declaration of forgiveness caused a stir among His listeners.

**BIBLE SKILL: Compare Bible**

**stories.** Compare this incident in Luke 7 with the incidents recorded in Luke 17:11-19 and 18:35-42. What role does faith play in each situation? How do these passages help us understand the relationship between faith, forgiveness, and love?

# APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers should demonstrate love for God with great intensity.
- Believers demonstrate love for God because of His great forgiveness.
- Forgiveness is found through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

**Spend time reflecting on the sin debt you carried before coming to Jesus. How can you demonstrate your gratitude for His forgiveness? With whom can you share your story?**

**What are some practical ways you and your Bible study group can show hospitality to others? How can you use those actions to reflect God's love toward those in need?**

**Write a summary of how you came to understand your need for forgiveness and expressed faith in Jesus. Thank God for His forgiveness offered through faith in Jesus. If you have not expressed faith in Jesus, review the information on the inside front cover and talk to your group leader about doing so.**

## Prayer Requests

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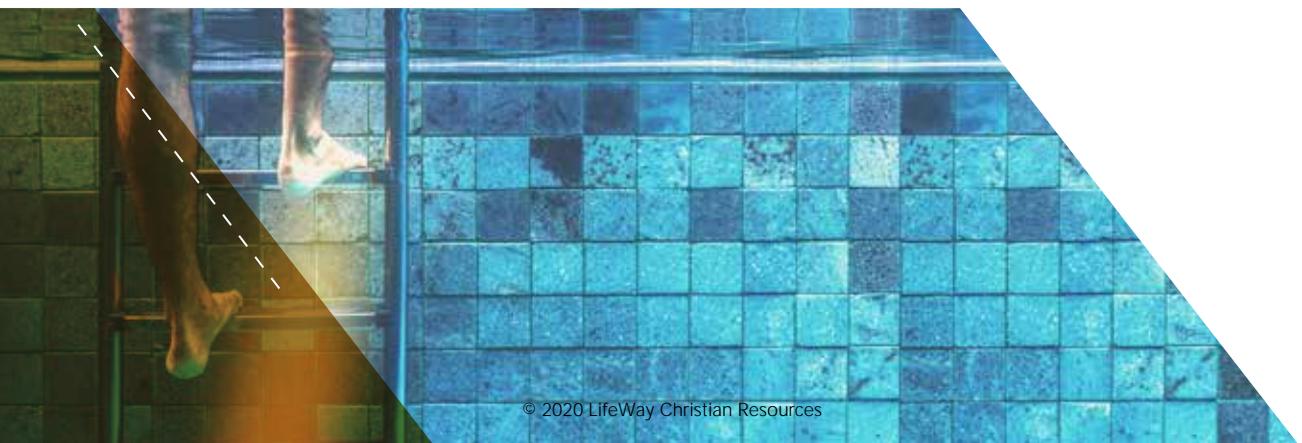
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# DAILY EXPLORATION

## Day 1: Jesus is concerned with the attitude of our hearts.

**Read Luke 7:40, considering Simon's willingness to listen to Jesus.**

In Luke 7:37-38, Luke didn't explain the identity of the woman who anointed Jesus with the expensive perfume or how she found her way into the home. It is clear from Simon's response that she was a "sinner" (v. 39). While this could have referred to a ceremonial impurity, it was more likely a moral judgment on Simon's part. It's clear that Simon questioned Jesus' credentials as a prophet and teacher since He allowed the woman's extravagant demonstration to continue. In the Pharisee's mind, Jesus didn't know about this woman's character—or, worse, didn't care. Either would seem to disqualify Him as a spokesman for God. Simon's arrogance and judgmental attitude stand in contrast to the humility of the woman honoring Jesus in the moment. Jesus understood Simon's thoughts but wasn't worried about Simon's opinion. He was more concerned with the Pharisee's attitude. Jesus told His host He had *something to say*. As a good host, Simon agreed that Jesus should *say it*. No doubt, he was interested in how Jesus would explain Himself and justify this apparently awkward situation. His reference to Jesus as *teacher* is the first time Luke used that title in his Gospel and shows that Simon at least recognized Jesus' role as a rabbi and the influence He had on people.

**What makes our evaluation of others flawed?**

## Day 2: God offers a greater forgiveness than we could ever expect.

**Read Luke 7:41-43, identifying how this story relates to the story of the gospel.**

While lenders were common in first-century Israel, the law had laid out very specific guidelines for such transactions. As the writer of Proverbs pointed out, borrowers are essentially slaves to their lenders (Prov. 22:7). This opened the door for possible abuse, which is why Israelites were commanded to avoid charging interest to their fellow countrymen (Deut. 23:19-20). For whatever reason, the lender decided to have mercy and cancel their debts. It was a generous act of kindness that transformed the trajectories of each man's life. Since sin is often referred to as a "debt" in Scripture, Jesus was building an analogy between financial relief and divine forgiveness. He was teaching Simon and His other listeners that God offers an even greater hope to those who accept His Son. Jesus concluded the story with a simple question. Given the situations of each man and the act of the generous lender, which one would *love him more*? Simon immediately provided a response. If measured by degrees of gratitude, the only logical answer would be the man *he forgave more*. Jesus affirmed Simon's response. The Pharisee showed that he understood the earthly logic behind the story. But that logic was only scratching the surface. Jesus was setting Simon up for a much deeper truth.

**How do a person's actions factor into how we measure the depth of their love?**

### Day 3: Our sacrifices do not escape Jesus' notice.

*Read Luke 7:44-46, listing the common signs of hospitality of the day.*

While Jesus acknowledged Simon's accurate answer, He also knew that His host was miles away from understanding the parable's true meaning. Still addressing Simon, He turned toward the woman at His feet. It would be hard for anyone in the room to miss her after making such a grand display. But Jesus was challenging Simon to look deeper. On the surface, Simon saw a broken woman, but Jesus saw a broken heart. To drive this point home, Jesus began listing ways the despised woman had shown hospitality that His esteemed host had missed. For example, in the ancient world, a host would provide a basin of water for visitors to wash the dust of the road off their feet. Simon had failed to fulfill this customary welcome. In contrast, the woman had washed Jesus' feet *with her tears* and dried them with her hair. She had shown Him far more honor than His host. Another cultural custom involved a *kiss* of greeting. But, again, Simon had apparently dropped the ball. In contrast, Jesus said the woman hadn't *stopped kissing my feet*. Both the basin and the kiss were not required of hosts, but they did demonstrate kindness and respect, especially for a guest of Jesus' standing. Finally, Jesus pointed out that Simon had failed to *anoint His head with olive oil*. This would have been the ultimate act of courtesy and respect for Jesus. But again, Simon did nothing. Meanwhile, the woman had anointed Jesus' feet with costly perfume. In addition to honoring Jesus, this would have been the most financially extravagant part of her demonstration. The olive oil Simon would have used was fairly common in Jewish homes. But perfume was costly, and the woman chose to anoint His feet rather than His head! Her humble sacrifice did not escape Jesus' notice.

**How do our emotions expressed in our actions of praise and gratitude reveal our understanding of who Jesus is?**

### Day 4: We all need God's forgiveness.

*Read Luke 7:47, highlighting the second sentence.*

Jesus didn't deny the woman's past. He acknowledged her *many sins*. But she *loved much* in response to the forgiveness she had been given. Her actions had not earned her salvation. No one finds salvation through good works. Her lavish display of love revealed the transformation God had performed in her life. On the other hand, Jesus explained that *the one who is forgiven little, loves little*. It seems logical that Jesus was directing this comment toward Simon and the others in the room who shared his proud, self-righteous attitude. Simon never felt the need to seek forgiveness. Like a lot of religious leaders in his day, he probably thought his devotion kept him on good terms with God. He kept the law while keeping his distance from "sinners" like this woman. Because he never felt the power of forgiveness, he never experienced the power of love.

**What do you suppose Jesus wanted Simon to learn from the woman's actions?**

## Day 5: We are saved through faith.

**Read Luke 7:48-50, noting what saved the woman.**

Jesus' listeners knew that only God could forgive sins. So, by telling the woman that her sins were forgiven, He was claiming a power they believed was reserved only for God. In that sense, the crowd understood Jesus' words perfectly. As the Son of God, He had all authority to forgive sins. Jesus paid no attention to the doubters and skeptics around the table. Instead, He continued talking to the woman and taught two important principles. First, He let her know that she had been saved by *faith*. Good works have no power to save anyone—even a grand display of adoration like the woman had shown. The second thing Jesus noted was that she could now *go in peace*. While faith is the prerequisite for salvation, peace is a by-product. Without Christ we live in a state of war against God, fighting Him at every turn. But when we accept Christ as Savior, everything changes.

**How does a failure to recognize Jesus as God get in the way of receiving forgiveness? What role does a person's pride play in finding forgiveness?**

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## TALK IT OUT

Reflect on the truths found in Luke 7, sharing with other members of your Bible study group.

**How did the parable present the gospel?**

**When do we behave like Simon the Pharisee? When do we behave like the woman with the jar of perfume?**

**How does God's love fuel faith?**



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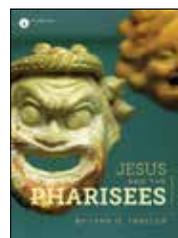
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For additional context, read "Jesus and the Pharisees" in the Winter 2020-21 issue of *Biblical Illustrator*. Available at [LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator](http://LifeWay.com/BiblicalIllustrator).