**The Gospel of Luke**

**Lesson 18** Luke 7:36-50 The Sinful Woman!

**Questions:**

1. What important truth did you learn from the lecture and how does it apply to your life?
2. Read Wiersbe pages 96-99.
   1. Simon and the woman were both sinners. What did Jesus forgive the woman of   
      her sins? Why can you be certain your sins have been forgiven?
   2. What kept Simon receiving God’s forgiveness? How can a person be saved?
3. Read Luke 7:36-39. Tears of love and gratefulness!

**IMPORTANT**: This story is not to be confused with the anointing of Jesus by Mary   
of Bethany found in Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14: 3-9, and John 12:1-8.

We do not know exactly why Simon the Pharisee invited Jesus to dine in his home. Perhaps because Jesus had preached in the synagogue, and it was considered a meritorious act to invite traveling rabbis to a Sabbath meal.[[1]](#endnote-1) No doubt Simon also had other reasons. Perhaps   
he was curious. Maybe he liked to boast about the celebrities he knew. It is even possible that he had some spiritual interest, because in Jesus’ time there were small study groups called *haberim* that held common meals for the purpose of religious study.[[2]](#endnote-2)

Whatever the reason for Simon’s inviting Jesus to dine with him, they were overlaid with a nasty animosity, for Simon purposely omitted the common courtesies accorded any honored dinner guest. Normally the host placed his hand on the guest’s shoulder and gave him the kiss of peace. But this was not done for Jesus. Customarily a guest’s sandals were removed, and his feet were washed when he entered or while he reclined at the table, thus removing the dust of the street and refreshing him. Jesus’ feet were left embarrassingly dirty. Dinner guests were also anointed with a touch of olive oil. But there was no such kindness for Jesus.

Simon treated Jesus with callous, calculated contempt. He carefully avoided every custom that would make the Lord feel at home. And all the guests and onlookers knew it as they   
took their places around the table.

In that day the homes of well-to-do people were built around central courtyards in which formal meals were served. The guests reclined on the left elbow on low-lying couches, eating with the right hand. One’s feet would extend away from the table, in keeping with the belief that the feet were unclean and offensive by nature. At such occasions the doors of the home were kept open, and the uninvited townspeople were free to wander in to observe the conversation. Typically, there was a great deal of coming and going by the onlookers.[[3]](#endnote-3)

So, many people, in addition to Simon’s dinner guests, were aware that Jesus had been slighted as his grimy feet extended behind for all to see. Though Jesus was perfectly at   
ease, the conversation was strained.

What do you say to your guest whom you have so insulted? “How was your walk over?...   
A bit dusty you say?...Yes, I suppose we could to with a wash—er, some rain, I mean?”

Everyone sensed that a lively exchange was imminent. But no one expected what followed.   
It began with a chorus of murmurs as a woman emerged from the shadows and silently   
stood behind the feet of Jesus.[[4]](#endnote-4)

1. What sort of life had this woman apparently been living? How might have she   
   been “earning’ a living during her former life?
2. An alabaster jar of perfume was probably one of her only possessions. What did   
   she do with what she had? What do you learn from this?
3. Read Luke 21:1-4 along with 2 Corinthians 8:5. What key principle do you learn from these two texts concerning giving to the work of God? How might this truth affect your future giving?
4. Read Genesis 8:20-21. Do you believe her gift was a sweet aroma to God as He looked down upon this scene? Explain your answer!
5. How did she physically demonstrate her love for Jesus? In what posture must she have been in order to kiss his feet? What do you learn from this?
6. Consider the response of the Pharisee.
7. What was the Pharisee’s attitude toward both Jesus and the woman?
8. What do you think the Pharisee failed to see concerning himself? Do you think this is a common problem among religious people? Explain your answer.
9. Billy Graham once said, “Religion is like the vaccine that stops you from getting the real thing.” Explain.
10. Consider the response of the woman by reading Kent Hugh’s wonderful description of this sinful woman’s love for her Savior.

She was at his feet with her ointment, about to anoint the Savior’s feet, when everything went wrong! Her tears began to fall like raindrops in the dust, streaking his soiled feet. She had not meant for this to happen! And she had no towel. So, the poor woman did the best she could by unloosing her long hair and wiping clean the Master’s feet. This was socially unacceptable, because a woman was to loosen her hair only in the presence of her husband. That Talmud says that a woman could be divorce for letting down her hair in the presence of another man. So grave was the offense that the rabbis put a woman’s loosening her hair and uncovering her breasts   
in the same category. The guests and the onlookers were in intense shock.

But the woman kept on anointing the Lord’s feet. The aroma filled the courtyard. Then she repeatedly kissed his feet. The Greek verb mean s “to kiss again and again.” The woman was a self-forgetful mess—crying unashamedly, her nose runny with weeping, her hair stringy with the muddy mixture of dirt and tears.

I would be embarrassed if I saw such a display. Yet, though it was clearly passionate, it was not erotic. It was beautiful and fully proper outpouring of love by a redeemed soul. Slaves were assigned to attend the feet of others, but she washed his feet at her own command. It was an act of desperately joyous humility.

This dear woman loved Jesus! And she was in the spring of spiritual health…Despite her past, she was brimming with spiritual life!

Consider her tears. This woman had been living with intense guilt. Having broken the seventh commandment, she was guilty, and her culture let hie know it wherever she went. But now her guilt was gone—and the crushing burden had been lifted from her shoulders! So she wept. She had been given a virgin heart. She felt pure, washed. Her life had been one constant rejection, but now she was accepted by God. Her tears were tears of both ongoing repentance and ongoing joy.

Consider her hair. It was her womanly glory, but she loosed it to wipe the Savior’s feet. Her comeliness was devoted to Jesus’ glory. She was his servant, and his glory was her first priority.

Consider her kisses. They were acts of pure adoration. Here was a sinner’s expression like the heart of the Virgin Mary— “My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has looked on the humble estate of his servant (1:46-48). Here was a woman who loved Christ! What an example for all of us!

But above all, consider Jesus Christ! He was not put off by the woman’s fleshly sins. When she came to him, she sensed nothing of the judgmentalism of the self-righteous. Jesus did not have the conventional moralism that condemns outward sins while ignoring the inward sins. Jesus freely received and redeemed her as she came to him in faith and repentance.

The good news is, Jesus, our Creator and Redeemer, has not changed (cf. Hebrews 13:8). The one who loved and forgave her loves and forgives us!

Up to this point, not a word has been spoken. No one has addressed the woman. There has been nothing said by anyone in the room. That was about to change.[[5]](#endnote-5)

**PERSONAL QUESTION:** Read Deuteronomy 6:5-6 along Matthew 22:34-40.   
How would you assess your love toward Jesus in light of this woman’s love t  
owards Him? How might we increase our love for Christ (Matthew 7:7; Luke 22:19; Romans 5:5b)?

1. Read Luke 7:40-50.
2. What simple puzzle or miniparable did Jesus put forth to reveal Simon’s heart?
3. Who did Jesus point to to reveal the type of heart that pleases God?
4. Jesus pointed out how this sinful woman had wet his feet with her tears, wiped them with her hair, poured oil on them and never stopped kissing them. What expression did Jesus used to, in essence, quantify her love (verse 47)?
5. In verse 47 Jesus says, “Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little.” What do you think Jesus meant by this?

Of course, the penetration point is they were both sinners. One had ten times the volume   
of outward sin, but they were both guilty inside. The “high-class” moralist had the same problem as the “low-class” prostitute. Simon apparently did not have the slightest understanding of this and is thus a good representative of thousands of religious sinners   
who have lived and died in the succeeding years.

The great supporter of the eighteenth-century ministries of John Wesley and George Whitefield, the Countess of Huntingdon, once invited a duchess to hear Whitefield   
preach and received this amazing written reply:

*It is monstrous to be told, that you have a heart as sinful as the common wretches that crawl on the earth. This is highly offensive and insulting; and I cannot but wonder that your Ladyship should relish any sentiments so much at variance with high rank and good breeding.[[6]](#endnote-6)*

Only a twitty duchess, raised in the insular, racist, upper class of old England, would say such a thing. But thousands have used such thinking to avoid applying Christ’s teaching to themselves—“Good people just don’t need that kind of religion. Grace is for big-time sinners, not for people like me. I don’t need it!”[[7]](#endnote-7)

1. Read Romans 2:1-5. What is Paul teaching in these verses about people who pass judgment on blatant sinners described in Romans 1:28-32?
2. What declaration did Jesus announce publicly over this woman for all to hear?
3. Read Romans 3:22-24. When a man or woman believes in the Lord Jesus Christ and his sacrificial death on the cross for their sins, they stand justified before God according to this text. Write out a biblical definition of justification.
4. What was the reaction of the guests to Jesus’ declaration? What did they fail to recognize Jesus?
5. What words did Jesus use to dismiss the woman? Do you think these words were meant for her alone? Explain your answer.
6. Consider the response of Jesus to the woman. What do learn about the heart of God from Jesus’ response (See Micah 7:18-19)?
7. Read the following texts and state what you learn about the heart of David. What did God see in the heart of David that He longs to see in us?
8. 2 Samuel 11-12: 13 along with Acts 13:22
9. Psalm 32:1-5
10. Psalm 51:16-17

To understand why David was a man after God’s own heart, we need to see what characteristics he had to qualify for such an exalted description. In the book of Acts, the apostle Paul speaks of God’s feelings about King David: “After removing Saul, he made David their king. He testified concerning him: ‘I have found David son of Jesse, a man after my own heart; he will do everything I want him to do’” (Acts 13:22). The answer to why David was considered a man after God’s own heart is found right in the verse: David did whatever God wanted him to do.   
An obvious question is how could God still call David a man after His own heart when David committed such terrible sins, including adultery and murder?

We learn much of David’s character in the book of Psalms as he opened up his life for all to examine. David’s life was a portrait of success and failure, and the biblical record highlights the fact that David was far from perfect. But what made David a cut above the rest was that his heart was pointed toward God. He had a deep desire to follow God’s will and do “everything” God wanted him to do. He was a man after God’s own heart. Let’s look at some characteristics of David’s life to discover what that entails:

Part of why David is called a man after God’s own heart is that he had absolute faith in God. Nowhere in Scripture is this point better illustrated than in 1 Samuel 17 where David as a young shepherd boy fearlessly slew the Philistine, Goliath. Shortly before the duel, we see direct evidence of David’s faith when David says, “‘The LORD who delivered me from the paw of   
the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.’ And Saul said to David, ‘Go, and the LORD be with you!’” (verse 37). David was fully aware that God was in control of his life, and he had faith that God would deliver him from impending danger. How else would one venture into a potentially fatal situation with such calm and confidence? David knew early on in life that God was to be trusted and obeyed. As we see in Scripture, David’s faith pleased God, and God rewards David for his faithfulness.

Another reason David was a man after God’s own heart is that he absolutely loved God’s Law. Of the 150 psalms in the Bible, David is credited for writing over half of them. Writing at various and often troubling times in his life, David repeatedly mentioned how much he loved God’s perfect Word. We find a beautiful example of this in Psalm 119:47–48: “For I delight in your commands because I love them. I lift up my hands to your commands, which I love, and   
I meditate on your decrees.” It is not hard to see his complete adoration for God’s Word. Also notice how David “meditates” on God’s statutes. God granted David understanding and wisdom through daily meditation. We would do well to not only read God’s Word but also think about   
it throughout the day, for God loves us to think about Him. “Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart. They do nothing wrong; they walk in his ways”   
(Psalm 119:2–3).

David was a man after God’s own heart in that he was truly thankful. “I wash my hands in innocence, and go about your altar, O LORD, proclaiming aloud your praise and telling of all your wonderful deeds” (Psalm 26:6–7). David’s life was marked by seasons of great peace   
and prosperity as well as times of fear and despair. But through all of the seasons in his life,   
he never forgot to thank the Lord for everything that he had. It is truly one of David’s finest characteristics. “Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name!” (Psalm 100:4, ESV). As followers of Jesus Christ, we would do well to follow David’s lead of offering praise through thanksgiving to our Lord.

After he sinned, David was truly repentant. David’s sin with Bathsheba is recorded in 2 Samuel 11:2–5. The mighty fall hard, and David’s fall included adultery, lying, and murder. He had sinned against God, and he admits it in 2 Samuel 12:13: “David said to Nathan, ‘I have sinned against the LORD.’ And Nathan said to David, ‘The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die.’” But admitting our sin and asking for forgiveness is only half of the equation. The other half is repentance, and David did that as well. Psalm 51 is David’s prayer of repentance to God: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin!" (Psalm 51:1–2).

In conclusion, David was a man after God’s own heart because he demonstrated his faith and was committed to following the Lord. Yes, his faith was tested on a grand scale, and he failed   
at times. But after his sin he sought and received the Lord’s forgiveness. In the final analysis, David loved God’s Law and sought to follow it exactly. As a man after God’s own heart, David is a role model for all of us.[[8]](#endnote-8)

1. What is the greatest truth you have learned from this lesson and how will you apply   
   it to your life?

1. Joachim Jeremias, as quoted in Kent Hughes *Luke: That You May Know the Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 283. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. Kenneth E. Bailey, as quoted in Hughes, 283. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid., 284. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
4. Kent Hughes *Luke: That You May Know the Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2015), 283-284. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
5. Hughes, 284-286. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
6. Arnold A. Dallimore as quoted in Hughes, 287. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)
7. Hughes, 281. [↑](#endnote-ref-7)
8. “How could David be considered a man after God’s own heart?” Got Questions Ministries, accessed January 3, 2022, [https://www.gotquestions.org/man-after-God-heart.html] [↑](#endnote-ref-8)