

LUKE 7:36–50

The Sinful Woman: Extravagant Love Born of Forgiveness

Lesson at a glance

An uninvited woman walks into a Pharisee's dinner, weeps at the feet of Jesus, lets down her hair, kisses His feet, and pours out an alabaster jar of perfume. The host is horrified. Jesus tells a small parable about two debtors, defends the woman, convicts the host, and sends her away forgiven and in peace. The lesson walks through every move of the scene, sets it carefully alongside (but distinct from) the Bethany anointing from Lesson 10, and uses Luke 7:47 and 7:50 to teach what saving faith looks like.

Goals for this session

First, that each woman would marvel at the love of Christ for the kind of sinner Simon would have refused to seat at his table.

Second, that any woman in the room who has been quietly thinking of herself as Simon (rather than as the woman) would be gently corrected.

Third, that the group would understand Luke 7:47 and 7:50 carefully, with the rest of Scripture, so that the relationship between forgiveness, love, and saving faith is clear.

Fourth, that any woman in the room who has not yet come to the feet of Jesus in the obedience of faith would be drawn toward that step.

Preparing to lead

Read Luke 7:36 to 50 earlier in the week, ideally aloud. Then read 1 John 4:19, Ephesians 2:8 to 10, Galatians 5:6, Romans 1:5; 16:26, and Acts 2:36 to 41 to anchor the soteriology of the lesson.

Pray for the women in your group, particularly any who carry shame from past sin (especially sexual sin, since the text and culture both lean that direction here), any who are quietly Simon (proud of their respectability without knowing they are proud), and any who have never obeyed the gospel.

Sensitive topics in this lesson

Shame over past sexual sin (questions 4, 16). The label "a woman of the city, who was a sinner" was understood by the first readers as a reference to sexual sin. Some women in your group will carry similar weight. The Lord does not crush her, and we should not crush them.

Religious pride (questions 5, 11). Simon's blindness is the more dangerous condition in this passage. Some of the most faithful women in our pews may have a little of Simon in them. Be gentle but clear.

The relationship between faith, love, and salvation (question 10, the Study Skill on Luke 7:47). This is one of the most-discussed verses in the New Testament. The lesson handles it carefully. Lead patiently, let Scripture interpret Scripture, and trust the women to come to the right conclusion when the text is laid out plainly.

Women in the room who have not obeyed the gospel (question 16). Do not manufacture a moment, but be ready for one. Have the names and phone numbers of the elders and preacher in your phone.

Suggested 60- to 75-minute schedule

Five minutes: welcome.

Five minutes: open in prayer. Read Luke 7:36 to 50 aloud, the whole scene in one breath.

Five minutes: warm-up. Ask each woman to share, briefly, about a moment when she has felt deeply forgiven, by God, by another person, or both. What did it stir in her?

Thirty-five to forty minutes: discussion. Choose six or seven questions in advance.

Five to ten minutes: "Your response" reflection.

Five minutes: closing prayer.

Discussion priorities

Make sure these are among the questions you discuss: 4 (her acts), 10 (forgiveness and love), 11 (Simon's blindness), and 16 (have you experienced this forgiveness, and if not, what is keeping you).

Notes on key questions

Question 2. Simon invited Jesus but did not extend the customary courtesies: no water for the feet, no kiss of greeting, no anointing oil. That is not hospitality; that is inspection. Pharisees often invited Jesus to look at Him more carefully, not to honor Him. The contrast with the woman is sharp.

Question 4. Slow the group down here. Read 7:38 line by line. Every action communicates something costly. Standing behind Him weeping. Wetting His feet with her tears. Wiping them with her hair (loosened in public, which no respectable Jewish woman did). Kissing His feet. Anointing them. This is one of the most beautiful pictures of true worship in the Gospels.

Question 5. Simon's thought is interesting on two levels. First, he doubts that Jesus is a prophet. Second, he assumes that a real prophet would have nothing to do with this kind of woman. Both assumptions are wrong, and Jesus exposes both in the next several verses. Simon believes that respectability is the test of holiness. Jesus knows differently.

Question 7. The parable of the two debtors is short and powerful. The point is not that some sinners owe more than others in some objective sense; the point is that recognizing the size of one's debt is what produces grateful love. Forgiven sinners who know they are forgiven sinners love much.

Question 10. Luke 7:47 is the heart of the lesson and the trickiest verse. The Greek construction, combined with the parable Jesus has just told and the final word in 7:50 ("Your faith has saved you"), makes the right reading clear. Her love is the evidence of her forgiveness, not the price of it. The same point runs through the rest of the New Testament: "we love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Make sure this lands clearly.

Question 11. Jesus does not say Simon has nothing to be forgiven. He says Simon thinks he has nothing to be forgiven. That is the more dangerous condition. The sinner can be saved by honest tears. The self-satisfied religious person stays lost while sitting at the table with Jesus.

Question 13. "Your faith has saved you; go in peace." The lesson commentary connects this to the obedience of faith of Acts 2:36 to 41. The kind of faith Jesus credits is the kind that brought this woman across the threshold of a Pharisee's house in tears, the kind that obeys. Make sure the women see that the New Testament's vocabulary for saving faith is always a vocabulary of action.

Question 16. Personal response. If a woman in your group has never obeyed the gospel, this is the moment to invite her to talk with the elders or the preacher this week. Have the contact information ready.

About the Study Skills in this lesson

Two Study Skills appear in Lesson 11. Distinguishing Similar Events in the Gospels is the one to demonstrate in the group hour: compare Luke 7 with Matthew 26 / Mark 14 / John 12 to show how careful reading prevents common confusions. The second skill, Letting Hard Verses Be Interpreted by Clearer Ones, is essential for Luke 7:47 and many other passages. Lead the women in the habit, and they will read the rest of the New Testament more safely all their lives.

A suggested closing prayer

Pray your own prayer. A sample, if you would like one:

"Father, thank You for the woman of Luke 7. Thank You that she found the courage to walk into Simon's house. Thank You that the Lord Jesus saw her, defended her, and sent her away forgiven and in peace. Forgive us when we have been more like Simon than like her. Make us women of much love, because

we have been forgiven much. Thank You for the blood of Christ that covers our sins, and for the obedient faith that brings us to Him. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen."

Looking ahead to Lesson 12

Next week is our closing lesson, Mary the mother of Jesus, drawn from Luke 1 to 2 and John 19:25 to 27. Encourage the women to set aside a little extra time for the reading and the lesson. The closing lesson also looks back over the whole study; you may want to bring a small token, a card or a small gift, for each woman in your group as a memento of the twelve weeks together.