



Loved

Jesus saves all who come to Him in faith.

LUKE 7:40-50

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.

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

UNDERSTAND **THE CONTEXT**

LUKE 7:1–8:56

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.

**Read Luke 7:40-50, circling actions taken by the woman.
How do her actions demonstrate the depth of her love for Jesus?**

EXPLORE THE TEXT

LOVE'S INTENSITY (LUKE 7:40-43)

⁴⁰ Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.” “Tell me, teacher,” he said. ⁴¹ “Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴² Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?” ⁴³ Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.” “You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

VERSE 40

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.

Luke didn’t explain the identity of the woman who anointed Jesus with the expensive perfume (vv. 37-38) 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 tell** him. 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.

VERSES 41-43

Jesus told a brief parable about a **moneylender** and **two people** who **owed money**. 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). They also were commanded to forgive all debts at appointed times (Deut. 15:1-3).

The two men in Jesus' story had fallen into debt to their lender, but to different degrees. The first owed **five hundred •denarii**, roughly equivalent to almost eighteen months' worth of wages. In contrast, the other debtor owed only **fifty** denarii. That was still a sizable amount at almost two months' wages but was more manageable than the first man's debt.

DID YOU KNOW?

One denarius was a typical day's wage for an ordinary laborer.

In the story, neither man could pay his debts, but the lender **forgave** both. For whatever reason, he decided to have mercy. It was a generous act of kindness that transformed the trajectories of each man's life. Hope immediately replaced hopelessness. The men had been given a clean slate—a new beginning. 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**? The word *love* in this context was used to indicate gratitude or thankfulness. Put in modern terms, Jesus wanted to know which debtor would appreciate the gift the most.

Simon immediately provided a response. Of course, both former debtors would hold a new appreciation for the man who had changed their lives. But, if measured by degrees of gratitude, the only logical

answer would be ***the one who had the bigger debt forgiven***. The debtor who owed the five hundred denarii had been staggering under massive debt—more than he could ever expect to repay. So, while both men were grateful, the one with the larger debt should feel the deeper sense of thanksgiving.

Jesus affirmed Simon's response. The Pharisee had ***judged correctly***, showing 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.

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?

LOVE DEMONSTRATED (LUKE 7:44-47)

⁴⁴ Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. ⁴⁵ You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶ You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. ⁴⁷ Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

VERSES 44-46

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. Jesus' question—***Do you see this woman?***—might seem rhetorical. 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. Simon saw someone who didn't belong, but Jesus saw someone loved by His Father. 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. 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. A proper host would kiss guests on the cheek as a sign that they were welcome in the home. 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 **oil**. This would have been the ultimate act of courtesy and respect for Jesus. But again, Simon did nothing. He may have been distracted by preparations or just failed to see the need. But his sense of hospitality was lacking, and he had done little to show appreciation for Jesus' presence.

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.

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

VERSE 47

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.

Jesus didn't deny the woman's past. He acknowledged her *many sins*. But she loved greatly 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 *whoever has been 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.

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).

LOVE AND FAITH (LUKE 7:48-50)

⁴⁸ Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." ⁴⁹ The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" ⁵⁰ Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

VERSES 48-50

Turning away from Simon, Jesus addressed the woman at His feet and told her that her *sins are forgiven*. She had heard Jesus say that to Simon (v. 47), but now He was giving her His full assurance.

As often happened, Jesus' declaration of forgiveness caused a stir among His listeners. Those at the table began to murmur among themselves about the audacity of Jesus' claim. They asked the rhetorical question, *Who is this who even forgives sins?* It was more of an indictment against Jesus than an effort to learn more about Him.

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.

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?

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. Faith always has been the way to salvation.

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. With Jesus' forgiveness, the woman no longer had to worry about her standing with God. He had restored her peace.

The peace Jesus mentioned is peace with God. Of course, this also has implications for our relationships with others. When our vertical communion with God is marked by peace, we can live at peace in our horizontal relationships as well.

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 NEEDS
