

Connecting with Others Like Jesus Did

Session 2

July 14, 2026

*Making Others a Priority*

**The Point:** We are called to the hands and feet of Jesus.

**Session Passages:** Luke 7:36-48

**Luke 7:36-39**

**Connection to the Point:** Jesus was willing to associate with the religious elite.

**Context.** Luke, a Gentile, has been taking us through Jesus's life in a chronological manner. This portion of Luke's Gospel focuses on Jesus's ministry in Galilee. Luke introduced us to Jesus's upside-down kingdom with the beatitudes in Luke 6:20-23. In chapter 7, Luke described how Jesus had the authority to heal all manner of sicknesses and diseases, even raising a young man from the dead. In this focal passage, Luke also indicated Jesus's authority to grant the forgiveness of sins.

There is a similar story of a woman washing Jesus's feet in Matthew 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; and John 12:1-8; but this passage records a separate incident. Luke's account takes place in Galilee, whereas the accounts of other Gospel writers are set in Bethany of Judea. Matthew and Mark identified the house in which a dinner was hosted as the home belonging to Simon the leper, while Luke's account identified the house as belonging to Simon the Pharisee. Luke emphasizes forgiveness of sin for a repentant sinner, while Matthew, Mark, and John underline the cost of the perfume

**One of the Pharisees** (v. 36). Luke later identifies this Pharisee as "Simon" (v. 40). The Pharisees were the largest religious party in first-century Judaism. They followed strict adherence to the law of Moses and expanded those laws to define precisely how a person should live. They were in charge of the synagogues and primarily responsible for teaching the nation the Mosaic law. During Jesus's earthly ministry, the Pharisees were among His chief adversaries.

**Invited him to eat** (v. 36). Luke does not mention the reason for the invitation. Perhaps Simon wanted to investigate the claims of Jesus further. More likely, Simon was a Pharisee looking for evidence to use against Jesus that would lead to His condemnation.

**Reclined at the table** (v. 36). That the guests were reclining at the table indicates that this was a more formal meal or banquet. Often, this type of meal would be a Sabbath meal. In the first century AD, Jews frequently invited rabbis or teachers to share a meal on the Sabbath after synagogue services. The discussion around the low-lying table would center on matters of theology, philosophy, and local politics. The discussions were often open to others who wished to learn from the visiting rabbi or teacher.

**A woman . . . who was a sinner** (v. 37). Often during a meal or banquet, the doors to the house or courtyard might be left open to allow for circulation. Those not invited to the dinner were allowed to come in and stand along the outside of the walls or courtyard.<sup>1</sup> Jewish expectations of generosity called for allowing outcasts,

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<sup>1</sup> James R. Edward, *The Gospel According to Luke*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 9.

sinners, and the poor to enjoy the leftovers after the guests had finished eating.<sup>2</sup> Understanding their culture of generosity and open hospitality helps us understand why the uninvited woman was there. She is mentioned as a sinner three times (vv. 37,39,47). Some speculate that she may have been a prostitute and that her alabaster jar was associated with her work as a prostitute. However, other scholars believe she could have spent her inheritance on the elaborate perfume.

**Found out** (v. 37). Word had spread throughout the town that Jesus was at Simon's house, for news spread rapidly wherever Jesus went. The people flocked to see Him, bringing their sick and disabled for Jesus to heal. Some Bible scholars believe that this woman had previously met Jesus and received forgiveness from Him. If so, she now showed up as an uninvited guest to express her gratitude to Jesus. If she had not been in Jesus's presence before, what she knew of Jesus convicted her of her sinfulness, and she came to Him to receive forgiveness.

**Alabaster jar of perfume** (v. 37). Perfume would have been one of the tools of the trade for a prostitute. Alabaster jars, carved from the soft rock of either gypsum or calcite, were standard but valuable in the first century AD. Because the perfume the woman used to anoint Jesus was in such a jar, the observers likely considered her actions extravagant.

**Behind him** (v. 38). Because the small table containing the food for the meal was in the center of the room, with the guests reclining around it with bare feet extending outward, the natural place for the woman to stand would have been at Jesus's feet. While she may have wanted to anoint His head with perfume, doing so might have been difficult. As she stood by His feet, she could have experienced remorse over her sinful lifestyle. Or perhaps she recalled the words of forgiveness that Jesus had spoken to her previously. With the regret of her sins or the remembrance of her forgiveness came tears of repentance and gratitude.

**Wash his feet. . . wiped his feet. . . with her hair** (v. 38). Since it was customary to remove one's sandals for these meals, the tears shed by this woman fell on Jesus's bare feet. The woman's plan was probably to anoint Jesus's head with the perfume, but with the reclining arrangement and the tears wetting Jesus's feet, the woman adopted a different approach. Using her hair for a towel, the woman dried Jesus's feet. Such an action of letting down her hair in public was disgraceful and subjected the woman to additional scorn. At this point, however, the woman could only think of remorse for her sin and gratitude to Jesus for His forgiveness (see v. 47).

**Anointing them with perfume** (v. 38). The woman's expression of gratitude continued as she anointed Jesus's feet with the perfume. The verb tense indicates that she continually kissed and anointed Jesus's feet for a lengthy period.

**If he were a prophet** (v. 39). Perhaps Simon had previously been unaware of the presence of the woman. Now, with her acts of adoration, Simon saw her and recognized her. It seems he thought Jesus's encounter with the woman was proof that Jesus was not a prophet. First, Simon thought if Jesus were a true prophet, He would have known what kind of woman she was. Second, He would not have allowed her to touch Him. Such a touch would have rendered Jesus unclean. Therefore, he concluded that Jesus was not a prophet.

## **Luke 7:40-43**

**Connection to the Point:** Jesus told a story to help the Pharisee understand the actions of the sinful woman.

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<sup>2</sup> David E. Garland, Luke, ed. Clinton E. Arnold, vol. 3 of *Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2011), 324.

**Jesus replied to him** (v. 40). Jesus interrupted the conversation around the table by speaking directly to Simon and revealing that He knew Simon's thoughts. Not only did Jesus know what Simon was thinking, but He also knew what kind of woman was touching Him.

**Something to say to you** (v. 40). To give Simon a deeper understanding of what was happening with the woman, Jesus told a brief parable to illustrate God's grace to sinners.

**Teacher** (v. 40). This is the first instance where Luke refers to Jesus as a teacher. For the disciples and others close to Jesus, the term they usually used to address Jesus was "master." The title "master" spoke of His authority. In Luke's Gospel, only those who were not part of Jesus's followers used the term "teacher" when addressing Him. Luke, being a Gentile, never used the Hebrew term "rabbi" to refer to Jesus.

**Creditor . . . debtors** (v. 41). The Greek word for "creditor" means a moneylender. Two different debtors owed this creditor money. The second debt was ten times the amount of the first debt. Fifty denarii would be approximately equivalent to two month's wages for a common laborer. Five hundred denarii amounted to almost eighteen months of wages.<sup>3</sup>

**They could not pay** (v. 42). In this story, Jesus did not provide any details, such as how the debtors had initially accumulated debt or why they could not repay their debts. This brief parable bears a resemblance to Jesus's parable of the unforgiving servant in Matthew 18:23-35. Here in Luke, however, the emphasis is not on the response of a forgiven person toward others. Instead, the focus is on the reaction of one forgiven toward the one who extends forgiveness.

**He graciously forgave** (v. 42). The Greek word means to grant a favor to or to be kind. The creditor extended favor or grace to the two debtors. They did not deserve any favor. They deserved just the opposite. In reality, they owed the debts. Out of generosity, the creditor canceled the debt, forgiving the amount owed. Consider that by canceling the debts, the creditor effectively assumed both debts in full. This thought has ramifications as we consider the fact that God forgives our sins through the cross. Luke placed "graciously" and "forgiveness" together to accentuate the abundance of grace.

**Which of them will love him more?** (v. 42). In other words, which one should be more grateful—the debtor whose small debt was forgiven or the debtor whose large debt was forgiven? While Jesus was confronting Simon's judgmental attitude, He was also trying to teach Simon about God's grace and forgiveness. The magnitude of the sin makes no difference in God's eyes. His grace is sufficient to cover any debt, large or small.

**I suppose** (v. 43). Simon hesitated momentarily. Perhaps he was suspicious, anticipating a trap. Or he realized he was trapped. Nonetheless, Simon answered, "I suppose the one he forgave more." Jesus commended him for this: "You have judged correctly."

**Forgave more** (v. 43). Simon realized, even with his distrust and perhaps hatred of Jesus, that one will love more when a greater debt is canceled. Whether he saw that principle in play at this point is unknown, but Jesus would quickly apply the lesson to the situation with the woman.

## **Luke 7:44-48**

**Connection to the Point:** Jesus was willing to associate with those who were looked down upon by others.

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<sup>3</sup> Robert H. Stein, "Luke" in *The New American Commentary*, vol. 24, ed. D.A. Carson (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1992), 237.

**Turning to the woman** (v. 44). Jesus spoke to Simon, even though He directed His attention to the woman. “Turning to the woman” indicated that Jesus in some way gestured or called Simon’s attention to the woman.

**Do you see this woman** (v. 44). Jesus now applied the truth of the parable to the situation at hand. Here was the type of person that the Pharisees hated the most, and in a twist of irony, she was the one that Jesus used to showcase His power to change a life through forgiveness of sin. In the following three verses, Jesus sets up a contrast between the sinful woman and Simon the Pharisee, illustrating who loved Jesus more.

**Water for my feet** (v. 44). While we have the luxury of walking on sidewalks, pavement, and grass—in first-century Israel, such luxuries were non-existent. Other than a few stone streets, the roads and pathways were dirt and rock. As a result, dirt covered the feet of travelers. The customary practice for guests was to wash their feet upon arrival at the home. Cleaning the feet of guests was a typical duty of hospitality in the first century AD. This task was often so tedious and dirty that household servants performed it. Simon had not provided this expected service to Jesus, whether out of neglect or spite. In contrast to Simon, Jesus said that this woman had provided her tears to wash Jesus’s feet.

**Gave me no kiss** (v. 45). Another hospitality custom of the first century AD was the kiss of greeting for guests entering a home. Although this was not required, it was a nice gesture of greeting and hospitality. Again, Simon did not provide this for Jesus. The woman’s kisses of Jesus’s feet served as a gesture of gratitude and thankfulness.

**Anoint my head** (v. 46). Another hospitality custom was to anoint the honored guest’s head with sweet, aromatic oil or olive oil. Anointing the head was optional but provided an additional touch of respect and love. The only oil that Jesus received at Simon’s banquet was that of the much more valuable perfume the woman supplied. Because Simon had neglected these fundamental acts of hospitality, it is evident that his motives were wrong when he invited Jesus to this meal.

The bottom line of these three comparisons was to illustrate that Jesus exhibited extravagant forgiveness, and the woman responded with more love for Jesus than Simon showed. Her actions were extravagant due to her genuine appreciation for the forgiveness extended to her by Jesus.

**Her many sins have been forgiven** (v. 47). The verb tense used here, translated as “have been forgiven,” indicates that the action occurred in the past and continues to have an effect in the present. Thus, Jesus pointed to a time in the past when she accepted Jesus as the Messiah and received forgiveness for her sins. Jesus did not forgive her sins because of her action. Instead, her actions were proof that she had received forgiveness for her sins. Therefore, Jesus said, the reason she loved so much was that Jesus had forgiven her many sins. Likewise, Jesus forgives our sins not because we earn His forgiveness but rather because we place our faith in Him and accept what He did on our behalf.

**One who is forgiven little, loves little** (v. 47). These words applied to Simon. As a Pharisee, he would not recognize his sinfulness or his need for forgiveness. Due to the Pharisaic self-righteous attitude, Simon was not open to embracing Jesus as the Messiah. Throughout the meal, Simon demonstrated little love for Jesus because he would not acknowledge his need for forgiveness. Therefore, he received no forgiveness.

**Your sins are forgiven** (v. 48). The remorse and repentance of the woman were personal. Because of this, Jesus spoke directly to her: “Your sins are forgiven.” This phrase was the first direct communication between Jesus and the woman at the dinner. This pronouncement by Jesus was spoken for the benefit of the woman and others at the table and in the community who might still regard this woman as a notorious sinner. The community would now be alerted to watch this woman’s transformation as a result of her encounter with Jesus.