

SHOWING LOVE

Bible Passage: Luke 7:36-50

Key Verse: Luke 7:47

❖ *Significance of the Lesson*

- The *Theme* of this lesson is looking for change.
- The *Life Question* is, How can I show my love for Jesus?
- The *Biblical Truth* affirms that believers who understand how much Jesus loves them are motivated to show love for Him.
- The *Life Impact* is designed to help your love for Jesus.

Let's Talk (And Sing) About Love

We live in a culture where people think, talk and sing about love. We especially like to sing about it. If we stop for a moment and think back over the last few years a number of love songs that topped the charts easily come to mind: "Love Me Tender;" "The Power of Love;" "Love Is a Wonderful Thing;" "I'll Always Love You;" "It's Love That Makes The World Go Round;" "All For Love;" "And I Love Her;" "Because You Loved Me;" "Endless Love;" "Love Me Or Leave Me Alone;" "Love Will Always Win;" "Love Will Find A Way;" and a country music favorite, "Don't Be Stupid! You Know I Love You!" Yes, we think, talk and sing about love, though it is quite obvious to any honest observer, we don't really understand it all that well. People are looking for love, but they are not always finding it. In Luke 7:36-50 we will not only find it, we will find it on display in a lavish and incredible display. We will learn that one who is forgiven much will love much, especially when the one who is doing the forgiving is the Son of God.

Theological Sidebar: "anoint" (Luke 7:46)

The Greek language has several words translated into English as **anoint**. *Chrio* was used in the context of sacred and symbolic anointing (e.g. Luke 4:18), and is closely related to the word *Christos* (Christ). *Enchrio* meant to rub in (Rev. 3:18). *Epichrio* meant to rub on (John 9:6, 11). *Murizo* was a word used in anointing a body for burial (Mark 14:8). The most general word for anointing, and the one used here in Luke 7:46, was *aleipho*. It appears several times in the New Testament and could be used to refer to washing your face when fasting (Matt. 6:17), embalming the dead (Mark 16:1), and anointing the sick (Mark 6:13; James 5:14). Thus anointing was a ritual activity whereby one would pour, rub, or smear a person or thing with oil or an ointment with a view to healing, sanctifying or embalming. Olive oil was the most common element used in anointing. However, here in Luke 7:46, the sinful woman **anointed** the **feet** of Jesus **with fragrant oil** or "perfume" (NIV). We cannot be certain as to what exactly this **fragrant oil** or perfume was, though it is almost certain that it was costly and expensive. Pouring or anointing Jesus with this perfumed ointment was a beautiful display of love and devotion for the one who could and did forgive her sins. She brought her best and gave it to Jesus because she loved Him.

Search the Scriptures

Jesus came into this world “to seek and to save the lost” (Luke 19:10). However, before one can get saved they must first understand that they are lost, separated from God because of sin. Jesus gladly identified Himself as “a friend of tax collectors and sinners” (Luke 7:35). This also brought with it the accusation that He was a “a glutton and a drunkard.” Jesus took the hits and kept right on doing what He had come into the world to do. Did He reach out to the tax collectors? He certainly did, just ask Zacchaeus (Luke 19:1-10). Did He reach out to sinners? Yes he did. Just ask an unnamed woman who felt the touch of His grace, and received the salvation and peace that comes when a person in faith comes to Jesus.

1. Love Expressed (Luke 7:36-38)

What is a Pharisee? What is so startling about this woman’s appearance in the story? What does Luke mean when he says the woman was a sinner? Can you see the extraordinary detail in which Luke tells us what this woman did?

One of Pharisees invited Jesus into his home **to eat with him**. The Pharisees were the largest and most influential religious party of Jesus’ day. They also wielded significant political influence. Josephus wrote that there were approximately 6,000. The word Pharisee means “separated ones” and the word may indeed describe the ethical and moral lifestyle of the group. They often opposed Jesus because He rejected their additions to and interpretations of the Old Testament Law. They were highly esteemed and respected by the common people, who viewed their rigid adherence to their traditions as an evidence of their righteousness. This Pharisee named Simon (v. 40) was apparently, at least in some sense, attracted to the ministry of Jesus. Unlike many of his party, he was willing to entertain Jesus in his home for a meal, a sign of good will and Near Eastern hospitality. Jesus **entered his house and reclined at the table**. Reclining was the normal way of eating a meal in that day. The guests would lean on their elbows as they **reclined**, with their heads near the table. It would also be customary to have the feet of the guest washed before the meal, as the reclining position around the table would expose each one’s feet in some measure. Apparently Simon neglected this act of hospitality (v. 44), a significant oversight or possibly even a slighting of Jesus done intentionally. Some believe Simon invited Jesus into his home only to debate or even trick Him. We cannot be certain of his motives.

However, we are suddenly stunned by what happens next. **A woman in the town who was a sinner** found out that **Jesus was** in this Pharisee’s home, **reclining at the table**. How she found this out we are not told, nor are we informed as to how she was able to “crash the party.” This gathering was probably a banquet of some kind with a number of important guests. No doubt she had not received an invitation. Describing her as **a sinner** is highly suggestive, as is her sudden appearance. Obviously, Jesus was a very recognizable and popular teacher. When he entered a village, he did not enter silently. He always made impressions wherever he went. This woman knows that the great teacher, prophet, and miracle-worker has entered the village and she wants to see him. The Bible indicates the condition of this woman. She is simply called **a sinner**. The Bible obviously teaches that all person are **sinners** (Rom. 3:23). However, this term was

used sometimes to indicate a class of persons who were thought of as grievously sinful. Luke does not tell us here what class of **sinner** she was. Some conjecture that she is a prostitute, but this claim cannot be verified. The simple fact is that she is known by those in the community as **a sinner**.

Luke informs us that she began to make her way to Jesus, bringing with her **an alabaster flask of fragrant oil** (*NIV*, “jar of perfume”). While there are some similarities with this event and that which took place in Bethany during the last week of Jesus’ life (Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8), it is probably best to see this as different and separate incident. Here in Luke the woman is nameless, called simply **a sinner**, and the issues are love and forgiveness. In the other anointing, John’s gospel tells us plainly that it is Mary of Bethany who anoints Jesus, and there the concern is selling the “pound of fragrant oil” and giving the proceeds to the poor. Here we are not told, as in John, of the amount or nature of the **fragrant oil**. Still, we can be quite certain that it was valuable, costly and an attractive gift. This woman loves Jesus, perhaps having had a previous encounter with Him that Luke does not mention. Her love for Him is genuine and sincere, flowing out of a heart of gratitude and worship.

True love is not arrogant or prideful. True love is humble and self-effacing. This woman is not egotistical. She is lowly and humble before Jesus. She is not trying to show off. She is trying to show her love for Jesus.

(She) stood behind Him at His feet, weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears. Jesus is reclining at the table with his feet away from it. This gives the woman easy access to his feet. She is standing behind him at his feet. She begins to weep and his feet get wet with her tears. The word for weeping here denotes wailing. We might say, “She was weeping hysterically.” The same word is used in Matthew 2:18 in speaking about Herod’s massacre of the infants, “A cry of anguish is heard in Ramah, **weeping** and mourning unrestrained. Rachel weeps for her children, refusing to be comforted, for they are dead” (*NLT*). This word is used in the Old Testament when Jacob thinks that Joseph is dead in Genesis 37:35, “Then all his sons and all his daughters arose to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. And he said, ‘Surely I will go down to Sheol in mourning for my son.’ So his father **wept** for him” (*NASB*). Even Jesus weeps bitterly in Luke 19:41 over Jerusalem because they have rejected him, “Now as He drew near, He saw the city and **wept** over it” (*NKJV*). Luke further indicates that there was no small amount of tears. The Bible said she began to wash his feet with her tears. The verb to wash literally means to rain. It is the same word as raining. Matthew 5:44-45 says, “But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends **rain** on the righteous and the unrighteous.” This woman is weeping so terribly that the tears rolling off her cheeks are dropping on Jesus’ feet like rainfall. There is so much water accumulating on His feet that she can wash His feet with her tears.

She wiped His feet with the hair of her head, kissing them and anointing them with the fragrant oil. Instead of using a towel, she uses the hair of her head. Letting down

her hair was a disgraceful thing for women in that society. The people watching her would have been stunned. She kisses his feet, which is a sign of reverence, respect and humility. The word here is a more emphatic word for *kissing*. It is used later in Luke 15:20 about the prodigal son, “So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long distance away, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and **kissed** him” (*NLT*). She anoints His feet with the perfume, the fragrant oil. This woman does not care about social rules and norms. She does not care about saving face. She does not care about impressing the religious leaders. All she cares about is expressing her love and gratitude to Jesus. What an act of worship. What an example she sets for all of us.

These verses emphasize several important lessons:

1. Jesus was willing to go where He was invited in order to confront sinners with their sin and show them their need for a Savior.
2. Our love for Jesus should be expressed in ways that are tangible and visible for others to see.
3. Jesus loves and cares for sinners, no matter who they are or what they have done.

2. Love Contrasted (Luke 7:19-46)

How did the Pharisees respond to the woman who honored Jesus? How did Jesus respond to Simon? In what ways did Jesus contrast the actions of the sinful woman and Simon the Pharisee?

Our text does not tell us specifically why this woman came to Jesus and anointed and washed His feet with her hair. It does not tell us why she wept so strongly that her tears were like a rain shower. Perhaps she was seeking forgiveness. Perhaps she was simply overwhelmed to be in the presence of One she believed to be the Messiah and who could and would forgive her of all that she had ever done. Regardless of what moved her, her actions stood in stark contrast to the reaction and response of **Simon the Pharisee**. The Pharisee responds in a most despicable way to this wonderful act of love. His is the response of pride and arrogance. He thinks that he is better than others. He thinks his position as a Pharisee and the rituals he observes make him superior to the “sinners” of the world. He is also convinced that Jesus is not as great as others think He is. He in fact questions the credentials of our Lord, only to have his thoughts thrown back in his face.

When the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this he said to himself, “This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what kind of woman this is who is touching Him.” Simon looks over and sees this sinful woman displaying her great love for Jesus and he is disgusted and appalled by what he is witnessing. This is disgusting to him on many levels. How could Jesus, this supposed prophet, let a person like this touch Him? He doubts the authority of Jesus. He is saying to himself, “If Jesus was really a **prophet** and a great man sent by God, then **He would know** who this woman is. Moreover, he would know **what kind of woman she is.**” Simon is implying by his conversation with himself that Jesus is not a prophet. Prophets, men of God, do not let sinners touch them, he thinks. They do not let sinners wash their feet. They do not let sinners kiss them. They do not let sinners pour expensive perfume on their feet. They do

not behave in such a shameful and irresponsible manner. It is time to reevaluate this fellow. And the woman? With disgust and distain, Simon sneers within himself, uttering the judgment: **She's a sinner**. Not only does Simon reject Jesus' authority, he reviles this woman. He is disgusted with her. Even though guests were allowed to come into a banquet to sit along the walls and listen to a traveling teacher who was eating there, her presence was unacceptable. This display is not tolerable. It is in full view of all the dinner guests! Simon is embarrassed and upset with this woman. She is a personal disgrace and she has made a travesty of his banquet. The quicker we can shut this thing down the better it will be.

Now Jesus is about to set Simon straight. Even though Simon is saying these things to himself, Jesus knows what he is thinking, because Jesus is a prophet after all. He is not only a prophet, but he is God in the flesh. He will teach Simon that the one in the room who has God's favor is not the religious leader, Simon, but rather the sinner, the one who shows her love for Jesus and gains God's forgiveness.

Jesus knows what Simon is thinking. This no doubt caught Simon by complete surprise and proved that Jesus is really a prophet after all. **Jesus replied to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you."** Jesus rebukes Simon for his thoughts. However, Jesus is very subtle and disarming in his rebuke. Just like fishing, he hooks Simon and reels him in, and then he lowers the hammer on him. **"Teacher," he said, "say it."** Simon is willing to listen to Jesus, although it is possible that there is a sting of sarcasm in his voice. Jesus, as He often did, makes the point with a story, a parable. This way of teaching often allowed Jesus to sneak up on his hearers. **A creditor had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Since they could not pay it back, he graciously forgave them both.** Jesus loved to teach in parables. With parables he confounded the wisdom of his age. He flipped people's understanding upside-down. He does it very delicately here. He tells a story. There was a moneylender who had two men that owed him money. A denarius is about a day's wage. This means that one man owed him about one and a half year's salary. The other owed him almost two months salary. Neither of these men had enough to pay the moneylender back. They were stuck with no hope of paying off the debt. Yet, the moneylender was gracious and forgiving. He cancelled both debts.

Jesus now asks Simon a question. **So, which of them will love him more? Simon answered, "I suppose the one he forgave more."** Is there some reluctance in his voice? This is obviously the logical answer. Imagine a child who stole a stick of gum being forgiven by the store clerk. Then, imagine a child who stole a DVD player being forgiven by the storeowner. Which child will be more grateful for the forgiveness? Obviously, the one who commits the more heinous crime will be more thankful. **"You have judged correctly," He told him.** Jesus now draws a striking and stinging contrast between the Pharisee Simon and the sinful woman.

Now that Jesus has hooked Simon, he can apply the parable. His application will commend the woman and criticize Simon, honor the woman and shame Simon. In the context of Near Eastern hospitality, Simon's shame would be great and inexcusable.

Simon, the self-righteous Pharisee, is not acceptable before God, whereas the sinner is acceptable before God. **Turning to the woman, He said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she, with her tears, has washed my feet and wiped them with her hair.”** He is saying, “Listen Simon, this is your party and you did not even do the most basic and normal acts of courtesy towards me when I entered your home. You did not go out of your way to make me feel welcome. Yet, this woman from off the street went out of her way and at great sacrifice to let me know of her love for me. You did not even see to it that **my feet** were washed. Anyone could have done that. In contrast she **washed my feet** with the **tears** from her eyes and then used her own **hair** to wipe them. **You gave me no kiss, but she hasn’t stopped kissing my feet since I came in.**” A kiss was a typical way of greeting in ancient Palestine. This was simply courteous. This woman, however, has gone beyond anything anyone could imagine in her display of love and affection. **You didn’t anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with fragrant oil.**

Simon, in other words, did not even pay Jesus the common courtesies of the day. On the other hand, this sinful woman paid Him all three of them: 1) she **washed His feet**; 2) kissed Him; and 3) anointed His **head with oil**. What a contrast in respect, honor, love and devotion between Simon the Pharisee and the “no name” sinful woman.

These verses teach us several important lessons:

1. Those who are forgiven will show their gratitude.
2. Jesus deals graciously with the repentant but firmly with the prideful and self-righteous.
3. Jesus knew the value of a good story to drive home a spiritual truth.
4. Be careful what you think! Jesus is watching.

3. Love Commended (Luke 7:47-50).

What principle about forgiveness does Jesus teach us? What question is raised in verse 49 that Luke wants us to answer for ourselves? On what basis did Jesus forgive the sinful woman of her sins?

Jesus addresses Simon with a final word of instruction about sin and forgiveness.

Therefore I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; that’s why she loved much. Like the **debtor** who **owed 500 denarii**, this woman had **many sins**. Jesus does not whitewash or minimize her past. Neither does He minimize God’s forgiveness. Yes, she has **many sins** and God has great forgiveness. All of them, each and every one has **been forgiven**. There may be a hint here that this woman had previously met our Lord and that her visit to Simon’s house was in response to a previous encounter. On this we cannot be sure. It is the case, however, that Jesus says she has already been forgiven, and that is why she has treated our Lord as she has. Her actions did not produce forgiveness. The Scriptures are clear, we are saved “by grace...through faith” (Eph. 2:8). But, we are saved “for good works” (Eph. 2:10). Her acts of love and devotion were the natural products of her forgiveness. Jesus reminds Simon, with a word of gentle but direct rebuke, **But the one who is forgiven little, loves little**. Those who do not recognize and acknowledge the greatness of their sin when set alongside the standard of God’s

righteousness and glory (Rom. 3:23) will not be grateful for forgiveness. In fact the implication is they, in self-righteousness and pride, may not even seek forgiveness. Luke does not tell us how Simon responded to this final word from Jesus.

Then He said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” This literally means that her sins have already been forgiven in the past. She is in a state of forgiveness. Jesus is assuring her that her sins are taken care of and forgiven. They are gone.

Those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this man who even forgives sins?” The Pharisee and his dinner guests could not believe their ears at this statement, words they would have considered as blatant blasphemy. Only God can forgive sin they thought. On this they were right on target. How can this Jesus from Nazareth claim to have the divine prerogative to forgive a sinner of their sins? If what He says is true, there is only one conclusion that we can draw as to who He is!

And He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.” Faith is what makes a person acceptable to God. Her faith made her, a sinner, right with God. Go in peace, wholeness, for one who can forgive your sins has crossed your path and you will never be the same again.

These verses teach us the following important lessons:

1. Great forgiveness results in great gratitude.
2. Only God can forgive sins. Jesus, therefore, is God.
3. We are saved by faith, not works. This has always been God’s way of salvation.
4. When Jesus saves a sinner, their forgiveness is complete and peace becomes their companion.

Spiritual Transformations

People are looking for love, but it is often in the wrong places and for the wrong reasons. Secular ideas of love range from a warm, fuzzy feeling to shocking, sexually explicit, and often tragically perverted displays of sensuality. The type of love that truly satisfies is set forth only in the Bible. When asked what is the greatest commandment, Jesus said in essence that it is to love God with all that we are and to love our neighbors as ourselves. This love is to be an unconditional love, just like God’s love for us. When we think of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done for us, we want to show our love for Him. We have learned a great lesson from a woman who was a known sinner. Because Jesus had forgiven her much, she loved Him much in return. Her love and her expression of love were in direct contrast to Simon, the Pharisee, in whose house Jesus was a guest. As you examine your own heart what do you discover? Are you more like the self-righteous Pharisee Simon who does not yet understand and see the sinfulness of his heart? Or, are you like the sinful woman who is fully aware of her sin and unworthiness, and who throws herself at the feet of Jesus because He is the only person she can go to and find forgiveness?

Do you acknowledge that you too are a sinner in need of a Savior? Have you fled to Jesus, and Jesus alone, for the forgiveness you need? Have you expressed in some clear and tangible way your gratitude for the forgiveness Jesus provides?

Prayer of Commitment : Lord Jesus, I am a great sinner but you are a great Savior! Thank you for forgiving me of all my sins. Let me never stop telling others of all that you have done for me. Amen.