

➤ **Read Luke 7:36—8:3.**

➤ **Reread Luke 7:36–50.¹**

1. This week's passage begins at a dinner party hosted by Simon the Pharisee. Given what Luke has told us so far about the increasing opposition of the religious leaders toward Jesus (5:17–26, 29–39; 6:1–11; 7:29–30), what do you think may have been Simon's motive for inviting him?

Does it surprise you that Jesus accepted this Pharisee's invitation? Why or why not?

2. What does Luke emphasize about the woman who shows up at Jesus' feet? (7:37, 39, 47)
3. Though dinners like this were open for the public to view, a woman with such an unsavory reputation would not have been welcome, especially not at the home of a Pharisee. Why does she take the risk? (7:37)

Cultural Context

“The scene is the courtyard of the house of Simon the Pharisee. The houses of well-to-do people were built round an open courtyard in the form of a hollow square. Often in the courtyard there was a garden and a fountain; and there in the warm weather meals were eaten. It was the custom in the east that when a Rabbi was at a meal in such a house, all kinds of people came in – they were quite free to do so – to listen to the pearls of wisdom which fell from his lips. That explains the presence of the woman. When a guest entered such a house three things were always done. The host placed his hand on the guest's shoulder and gave him the kiss of peace. That would be a mark of respect which was never omitted in the case of a distinguished Rabbi. The roads were only dust tracks, and shoes were only soles held in place by straps across the foot. So always cool water was poured over the guest's feet to cleanse and comfort them. Either a pinch of sweet-smelling incense was burned or a drop of attar of roses was placed on the guest's head. These things good manners demanded, and in this case not one of them was done. In the east the guests did not sit, but reclined, at table. They lay on low couches, resting on the left elbow, leaving the right arm free, with the feet stretched out behind; and during the meal the sandals were taken off. That explains how the woman could be standing at Jesus' feet.”²

4. Overcome in Jesus' presence, the "notoriously sinful woman"³ begins to cry (v. 38a). What has she come to know that causes her flood of emotion? (7:47a, 48; Ps. 38:4; Rom. 4:7-8; Titus 3:4-5a)
5. Think of a time in your own life when the Lord revealed to you the depth of your sin and the breadth of his love and forgiveness through Jesus. How does your experience help you to understand the sinful woman's tears?
6. As unacceptable as it was for this "kind of woman" (v. 39) to be present in a Pharisee's home, the woman's actions that follow cause her to make an even greater spectacle of herself:
- She unbinds her hair to dry Jesus' tear-soaked feet. "In those days it was shameful for a woman to let down her hair in public."⁴
 - She lavishes Jesus' feet with kisses. Kissing the feet of a rabbi "was the sign of abject humiliation and servitude."⁵
 - She pours expensive perfume on Jesus' feet. "Perfume was highly prized...and may have been the most precious thing [the woman] owned."⁶

What do you think is going on in her heart that causes her to do these things in front of everyone there?

"... Jesus understood that the more sin this woman had committed, the more grace she needed. The more grace she received, the more love she felt."⁷

7. Read verse 39. What does the Pharisee's inaudible response to the woman's behavior tell you about...
...his attitude toward her? (📖* 1 Samuel 16:7b)

...his attitude toward Jesus?

...his estimation of himself? (📖 Lk. 18:9-14; 1 Jn. 1:8)

8. In verses 41–43, Jesus answers the Pharisee’s thoughts. What point is Jesus making with the parable he tells? (7:42b–43a, 47b)
9. Read verses 44–47.
- Jesus lists specific ways the Pharisee has failed to honor his guest. What lies behind this failure to honor Jesus properly?
 - What lies behind the woman’s freedom to do what the Pharisee failed to do?
10. Jesus responds directly to the woman after her extravagant expressions of love for him. How do you think his words of comfort in verses 48 and 50 will enable her now to live among people who have known her by her very public sins of the past? (📖 1 Cor. 6:9–11)
- “God does not ask us to prove our love for him before he will save us. No, he offers forgiveness as a free gift of his love. Then, once our sins are forgiven, the right and natural response is for us to love him in return. It is not the love we show for Jesus that causes him to forgive us; it is his forgiveness that causes us to love.”⁸
11. The sinful woman has lived a life of guilt and shame, but now, having been saved by faith, she receives something totally new: peace (7:50). You can know this peace, too. Read Luke 1:77–79 and 2:14, Romans 5:1–11, and Ephesians 2:17–18. Respond in prayer.
- **Read Luke 8:1–3.**
12. “From the beginning of his Gospel, Luke has paid special attention to the women whose lives were transformed by the coming of Christ.”⁹ In Luke 8:3, three women – Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna - accompany Jesus and his twelve disciples as he ministers “from one town and village to another” (8:1).
What has Jesus done for these women? (8:2)

How have these women responded to what Jesus has done for them? (8:3b)

How is their response similar to that of the sinful woman in the previous chapter?

How is it different?

13. Each of the women we have looked at this week recognized who Jesus was and responded to his extravagant love freely, wholeheartedly, and without a care for what others thought. Spend some time with Jesus and allow yourself to be moved by his extravagant love for you.

“Jesus desires the affection of our hearts as well as the faith of our minds. So greet him with extravagant affection. Fall into the arms of his love, bow at his feet in worship, and weep for joy that all your sins are forgiven.”¹⁰

*📖 For further study

¹ Matthew 26:6–13, Mark 14:3–9, and John 12:1–8 also recount a woman’s anointing of Jesus. While those accounts may seem similar to this one, they are different incidents.

² William Barclay. *The Daily Study Bible Series: The Gospel of Luke* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1956), 92-93.

³ Norvel Geldenhuys. *The Gospel of Luke: The New International Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), 233.

⁴ Philip Graham Ryken. *Reformed Expository Commentary: Luke: Volume 1: Chapters 1-12* (Phillipsburg: P & R Publishing, 2009), 342.

⁵ R. C. Sproul. *A Walk with God: An Exposition of Luke* (Ross-shire: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 152.

⁶ Ryken, 342.

⁷ Sproul, 153.

⁸ Ryken, 351.

⁹ *Ibid.* 353.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 343.