

## Discussion Guide, Luke 7:36–50

In Luke 7:36–50, Jesus has dinner in the home of a Pharisee when an unexpected guest arrives—a woman known for her sinful lifestyle.

### QUESTIONS:

**1. In ancient cultures it was (understandably) considered very rude to weep on someone’s feet and smother them with your hair (even if you used expensive ointment). Still, this woman, a notorious “sinner,” does just that.**

- Was she being rude, or is there something else going on here? What does it say about her that she would stoop so low and disregard the rules of proper conduct?
- There are two other reactions we should note: that of Jesus and that of the Pharisee. How would you expect them to respond, and how do they respond?
- Now, compare the Pharisee’s “manners” with the woman’s. How did the Pharisee dishonor his guest? What does he think of Jesus?

**2. In verse 39 we glimpse the Pharisee’s skepticism. Based on this brief thought, what defines a prophet for this man? As one of the leading religious leaders of his day, known for his strict adherence to the Law, how might his expectations for Jesus be skewed?**

- How is Jesus’ reaction to the Pharisee’s thought ironic?
- If prophets were expected to speak for the Lord, what does the Pharisee’s assumption say about how he expects the Lord would react to this woman?

**3. Verse 47 seems to present two different ways of understanding the relationship between forgiveness and personal love. First he says, “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much,” but then he says, “He who is forgiven little, loves little.” How might you resolve this tension? (Hint: the second statement is stated more absolutely than the first.)**

- Like the Pharisee, the woman perceives herself to be a great sinner. But unlike the Pharisee, she also perceives that she has been forgiven by God himself. How does Jesus know this?
- People love God (and others) in proportion to the forgiveness they’ve received. According to Jesus, the love of a person forgiven much looks more like that of the sinful woman than that of the Pharisee. Take a moment to genuinely reflect on her demeanor toward Christ. It’s easy to read ourselves into stories like this as the sinner, but think about your day-to-day reality for a minute. When you worship, are you more like the sinner (putting yourself out there) or the Pharisee (reserved,

hesitant to embrace Jesus)? When you pray, are you more like the sinner (crying out, repentant) or the Pharisee (closed, stoic, calculating)? When you serve others, are you more like the sinner (humble, eager, willing to be rejected) or the Pharisee (a savior, expecting honor)?

- In what other ways are you tempted to be like the Pharisee? How can we have a heart like this woman?

**4. We are not saved simply by honoring Jesus or humbling ourselves. How do actions like this woman's mesh with salvation by grace through faith? What did her actions say about her? What do our actions say about us?**