

A Sinful Woman Washes the Feet of Jesus



Scripture Reference:

[Luke 7:36-50](#)

Español 

Suggested Emphasis:

Jesus loves a genuine heart, and forgives our sins. We can repent and praise God for His forgiveness.

Memory Verse: “Jesus said to the woman, ‘Because you believed, you are saved from your sins. Go in peace.’” [Luke 7:50, ICB](#)



Story Overview:

Simon, the Pharisee, invited Jesus to come to his house and eat with him. Simon did not show Jesus the simple gestures of hospitality common for that time, like greeting Him with a kiss and then washing his feet. During the meal, other guests were appalled to see a sinful woman come into Simon's house. She washed Jesus' feet with her tears and then dried them with her hair. She was sorry for her sins, and Jesus forgave her.

Background Study:

Pharisees were a small but powerful group that tried to enforce their strict understanding of the Old Testament law on the people and often felt they were elite. They were also strict about keeping the many unwritten traditions. Many of the Pharisees Jesus met were hypocrites in the way they obeyed the religious laws ([Luke 7:30](#)). Simon was a Pharisee who invited Jesus to come to his house for a meal.

Verse 49 tells us that there were other guests besides Jesus. Later in the story, we find that Simon did not treat Jesus as an honoured guest (verses 44-47). Common courtesies of the day would have dictated that Simon offer Jesus water to wash his feet. Sometimes servants washed guests' feet. Simon should have greeted his guest with a kiss and anointed his head with oil. Simon did not do any of those things for Jesus even though he had invited Jesus to be his guest.

In the first century, people did not have to sit at a table or on chairs to eat a meal. A low table or mat would be placed on the floor and

surrounded by low couches or cushions. Instead of sitting on the cushions, it would have been common to recline. One could rest on one elbow and use the other hand to eat. The legs and feet would be faced toward the outside so that people could sit close together without feet being in the way or near the food. This arrangement made it possible for the woman to come up behind Jesus and wash His feet while He continued to eat. The alabaster jar would have been round with a long neck. The perfumed ointment would have usually been put on the head, but she quietly and humbly anointed his feet instead.

It would have been unheard of for a woman to touch a Pharisee. Besides being a female, this woman was also well-known for leading a sinful life. She was likely a prostitute. This made it even more disgraceful in Simon's eyes. If Jesus had been concerned about his reputation like the Pharisees, then He surely would not have allowed this woman to touch Him. The fact that He not only allowed it but went on to defend Her shows how much Jesus truly cared about this woman. It was not enough to strictly obey the Old Testament Law. Jesus knew that He must love people. He showed true concern and love towards this woman.

The woman had probably heard Jesus preaching before. It seems her heart was tender, and she wanted to leave the sinful life she had been living. Simon did not care about the woman. All he seemed to care about was the scandal taking place. Read the story carefully, and you will see that Simon did not say anything out loud at first (verse 39). Jesus read his mind.

Jesus showed compassion towards the woman by deflecting the attention off of her and putting it on Simon. In front of this important man and other important guests, Jesus shows this woman that she is important because of her repentant heart. Only God can forgive sin. This pronouncement of forgiveness reveals something significant about Jesus' identity and relationship with God.



Way to Introduce the Story:

Bring a bowl of warm water and a large towel to the session today. Wash the children's feet. As you do this, talk about how people used to walk outside wearing sandals. Talk about dusty or muddy streets where animals walked. People always washed their hands and their feet before they ate. Who would want to eat with someone's stinky feet nearby? People reclined on cushions around low tables, so sometimes you sat very close to people's feet. If I invited you to my house to eat, the very first thing I would do is give you a kiss on the cheek. Then I would either give you water to wash your feet, ask a servant to do it, or if you were an important guest, I might even wash your feet for you. Then I would give you some perfumed ointment to put on your head in case you were hot and sweaty. In today's story, Jesus was invited to someone's house for a meal. Let's find out what happened.

[top](#)

The Story:

Who knows what Pharisees were? Pharisees were religious men who liked to obey lots of rules. They tried to obey all the rules in the Old Testament Law. Not only that, they obeyed other rules that other religious people made up. Pharisees talked so much about obeying rules that they forgot to think about God. It seemed that they thought all the rules were more important than God. Although following God's rules is important, they forgot that people were more important than rules. They did not like anyone who did not obey rules just like them.

Jesus met a Pharisee named Simon, who invited Him to his house to eat. When Jesus arrived at Simon's house, Simon did not give Him a kiss. Simon did not give Jesus water to wash His feet with. Simon did not offer Jesus perfumed oil to put on His head. Jesus reclined on the cushion anyway. Other very important guests also ate with Simon.

Someone else came to Simon's house. But Simon had not invited her. The person who came in was not someone who liked to obey rules like Simon. This was a woman who had done very bad things. Everyone knew that this was a sinful woman. Why do you think she was there?

The sinful woman did not come to see Simon. She knew Simon would not help her. She was sorry for the bad things she had done. She knew that Jesus could forgive her of her sins.

While everyone was eating, the woman came and knelt on the floor behind Jesus. She was so sorry for her sins that she began to cry. When she saw that Jesus' feet had not been washed, she used her tears to wash His feet. She did not have a towel, but she used her long hair to dry Jesus' feet. Then she took her jar of perfume and put it on Jesus' feet.

Simon could not believe what he was seeing! He thought to himself, “How dare this woman come into my house! How dare Jesus let her touch Him, much less wash His feet? Didn’t Jesus know about following rules? Jesus must not be a true teacher.” But Simon did not say one word out loud. He only thought these things to himself.

Jesus could read Simon’s mind. He decided to tell Simon a story. “Simon,” Jesus said, “once two men borrowed money. One borrowed 500 denarii and the other fifty denarii (denarii is a kind of money). After a while, the lender told the men that they did not have to pay him back. They could keep the money. Which of those men do you think loved the money lender the most?”

Simon, “The man who owed the most money would be the happiest. He would love the lender the most.”

The woman was like the man who owed 500 denarii. She had done many bad things. So she loved Jesus very much for forgiving her.

Jesus said to Simon, “Simon you asked me to your house but you did not kiss my cheek or wash my feet or give me oil for my head. This woman has kissed my feet and washed them. Then she put oil on them.”

Then He told the woman, “I forgive you of all of the sins you have done. Now you can go in peace.” What do you think happened after that?

[top](#)

Ways to Tell the Story:

This story can be told using a variety of methods. Always remain true to the facts found in the Bible but help children connect to its meaning by using drama, visual aids, voice inflection or other group participation.

[Click here for visual aids and story-telling methods.](#)

[Click here to download these illustrations and the slideshow.](#) Be selective. Each teacher is unique, so only use the illustrations that best relate to how YOU tell the story in THIS lesson. Too many illustrations can be confusing, so eliminate any that cover other stories or details you do not wish to emphasise in this lesson.

Review and Reflection Questions:

Review questions help children remember and know the facts of a story, while reflection questions encourage them to internalize its meaning and implications for their lives. Asking at least one of each type of question can help strengthen a child’s spiritual development and help them connect to God. [Click here to learn more about review and reflection questions.](#)

REVIEW:

1. What was the name of the Pharisee who invited Jesus to his house to eat? (Simon)
2. Who washed Jesus’ feet at Simon the Pharisee’s house? (A sinful woman)
3. How did the woman wash Jesus’ feet? (She washed them with her tears and dried them with her hair)
4. Why did the sinful woman wash Jesus’ feet? (Simon had not washed them. She also did it in thanks for Jesus forgiving her sins)
5. Why did the woman wash Jesus’ feet with her tears and anoint his feet with perfume? (She showed Jesus she loved him and believed in him)
6. What did Jesus’ parable show Simon? (God wants us to love Him, not just do the right things)
7. What did Jesus tell the woman after he told Simon a parable? (Because she believed she was saved from her sins, and he told her to go in peace)
8. What did you learn about Jesus from this story?
9. What did you learn about God from this story?

REFLECTION:

1. What do you think Jesus and the other guests were eating at their meal?
2. What question do you have for God about this story?
3. How do you think Jesus felt when Simon the Pharisee didn’t honour him by washing his feet?
4. How do you think the sinful woman was feeling as she washed Jesus’ feet with her tears?
5. How do you think Jesus felt when Simon thought about how Jesus would not want the woman touching his feet?
6. Why do you think Jesus told Simon a parable?
7. How do you think Simon felt when Jesus told him the woman had shown him great love, but Simon hadn’t?
8. How do you think the woman felt when Jesus told her that her sins were forgiven and to go in peace?

9. Is there a sin you struggle with? (Suggestion: have time for prayer)
10. How can you show Jesus you love him?

Prayer:

It is important to guide children in learning how to pray. In prayer, children can connect with God and learn that He hears and answers them. God can become a life-long friend who is with them every moment of their lives. Try using a variety of prayer methods from time to time so that the children can learn to connect with God in different ways. Note that you can pray at any time throughout your lesson. [A variety of prayer methods are found here.](#)

Song Suggestions:

- [I've Got Peace Like a River Song](#)
- Refer to the [Song Page](#) on this website for more options.

Activities and Crafts:

[\(How to choose the best learning activities for my teaching situation\)](#)

ACTIVITIES:

- Help the children to draw a cross on a piece of paper. Talk about what it means to sin. Gently encourage children to write their sins on the cross. Be sure to do this yourself so the children know that you need forgiveness, too. Allow the children to share if they would like, but do not press it. Talk about how we all need forgiveness and that God (and Jesus) can forgive us because Jesus died on the cross. The discussion might lead to some good discussion. Can Jesus forgive us of any sin? Are some people too bad to be forgiven? Too good to need forgiveness? What if you are not really sorry? Finish with a prayer.



- Sing songs from the church hymnbook about forgiveness.
- For something fun and to help the children remember the woman washing Jesus' feet, write the following on each child's toenails:
 - Left foot: L-U-K-E-7
 - Right foot: J-E-S-U-S.



- [Click here for instructions here.](#)
- Act out the story. You might want to "set a table" on the floor and have the children recline around it on cushions. One child can be Jesus, another Simon, and someone can be the woman.



- Invite the children to respond to this story using the adaptable “God’s Story” printable reflection page. [Free printables for this story.](#)

CRAFTS:

- Mix perfume, spice or vanilla extract in washable paint (like tempera paint). Spread a thin layer of the paint on the soles of children’s feet and print footprint pictures.
- Pour oil into a small container for each child. Gather some seeds or spices (such as star anise, cardamom, cinnamon sticks, etc.), and let the children choose which spices to put in their container of oil. You can also ask the children to share a sin they struggle with. Let them choose a type of seed or spice to represent that sin and then drop it in the oil. Once the children have finished with the spices, glue the container closed. When the children swirl the oil in the container, they can look at the spices they chose and remember that God forgives them for that sin, or it can simply remind them of the woman showing Jesus love, of God’s forgiveness and the story.



- Print bookmarks, trading cards or timelines ([printable pages](#)).
- Visit the [Teaching Ideas](#) page for additional activities and crafts.

Other Online Resources:

- [Colouring page and worksheets \(Calvary Curriculum\)](#)
- [Colouring page \(Sermon 4 kids\)](#)
- [A number of activities for teaching children about forgiveness \(with printables\) \(Truth for kids\)](#)
- [How to make homemade perfume \(will keep up to a month\). \(Education\)](#)

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[top](#)

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