

A Reversal of Shame

Teaching Tips

April 10, 2016

Bible Study Guide 6

Words You Should Know

A. Creditor ([Luke 7:41](#)) *daneistes* (Gk.)—A money lender. 

B. Pence (v. 41) *denarion* (Gk.)—The principal silver coin in Roman times, equivalent to one day's wages.

Teacher Preparation

Unifying Principle—A Fresh Start. Sometimes in life, people are remorseful to the point of tears about something they did or said. Where can they turn for help? Jesus' response to a sinful woman provided real forgiveness and peace because she loved Him so much.

A. Pray for your students and lesson clarity.

B. Read [Luke 7](#) in multiple translations. 

C. Complete the companion lesson in the *Precepts For Living*® Personal Study Guide.

O—Open the Lesson

A. Open with prayer and introduce today's lesson title and the Aim for Change.

B. Tell the class to read the In Focus Story silently, then discuss it.

P—Present the Scriptures

A. Have volunteers read the Focal Verses aloud.

B. Use The People, Places, and Times; Background; Search the Scriptures; In Depth; and More Light on the Text to answer any questions the verses bring up and to reinforce the lesson.

E—Explore the Meaning

A. Divide the class into groups to discuss the Discuss the Meaning, Lesson in Our Society and Make It Happen sections. Tell the students to select a representative to report their responses.

B. Connect these sections to the Aim for Change and the Keep in Mind verse.

N—Next Steps for Application

A. Summarize the lesson.

B. Close with prayer.

Worship Guide

For the Superintendent or Teacher

Theme: A Reversal of Shame

Song: "Amazing Grace"

Devotional Reading: [Psalm 13](#)



Bible Background • [LUKE 7:36–50](#)



Printed Text • [LUKE 7:36–50](#) | **Devotional Reading** • [PSALM 13](#)



Aim for Change



By the end of the lesson, we will: KNOW the story of Jesus' tenderness for the repentant woman and His forgiveness of her sins; EXPRESS the great joy that comes from knowing their sins have been forgiven; and FORGIVE others for their failures, shortcomings, and hurtful actions.

In Focus

The pews were packed at Mt. Shiloh Baptist Church. So many people had come out this Sunday, and the praise and worship were in full swing. You could hear the sounds of singing and exclamations of joy all the way down the block. Many of the worshipers lifted their hands and joined the praise and worship team in singing the chorus. Deacon Scott was standing up and bellowing out the congregational song when he noticed a young man dancing wildly up in front. He immediately began to go to handle the situation when Pastor Jones motioned him to stay put. Deacon Scott had a confused look on his face. He shrugged it off and continued to worship.

After church, he asked the pastor why he was asked not to bring the young man back to his seat. Pastor Jones told him the young man's story. His name was Denny and he had been abused when he was a young boy. He also became a runaway and drug addict. Just this past month, after a drug overdose that almost took his life, He decided to follow Christ. Denny had a lot to praise God for. His sins were forgiven so he wanted to give Jesus his all.

Those who truly know Christ's forgiveness can't help but bring Him honor. How does knowing how much we've been forgiven help us to forgive others?

Keep in Mind

"Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little" ([Luke 7:47](#)).



Focal Verses

KJV

Luke 7:36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.



37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment,

38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

39 Now when the Pharisee which had bidden him saw it, he spake within himself, saying, This man, if he were a prophet, would have known who and what manner of woman this is that toucheth him: for she is a sinner.

40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on.

41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty.

42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most?

43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

44 And he turned to the woman, and said unto Simon, Seest thou this woman? I entered into thine house, thou gavest me no water for my feet: but she hath washed my feet with tears, and wiped them with the hairs of her head.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet.

46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment.

47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.

48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven.

49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also?

50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

NLT

Luke 7:36 One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to have dinner with him, so Jesus went to his home and sat down to eat.



37 When a certain immoral woman from that city heard he was eating there, she brought a beautiful alabaster jar filled with expensive perfume.

38 Then she knelt behind him at his feet, weeping. Her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them off with her hair. Then she kept kissing his feet and putting perfume on them.

39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know what kind of woman is touching him. She's a sinner!"

40 Then Jesus answered his thoughts. "Simon," he said to the Pharisee, "I have something to say to you." "Go ahead, Teacher," Simon replied.

41 Then Jesus told him this story: "A man loaned money to two people—500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to the other.

42 But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that?”

43 Simon answered, “I suppose the one for whom he canceled the larger debt.” “That’s right,” Jesus said.

44 Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, “Look at this woman kneeling here. When I entered your home, you didn’t offer me water to wash the dust from my feet, but she has washed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair.

45 You didn’t greet me with a kiss, but from the time I first came in, she has not stopped kissing my feet.

46 You neglected the courtesy of olive oil to anoint my head, but she has anointed my feet with rare perfume.

47 I tell you, her sins—and they are many—have been forgiven, so she has shown me much love. But a person who is forgiven little shows only little love.”

48 Then Jesus said to the woman, “Your sins are forgiven.”

49 The men at the table said among themselves, “Who is this man, that he goes around forgiving sins?”

50 And Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

The People, Places, and Times

Sinner. Among first-century Jews in Palestine, many groups were considered ceremonially impure, including shepherds, tax collectors, camel drivers, custom collectors, and tanners. Also included in this group were prostitutes, who were not only ceremonially but also morally impure. The sinners were the social outcasts of first-century Judaism. While most of the religious leaders would affirm that all people sin, these sinners would be those who sinned with a deliberate disregard for the Law or simply those who from were outside of the Jewish people and therefore in no way connected to the Law. This group would have been excluded from the covenant blessings of Israel. Jesus interacted with sinners with no discrimination, which attracted the hostility of the Pharisees.

Alabaster. These were boxes made of a stone found near the town of Alabastron in Egypt. They took their name from the city of their origin. They were often used to make vases or flasks to hold ointment and perfume. The stone they are made from is light, translucent, and resembles marble. In order to obtain the contents of the alabaster vessels, the long and narrow neck must be broken. Eventually this name was given to all containers that contained perfume.

Background

The Gospel of Luke is filled with examples of Jesus’ acceptance and inclusion of outcasts. In His accepting those rejected by the religious leaders of Israel, we see the full scope of Jesus’ mission. God’s redemptive activity will encompass not only the Jews but the Gentiles as well. Luke’s Gospel is a global Gospel. God’s plan of salvation reaches those far off geographically, culturally, and also morally; no one is outside the reach of His redemptive love. Earlier in chapter 7, the healing of a centurion’s servant is highlighted. The centurion was a Gentile official of the Roman Empire. He was a target of Jewish prejudice and hatred, but his being a God-fearer shows that even he can be redeemed. Jesus praises Him as one who has great faith. In this week’s passage, the woman who anoints Jesus is a sinner. Luke doesn’t tell us what has made her a sinner. She may have committed moral sins, and chances are she was also not Jewish, but Jesus welcomes her efforts to honor Him. This results in the removal of her moral shame. She recognizes who Jesus is and He forgives her of her sins. She is in need of grace and Jesus provides it, showing that His grace is available to all.

At-A-Glance

1. A Fearless Woman ([Luke 7:36–39](#))



2. A Fiscal Example (vv. 40–43)

3. A Forgiving Christ (vv. 44–50)

In Depth

1. A Fearless Woman ([Luke 7:36–39](#))



Jesus is invited to the home of a Pharisee named Simon. As the guest of honor, Jesus lies beside a table with His feet pointing away from the table. As the banquet is under full swing, a woman appears. She has a bad reputation. Nothing is said about her except that she is a sinner. As an outsider to such a public celebration, she would have been consigned to sitting by the wall, observing the guests, and eating leftover scraps of food. This woman was not here to observe but to act. She goes to Jesus and washes His feet with her tears. She then proceeds to anoint them with expensive perfume from an alabaster jar. Simon the Pharisee reacts in disbelief; Jesus would not have allowed her to touch Him if He really was a prophet.

This woman was fearless. She had to cross two barriers to do what she did. First was a gender barrier; according to the culture then, women were supposed to keep their hair covered. Wiping His feet with her hair would have been considered taboo. Second, she was a sinner and He was a distinguished rabbi. Her place was on the outside with the other sinners and societal rejects. In spite of this, she was bold enough to approach Him. Her desire to honor Jesus was greater than any barriers in her way.

2. A Fiscal Example (vv. 40–43)

Jesus shows Simon that He really is a prophet. He knows Simon's thoughts and proceeds to tell a short parable about a creditor who forgives two debtors. One debtor owes five hundred denarii and the other owes fifty. A denarius was the standard daily wage for a day laborer. The five hundred denarii would be equivalent to two years' wages, and the fifty denarii to two months' wages. Knowing that neither could pay, the money lender shows grace and forgives both debts. Jesus asks Simon "Which one loved the creditor most?" Simon answered the one who he "forgave most" (v. 43).

Jesus commends Simon for judging rightly. Jesus gets Simon to support what He is going to say next. Clearly the one who needed more grace would give more honor to the money lender; his enormous debt was forgiven. The parable provides a stark contrast between the different amounts and parallels the perception of sin in the life of the self-righteous as opposed to the needy sinner. In other words, we all have been forgiven an enormous debt. Only a few realize the greatness of it and respond appropriately to God's grace.


3. A Forgiving Christ (vv. 44–50)

Jesus then proceeds to rebuke Simon. He points out that Simon, who should know better, has not offered Him the customary hospitality for a guest of honor. The sinful woman has done even more: she not only washed his feet, but did so with her tears and wiped them with her hair. Jesus was not given the customary greeting of a kiss, but the sinful woman has not stopped kissing His feet. Simon had not anointed Jesus' head with oil, but the woman anointed his feet with expensive perfume. One can only imagine Simon's embarrassment. He was quick to think of how unworthy the woman was, but his actions were more disdainful.

Jesus explains why this woman was so bold in giving honor. She knew her many sins were forgiven so she "loveth much" (v. 47). Jesus then turns to the woman and causes quite a stir with His next words: He declares forgiveness for her sins. Those sitting with Jesus at the banquet were shocked. In traditional Jewish understanding, only God Himself had the right and authority to forgive sins. Although the other guests didn't protest out loud, they questioned this unprecedented act. Jesus responds to their unspoken questions. He turns to the woman and lets her know her faith in Him has saved her. The honor that she gave to Jesus resulted in her shame being taken away. She can now live her

life in peace just like all who choose to honor Christ and accept His gift of forgiveness.

Search the Scriptures

1. What caused Simon to doubt Jesus' status as a prophet ([Luke 7:39](#))? 
2. How did the guests at the banquet respond to Jesus forgiving the woman's sin (v. 49)?

Discuss the Meaning

1. In what ways can shame cause us to run away from Jesus?
2. How can we cultivate a desire to honor Jesus no matter what others may think of us?

Lesson in Our Society

Many seem to feel no shame for their sinful actions. In fact, if you look at reality TV, some have become celebrities by parading their sin in public. While it may seem like most of the world callously acts without a conscience, most feel shame for what they have done. It may not be apparent, but we all experience a desire to hide from others and God because of our sin. Jesus shows us that we do not have to hide, but we must be bold in honoring Him as the only One who can offer forgiveness. Christ's acceptance of us is why we no longer have to wear a mask of shame. Those who boldly sin and display their wicked behavior and those who trust in their own righteousness still bear the weight of their sin. Their shameful behavior cannot be covered no matter how much they try to hide it. Forgiveness and acceptance can only be found in Christ.

Make It Happen

Sometimes it takes a symbolic act to hammer home the spiritual truth we have learned. List all of the ways you believe you do not measure up spiritually. Write them out on a piece of paper, then tear the paper into pieces and dump it into the trash can. This is what God has done for you. He has torn up anything that you have to be ashamed of, and now you are free in Christ.

Follow the Spirit





What God wants me to do.

Remember Your Thoughts

Special insights I have learned.

More Light on the Text

[Luke 7:36–50](#)

This narrative also appears in [Matthew 26:6–13](#), [Mark 14:3–9](#), and [John 12:1–8](#) (with major alterations). Notice that both Matthew and Mark place the narrative toward the end of their Gospels—right before Jesus' trial, scourging, and Crucifixion (these portions of text that depict Jesus's trial and suffering are referred to as the "Passion Narrative"), and that both writers relate a very similar version of the story. However, Luke places the narrative of the woman early in his Gospel in chapter 7, which is the section that relates to Jesus' deeds among the people. 




36 And one of the Pharisees desired him that he would eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to meat.

The Pharisees were an important Jewish sect at the time of Jesus. References to the Pharisees occur throughout Jewish and Christian literature of the first two centuries. Josephus, the Jewish historian who wrote a comprehensive history of the Jewish people at the command in the first century AD, lists the Pharisees as one of the main Jewish parties that emerged during the brief period of Jewish independence at the end of the 1st century B.C. The New Testament portrays the Pharisees as opponents of Jesus and the early Christians ([Mark 3:6](#), [7:1](#), [10:2](#); [Matthew 23](#); [John 11:47](#)). Central to their teaching was the belief in the twofold Law: the written and oral Torah—the recognition of a continuing tradition of interpretation of the Law.

The Gospels present an ongoing conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees, probably due to Jesus being more in favor of many of their theological tenets such as adherence to the Law ([Matthew 5:17–20](#)) as well as the resurrection of the dead and future rewards and punishments ([Mark 12:18–27](#), [Matthew 25](#)). Because of their popularity and His frequent contact with them, Jesus gave His sharpest rebukes against the Pharisees. He also gave them profound teaching moments such as this one ([Matthew 23:1–35](#), [John 3:1–10](#)).

37 And, behold, a woman in the city, which was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at meat in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster box of ointment, 38 And stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with the ointment.

“Alabaster box” should be understood as a flask, the general term translators use to describe vessels. (The word “flask” does not appear in the KJV.) The term refers to a small container of perfumed oil. The flask perhaps had a narrow neck, making it impossible to mend. [Luke 7:37](#) refers to a small alabaster container as had been used for expensive perfumes for thousands of years.

In the ancient world, one did not sit down in a chair to eat, but rather recline on couches, leaning on their left elbow. Jesus' reclining position with the head toward the table and feet away from the table (the customary position of diners in the ancient world) makes His feet very accessible for the woman's attention. The Israelites, like all other peoples of the ancient Mediterranean world, wore sandals instead of shoes, and as they usually went barefoot in the house, frequent washing of the feet was a necessity. Hence the host's first duty was to give his guest water for washing his feet ([Genesis 18:4](#), [19:2](#), [24:32](#), [43:24](#); [Judges 19:21](#)); omitting this was a sign of marked unfriendliness. It was also customary to wash the feet before meals and before going to bed; abstaining from washing for a long time was a sign of deep mourning ([2 Samuel 19:24](#)).

40 And Jesus answering said unto him, Simon, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And he saith, Master, say on. 41 There was a certain creditor which had two debtors: the one owed five hundred pence, and the other fifty. 42 And when they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both. Tell me therefore, which of them will love him most? 43 Simon answered and said, I suppose that he, to whom he forgave most. And he said unto him, Thou hast rightly judged.

Jesus frequently used parables to illustrate profound, divine truths. Stories like these are easily remembered because the symbolism is rich in meaning. The defining characteristic of the parable is the subtext suggesting how a person should behave or what he or she should believe. Aside from providing guidance and suggestions for proper conduct, parables frequently use metaphorical language that allows people to more easily digest difficult or complex ideas. A feature often involves a character who faces a moral dilemma or makes a bad decision and then suffers the unintended consequences. Although the parable's meaning is often not explicitly stated, it is not intended to be hidden or secret, but straightforward and obvious. Speaking in parables was widely practiced during Jesus' time and the Pharisee himself would have probably used this figure of speech as part of his own teaching style.

45 Thou gavest me no kiss: but this woman since the time I came in hath not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 My head with oil thou didst not anoint: but this woman hath anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. 48 And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. 49 And they that sat at meat with him began to say

within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? 50 And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace.

These verses represent the climax of the Lukan narrative. This story focused on the sinful woman's faithful actions toward Jesus that led to her salvation. Her actions were juxtaposed with the unfaithfulness of the supposedly pious and righteous Pharisees. The story's meaning is that those from the outside—the unprivileged, the outcast, which includes women—and not necessarily those on the inside—the privileged Pharisees, for example—will enter the kingdom of God because of their belief in Jesus as the Son of God, the One who can forgive sins. When comparing this Lukan version to the Matthean and Markan narratives which, as stated above, are placed at the end of their Gospels, we gain a better perspective of Luke's intent. In Matthew and Mark, Jesus is in Bethany at Simon the leper's house, not Simon the Pharisee (cf. [Matthew 26:6](#); [Mark 14:2](#)). The woman who comes to Jesus in these two Gospels is not defined as a "woman of the city" like she is in Luke (cf. [Matthew 26:7](#); [Mark 14:3](#)). In addition, the disciples are the main characters in the Matthean version ([Matthew 26:8](#)), while Mark ([Mark 14:4](#)) is not specific about who questions Jesus about the woman's use of the expensive oil. In both Gospels, we see that these two narratives do not focus on the woman whose sins have been forgiven because of her faith, but rather on a woman who, according to the men, seems to waste valuable resources by pouring the oil on Jesus's head.

In Matthew and Mark, Jesus reprimands those who protest the woman's actions, saying that her deed is good because she has come to "prepare me for my burial" (cf. [Matthew 26:12](#); [Mark 14:8](#)). The woman's anointing of Jesus is a ritual of burial, so her actions are in relation to Jesus' death on the Cross. However, by Luke placing the story early on in his Gospel, in chapter 7, the section that focuses on Jesus' deeds among the people, the emphasis is on the woman's act as a demonstration of faith and salvation. Luke does not focus on the rite of burial, as the woman does not use the oil on Jesus' head but His feet, the appropriate custom for a dinner guest as a sign of hospitality. Anointing Jesus' head with oil would not have been an appropriate act in the case of the Lukan narrative. Also note that in [John 12:1–8](#), Jesus is in the home of Lazarus in Bethany, and Mary, sister of Lazarus and Martha, is who pours the costly perfume upon Jesus' feet and wipes His feet with her hair. In addition, [John 12:4](#) states that it is Judas Iscariot who questions Mary's misuse of resources. When examining these various stories, it is possible to discern the intent of each author. Each Gospel wrote to suit the particular needs of their specific audiences. When we begin to read the Gospels in this way, by comparing the similarities and differences in each of the different stories, we begin to dip deeper into the well of Scripture.

Say It Correctly

Alabaster. AL-uh-**bah**-ster.

Creditor. **KRE**-di-ter.

Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY

Israel's Salvation

([Exodus 14:30–15:3](#))

TUESDAY

David's Deliverance

([2 Samuel 22:2–7](#), [17–20](#))

WEDNESDAY

Prevailing Trust

([Psalm 13](#))



THURSDAY

Fulfilled Trust

([2 Samuel 7:8–12](#))



FRIDAY

Triumphant Trust

([Psalm 54](#))



SATURDAY

Trust without Shame

([2 Timothy 1:8–14](#))



SUNDAY

A Reversal of Shame

([Luke 7:36–50](#))

