

## Luke 7:36-50 | The Forgiven Woman

### InterVarsity Bible Study Guide (60 minutes)

#### WELCOME (7 minutes)

Icebreaker: Share something you like that other people generally dislike.

We are studying the Bible together because we want to grow in our love for Jesus through Scripture and because we want to grow in our witness to Jesus through Scripture.

Let's pray and ask God to help us as we study today's passage together...

#### GROUP NORMS (3 minutes)

Let's remember our group norms as we study together today:

1. Use "I" statements (speak for yourself, not for everyone)
2. Avoid judgmental statements (no shame or blame)
3. Allow space for everyone to share if they choose
4. Practice active listening and give advice only if invited to do so
5. What we share here stays here (confidentiality)

#### INTRODUCE the Scripture Text (3 minutes)

After calling his first followers, Jesus has been teaching and doing miracles. In today's passage, he has been invited to a dinner party at the home of a Pharisee. Pharisees were Jewish leaders who focused on helping the people continue religious practices that kept them spiritually pure. These practices also helped the people maintain and celebrate the identity of their community while under Roman occupation. A typical dinner party would have included a special guest who engaged in philosophical dialogue with the host and other guests, and while there may have been other people present in the room, those not invited to the banquet were expected to remain quiet and uninvolved.

#### SEE the Scripture Text (10 minutes)

Let's read the passage and talk about what we see.

- Who are the characters? How are they connected?
- What is happening? When? Where?
- Which words are being repeated?
- Is the author comparing or contrasting anything?
- Would you like to point out anything else you notice?

Luke 7:36-50 NIV

<sup>36</sup> When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. <sup>37</sup> A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. <sup>38</sup> As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

<sup>39</sup> When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, “If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner.”

<sup>40</sup> Jesus answered him, “Simon, I have something to tell you.”

“Tell me, teacher,” he said.

<sup>41</sup> “Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup> Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?”

<sup>43</sup> Simon replied, “I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven.”

“You have judged correctly,” Jesus said.

<sup>44</sup> Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, “Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give me any water for my feet, but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. <sup>45</sup> You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. <sup>46</sup> You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. <sup>47</sup> Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—as her great love has shown. But whoever has been forgiven little loves little.”

<sup>48</sup> Then Jesus said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.”

<sup>49</sup> The other guests began to say among themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?”

<sup>50</sup> Jesus said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

### **DISCOVER the Scripture Text (25 minutes)**

Let’s discuss a few questions that will help us discover and understand the text.

1. Imagine what it might have been like to be another person at the table with Jesus. What feelings come up for you as you watch this scene unfold?
2. Discuss similarities and differences you see in: a) the way Simon and Jesus view the woman, and b) the way Simon and the woman view Jesus.
3. Parables are simple stories with deeper meaning that are taught for the purpose of provoking a response. Re-read verses 41-42. Why do you think Jesus shares this parable with Simon? What responses might Jesus want this parable to provoke in Simon?
4. What is the relationship between forgiveness and love? Why?
5. If we could communicate the core message of this text in just one sentence, what would it be? What do we sense God is communicating through this passage?

### **RESPOND to the Scripture Text (10 minutes)**

Simon invited Jesus to a dinner party in his home, but he failed to provide all the traditional welcome that guests would expect. Surprisingly, the one who honors Jesus at the dinner party, was an uninvited woman whose very presence was an offense to those who saw her as a sinner, undeserving of the prophet Jesus. Jesus taught a parable that connected great forgiveness with

great love, which explained the actions of both the woman, who had been forgiven much and showed great love, and Simon, who is showing little love and does not seem to realize his need for forgiveness. Through the parable, Jesus affirms the woman and invites Simon to consider a different view of reality.

Jesus welcomes those who want to be close to him.

Let's discern together how we can respond to what God is saying. We will answer one option from below, whichever seems most relevant to our group's discussion of the text.

- A. Do you relate more to Simon, the woman, or another guest at the dinner party? Explain why and share any invitation you sense from God through this passage.
- B. This woman takes bold risks to be close to Jesus and show her love. What level of desire do you have for getting closer to Jesus? What will you do about it (or not)?
- C. As a community that has access to Jesus and his forgiveness, there is a freedom we can experience and invite others to experience. How could we do that in our context?

### **CLOSE (2 minutes)**

Let's pray and thank God for our time in Scripture together...

*Tips for leading the group discussion:*

- *Participate but keep your comments short to make space for others.*
- *Silence is okay. Encourage further discussion by saying "What else?" instead of commenting on every response.*