

# JESUS: MERCIFUL HEALER

## Open

In Middle Eastern cultures, extending hospitality is obligatory. People follow formal codes of conduct. What is the value of extending hospitality in your native culture? What codes of conduct are hosts expected to practice?

## Context

Israel's religious leaders believed God only cared about those who obeyed His laws. When Jesus extended love and acceptance to "tax collectors and sinners," they bitterly complained (Lk. 5:30; 7:31-34). Jesus responded by saying He came to help those who recognized their sickness: "*I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*" (Lk. 5:31-32). Jesus did not declare the religious leaders healthy, but pointed out that they saw themselves that way.

Read [Luke 7:36-50](#) (NIV)

## Discuss

1. Traditional Middle Eastern village meals were often held in an outdoor courtyard and were observable to uninvited villagers. Imagine yourself as one of these villagers on the outside looking in. What might be going through your mind as you observe the interactions?

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| Leader Note | The woman showed Jesus courtesies that Simon overlooked. Moved by Jesus' teachings about God's love for sinners, she washed, kissed, and anointed Jesus' feet with oil, customary gestures that Simon had neglected. Hosts typically greeted their guests with a kiss on the cheek. Once seated, a household servant brought water and olive oil, which was used as soap to wash their hands and feet. Sandaled feet became quite dirty on unpaved roads. |
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2. How does Simon receive Jesus into his home? How does he react to Jesus' acceptance of the woman's actions? In healthcare, how are stigmatized patients (e.g., people with addictions, HIV, mental illness, or homelessness) sometimes viewed like this woman?

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| Leader Note | Simon is shocked by Jesus' acceptance of the woman's attention. Pharisees took extraordinary steps to avoid even accidental contact with women, such as staring at the ground while walking down the street to avoid seeing them (Babylonian Talmud Sotah 22b). |
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3. Jesus compares forgiveness with the cancellation of debt. How are these ideas related? Give examples from your personal experiences.

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| Leader Note | The phrase "I have something to say to you" (v. 40) serves as an expression that introduces direct speech, which the listener might be reluctant to hear. |
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4. What does Jesus say to the woman (vv. 48, 50)? Why does his proclamation surprise the others (v. 49)?

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| Leader Note | Simon's dinner guests understand that forgiving sins is a divine prerogative. |
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## Reflect

Our story's "sinful woman" shows love, gentleness, humility, gratefulness, and selflessness toward Jesus. However, the respected religious leader Simon views her with contempt and Jesus with indifference.

- How are you like or unlike Simon and the woman in our story? How might your attitudes reflect your spiritual condition?
- Who in your field tends to be overlooked, labeled, or judged? Does this story of the sinful woman and Jesus affect how you view and treat them? Why or why not?
- Imagine yourself coming to Jesus. He knows what you are thinking and everything about your past. What would you say to him? What would you want him to say to you?

## Pray

Sit in silence and listen to Jesus' words. Confess any judgmental attitudes. Pray for a heart softened by grace, eyes to see others through Jesus' lens, and courage to love the unlovely and serve the marginalized.

