

## Simon the Pharisee encounters Jesus Luke 7v36-50



It was a luxurious banquet given by Simon, a leader among the Pharisees in Galilee. He had invited Jesus to dinner because important people invite important people to dinner. When an important man like Jesus shows up at the synagogue, it was expected that he would be invited to dinner by an important person in the synagogue.

The quest of honor came into the room and reclined on one of the couches placed around the U-shaped table. Since it was a public dinner, people from off the street wandered in and sat on one of the benches that circled the room so that they could hear the conversation and debate that would occur during the meal.

Jesus' reputation was beginning to grow around Galilee. People kept telling stories about things he said and done, so Simon wanted to know more about him. Jesus was too independent and often stood aloof from what Pharisees taught about being right with God. Yes, he did some miracles and healings, and was noted for his teaching, but that didn't guarantee that he was a prophet sent from God. So, here was another reason to invite him to dinner. Perhaps Simon could find out more about who this Jesus really was.

Then this woman came into the banquet room, and sat down at the feet of Jesus. Since women weren't invited to these banquets, Simon thought at first that she was a beggar. But this wasn't some common beggar. She was a sinful woman, one of the worst kinds. She sat next to the feet of Jesus with her head uncovered like sinful women do. The perfumed ointment that she poured out on the feet of Jesus—obviously a tool of her trade—there was a lot of it and probably cost her two years wages. And of course, Jesus allowed her to touch his feet, something else that shouldn't happen.

Jesus didn't seem to have a clue about who she was. Some prophet he was.

### ***The Message – Luke 7v36-50***

<sup>36</sup>Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. <sup>37</sup>When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, <sup>38</sup>and 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 men 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 canceled 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 canceled." "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—for she loved much. But he who 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."

**The Woman and the Pharisee**

That this woman is a "sinner" may imply that she is a prostitute, surely a Jewish one, or at least a woman known to be morally loose and is probably seeking something disreputable. If the Pharisee is well-to-do; religious people often opened their homes for the poor, and the woman manages to get in. In banquets where uninvited people could enter, they were to remain quiet and away from the couches, observing the discussions of host and guests.

**Luke 7v41-42**

<sup>41</sup> "A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. <sup>42</sup> When they could not pay, he canceled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?"

**Debts and Creditors**

Although debts were to be forgiven in the seventh year, experts in the law had found a way to get around that requirement. Those who could not pay could be imprisoned, temporarily enslaved or have certain goods confiscated; but this creditor goes beyond the letter of the law and extends mercy.

**Banquet**

Since the classical Greek period, banquets had become a setting for moral instruction. It was considered virtuous to invite a teacher over for dinner, especially if the teacher were from out of town or had just taught at the synagogue. That they are "reclining" rather than sitting indicates that they are using couches rather than chairs and that this is a banquet, perhaps in honor of the famous guest teacher.

**Hospitality**

Common hospitality included providing

**A. The Woman who Anointed Jesus**

1. Why did the woman come to find Jesus?

2. Read Leviticus 5v1-4. For Simon, it wrong for the woman to touch Jesus.

**Lev. 5v1-6** When any of you sin in that you have heard a public adjuration to testify and—though able to testify as one who has seen or learned of the matter—do not speak up, you are subject to punishment. <sup>2</sup> Or when any of you touch any unclean thing—whether the carcass of an unclean beast or the carcass of unclean livestock or the carcass of an unclean swarming thing—and are unaware of it, you have become unclean, and are guilty. <sup>3</sup> Or when you touch human uncleanness—any uncleanness by which one can become unclean—and are unaware of it, when you come to know it, you shall be guilty.

Based on what this passage says, why would it be wrong for Jesus to let the woman touch him?

3. The woman who came to Jesus to anoint him had to take some risks in order to do it. What were some of those risks?

4. Jesus asks Simon, "Do you see this woman?" Why is his question so striking?

5. Jesus tells a parable to Simon in Luke 7:41-43. How does this parable illustrate the difference between the sinful woman and Simon?

6. Note the faith and love of the woman who anointed Jesus. What does Jesus say about her faith (7:48-50)?

What is the relationship between her love and her faith?

7. Why do the people in the room complain when Jesus tells the woman that her sins have been forgiven?

**B. Simon the Pharisee**

1. According to vs. 39, Simon says that Jesus could not be a prophet. Why does he say that?

Read Luke 7:40-49. Is what Simon said about Jesus true or not? Why?

3. How did Simon's ideas of sin and holiness affect how he viewed Jesus?

4. In the parable of the two debtors, what was Jesus telling Simon about how to be a disciple of Christ, and how to follow Jesus?

<p>water for the feet. The oft-invoked example of Abraham's hospitality (Gen 18:4) would render the host without excuse. A kiss was an affectionate or respectful form of greeting.</p>	
<p>In Israel's legal system, touching becomes a symbol for the moral purity of the heart which God greatly desires. God designates certain objects as holy and other objects as unholy or unclean to the touch. God intends this material holiness to be so real to his people that he declares that "whatever touches the altar becomes holy" (Ex 29:37). Equally powerful is physical contact with anything that God calls unclean: if any Israelites touched any of these objects, they must ritually purify themselves (Lev 5:2-3; 7:19, 21).</p>	<p><b>C. Application</b></p> <p>1. Simon, in his desire to be holy and pure, separates himself from the company of people whom he believes are sinners. What was the result?</p> <p>What does Jesus us teach to do?</p> <p>2. Read what Paul wrote to the church at Colossae.</p> <p>Many of the safeguards and barriers that we set up to protect ourselves from sin can be sinful. Why?</p>
<p><b>Col. 2v20-23</b>  <sup>20</sup> You died with Christ. Now the forces of the universe do not have any power over you. Why do you live as if you had to obey such rules as, <sup>21</sup> "Don't handle this. Don't taste that. Don't touch this."? <sup>22</sup> After these things are used, they are no longer good for anything. So why be bothered with the rules that humans have made up? <sup>23</sup> Obeying these rules may seem to be the smart thing to do. They appear to make you love God more and to be very humble and to have control over your body. But they don't really have any power over our desires. (CEV)</p> <p><b>Lee Stroebel</b> has written:  You may have found that since you've become a Christian, your unbelieving friends have drifted away as you've become increasingly involved in the social network of the church. It has been said that within two years of becoming a Christian, the average person has already lost the significant relationships he or she once had with people outside the faith. Without frequent heart-to-heart conversations with unchurched people, it's easy to forget how they think...</p>	<p>Paul says that these barriers come out of our own strength and understanding (see vs. 22-23). What is the best way to prevent barriers like this from happening?</p> <p>3. Simon the Pharisee presents us with a picture of how not to respond to sinners. The woman represents the hope that sinners can find God. The commentary that Jesus gives is a part of the picture of what it means to be follower of Christ.</p> <p>How could the people we know and meet challenge our view of how to be holy and pure before God?</p> <p>Can you think of times and places where you could be challenged by this?</p>