

life group study guide

ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS

March 10, 2013



ENCOUNTERS WITH JESUS LUKE 7

Luke 7 is one of my favorite chapters. Jesus shows us - by incredible example - how we and our church should and must operate today. He reached out and engaged people who were in need – he cared and helped without any regard to who they were and what others thought of them. He healed, forgave, taught, and erased doubt, all in one chapter. He didn't just notice people, or just listen to them, he did something. *"At that very time, he cured many people of their various diseases, and he cast out evil spirits and restored sight to the blind."* (Luke 7:21) There was great power in His presence– in His voice - in His touch. Perhaps the greatest power of Christ is in His blood to atone for sin. *"Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* (Isaiah 1:18)

In verses 36-39 we witness two sinful people and their reaction to Jesus. One approached with eyes and heart wide open; she sensed a desperate need in her life, knew she was a sinner, and was deeply convicted about her sin. She approached Jesus in spite of all the strikes against her and surrendered herself in total humility. She gave her most highly valued possession – perfume. The other treated Jesus with heart hardened and judgmental. Simon was a Pharisee, a student of Jewish religious law. We don't know why he extended the invitation to Jesus, perhaps to show him up in front of his guests.

- Q. On this occasion, what was the motivation of the woman? What was the motivation of Simon?
- Q. Where have you been recently that you felt out of place or unwanted?
- Q. What strikes you about the sinful woman's courageous approach to Jesus?
- Q. What keeps you from freely coming to God anticipating his desire to love and forgive you?
- Q. Describe how the Pharisee's quiet disdain for Jesus and the sinful woman impacts you.

The actions of one showed that she knew she was sinful and she knew what she needed; the other was only too willing to point out the others sinful state, but unable to acknowledge his sin and what he needed. They both owed the "greater debt" – (Luke 7:43); the woman realized that was her debt, while Simon thought he had just a very small debt to God. It was easy for him to say, "She is a sinner!" but impossible for him to say, "I am a sinner!" Both phrases have four words, but the four words in verse 48 – *"Thy sins are forgiven"* – are life-changing. Jesus made it personal for all of us.

"Thy" –You, me, us! Not somebody else; **"sins"** – those times in your life when you have missed the mark and deviated from God's plan for your life; **"are"** - Obvious? Hidden? Fun? Heavy? Weighing you down? Killing you? Destroying you? Destroying others? Waking you up at night? ; **"forgiven"** – your sins have been canceled; you are no longer a slave to sin but a servant of God your Creator.

- Q. What hinders you from truly facing your real need and condition? (Luke 7:40-50)
- Q. Why is understanding and experiencing God's forgiveness the key to offering forgiveness to others?

life group study guide

Q. Where do you currently need to hear Jesus' forgiving voice?

"Forgiveness is an unnatural act. Forgiveness is an act of faith. I must trust that God is a better justice maker than I am." What's so Amazing About Grace - Philip Yancey

We all have been "at the dinner table" - at one time we all were sinners. Maybe not to the extent of the woman in this story, and maybe not as spiritually blind as Simon, but we were all sinners. *"..for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,"* Romans 3:23.

"And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest". Ephesians 2:1-3

Q. How much sin must a person commit to be a sinner?

Q. What does it mean to know that your sins are forgiven?

Simon is thinking to himself, 'Doesn't Jesus know what sort of person this woman is?' Jesus tells a story to make it plain that he does know what sort of woman she is, and more than that, knows what sort of person his host is as well. Jesus asked Simon, do you see this woman? He asks us today, do we see that man, that woman, that child? Those who are around us in our neighborhoods, at work, in our own families. Do we see them? Not their sins, their failures, and their lack of what we consider appropriate, but them. When we categorize people we really do dehumanize them. Once we've categorized them we don't actually have to deal with them on a personal basis.

Q. Are you ever guilty of categorizing and, as a result, dehumanizing people?

Q. Are there any times when you find yourself thinking more like Simon than you'd care to admit?

Q. When it comes to risking our *reputation* for a "questionable" character, what will we do?

"And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more ". . . (Philippians 1:9). Paul prayed for the Philippians that their love would *"abound more and more."* Paul's prayer is bold if for no other reason than the fact that we know our love does not always abound. Too often we are stingy with our love. We do not lavish it on others; we measure it out carefully. We love some people but not others. We love those who agree with us and reinforce our ideas and opinions, but beyond that circle our love slows to a trickle. We've looked out for ourselves, us and those we love. Jesus was simply moved to act out of love. He healed the slave of the Roman soldier, raised the widow's son, and forgave the party-crashing woman, and taught Simon – and us – about love – real godly love.

"After breakfast Jesus asked Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?" "Yes, Lord," Peter replied, "you know I love you." "Then feed my lambs," Jesus told him." John 21:15

Q. How are we to show this love, to feed His lambs, to act as Christ did, while He was here on earth?

- Ephesians 5:2 – imitate God
- Ephesians 4:32 - forgive
- 2 Peter 3:9 – be patient
- Luke 6:35 – don't be judgmental and critical
- 1 John 4:19 – love like God loves us

life group study guide

- Luke 7:13 – be compassionate and sympathetic
- John 11:35 – be compassionate and sympathetic
- John 11:35 – be compassionate and sympathetic
- Mark 12:33; 1 John 3:23 – love others as much as you love yourself
- John 11:35; Acts 20:31; 1 Samuel 15:11; Psalm 126:5-6 - remember the power of tears
- Jeremiah 33:3 - pray
- [Mark 16:15-16](#) – witness to everyone

Q. Is your love extravagant or miserly?

Q. How do we measure up to Luke 7:47? Do we show “BIG” love because we ALL have received “BIG” forgiveness?

The more aware we become of how much we have been forgiven, the deeper our love for Jesus and others will grow.

Q. Where does one go when told by Christ "Go in peace"? Luke 7:50

Right back into their old world. The story screams the need for a church, not just any church but one that says, "You are welcome here." God's people should be known for being forgiving...not fault-finding. If there is a group of people in the world that know how to forgive lavishly and fault-find sparingly, it is the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. It's important to learn to become known as a people and place of forgiveness. (*I wonder if Simon was able to go in peace. It seems to me that his encounter with Jesus and the woman would leave his world anything but peaceful.*)

Q. What are the implications of this story for us, our families, and our church today?

Q. Are we willing to come to terms with the depths of God's love in our own hearts and allow God's radical love to come into our hearts, and then into the lives of others?