

Notes And Helps to Instructors

Thank you for volunteering to lead a group through the treasures of God's word! You may feel overwhelmed or inadequate, but you can do this! The leader notes are designed to help you grow in knowledge and love for Christ and for you to help pass what you have received to your group. Here are some suggestions to help equip you to grow in your teaching and leading ability.

- These lessons could simply be read, and a group would receive something but that is not how they are designed. The notes are designed to grow you as a leader so you might tailor the lesson for the needs of your group. Some groups may not have much of a knowledge base in the bible, so the concepts must be brought down to their level. Other groups may have a large knowledge base and you may challenge them with more information. The key is to know your group. If you begin leading a group in one way and find that it is not connecting, it is alright to modify and bring down or raise up the level of information.
- The more preparation you do the stronger you will be as a leader. Let the study material be a joy for you! Let it feed you as you prepare! The more you are fed the more you have to give to your group.
- There is no set time on how long a lesson may take. Lessons could be slowed down and take several weeks to finish. Perhaps in leading a group, one question captivates the group and leads to a fruitful conversation. If that happens, that is good! You are in no hurry. If you can finish the material in a week, then great! But if it takes several, that is great as well! The important thing is that they receive deeply from the gospel of Jesus.
- Pray about your lesson! Pray as you prepare! Pray as you teach! Remember we do not teach or exercise our gifts in our own strength. The Holy Spirit is the one who opens the heart and mind. Pray for the Spirit to move in your heart and the heart of the group.

May our merciful Triune God bless your study and your group that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith-- that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

In Christ,

Prison Discipleship Ministry

Lessons in Luke -- Lesson 4 – Jesus and Simon

Introduction:

In these lessons we are looking at the ministry of Jesus found in the Gospel of Luke. Simeon prophesied over baby Jesus that He would raise up many weak persons and bring down many proud persons (Luke 2:33-35). We see our next example of this in Luke 7:36-50. We will look at the first part of this passage this week.

Read this passage at least five times then answer the questions as best you can:

36 Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. 37 And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, 38 and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This Man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner." 40 And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." So he said, "Teacher, say it." 41 "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 "And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." (Luke 7:36-43, NKJV)

In the customs of this day, when one “sat down to eat” he was actually reclining on a couch propping himself up with one arm and eating with the other arm off the table. His feet were away from the table at the end of the couch. Also, meals like this were “semi-public.” Folks from the neighborhood could drop by.

What do we know about Simon? The woman?

Simon is a Pharisee. The Pharisees were outwardly religious but inwardly wicked because they were very proud of their own righteousness. The great sinners in the Bible were in general the scribes, Pharisees, and the Sadducees. **They were greater sinners than the prostitutes or tax collectors.** To hear what Jesus really thought about the Scribes and Pharisees, read Matt 23:1-35. Outward religiosity is not what is pleasing to God. God wants our heart. From the heart come our sinful thoughts, actions, etc. Consider Mark 7:21-23, “²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, ²² "thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. ²³ "All these evil things come from within and defile a man.” The Pharisees were not concerned with their heart, only their actions. And so, Jesus told us in Matt 5:20, “For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.” Our works cannot save us. We must see that our works cannot earn for us salvation. We don't sin and that makes us sinners; we are sinners, so we sin. It is only by looking to Jesus in

repentance and faith for a righteousness from Him outside of ourselves that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone and his work for us alone.

The woman is “a sinner” which probably means she was a well-known prostitute. For her to even enter Simon’s house is an act of holy bravery. She knows she is a sinner and would not be welcome in Simon’s house, but she rushes to Jesus because she knows Jesus is the savior she needs. She pours out her love for him by anointing his feet (in those days you walked everywhere, and your feet would need lots of care.) and loves him using the tools of her trade, her lips, her hands, and her hair. By using her tools of the trade to love Jesus, she is saying she no longer wants to use them in the sinful ways she had been using them; she wants to love and honor Him with her tools for now on. With body and soul, she wants to love, worship, and serve Jesus. As she loves Jesus she is crying. She knows that Jesus loves sinners like her. Jesus is her hope.

No child grows up wanting to be in the sexual trade, a gang member, a drug addict, or any other kind of dehumanizing occupation or title. Something happened in their lives that caused great trauma that brought them into that lifestyle. What other kinds of trauma contribute to lives that become known as “sinners”? (Physical, sexual, or verbal abuse, absence of parent, life on the street, war, PTSD, etc.)

It is good to recognize the kinds of trauma that have influenced us. Though trauma affects us truly and brings great difficulty and struggle to our lives, we cannot blame the trauma for the sinful choices we make. Sin did not come from the trauma, rather, trauma was the heat that stirred the sinful desires in our hearts and caused the sinful response to that trauma.

The bible is full of people of God who suffered great and true trauma in their lives: Joseph, David, Christ, Paul, etc. And their stories help us see the healthy, healing, and God-honoring responses we can have to trauma.

Trauma is real and Jesus cares about the suffering we endure. Jesus knows what it is to suffer trauma. Consider the life of Jesus. He knows what it is to be slandered by people. He knows what it is to suffer physical abuse. He knows what it is to suffer injustice in the judicial system. He knows what it is to suffer sexual abuse as he was hung naked and exposed upon the cross. Jesus understands trauma in a real and personal way as he was traumatized just as we often are.

Hebrews 4:15-16 tells us, “¹⁵ For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, **but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.** ¹⁶ Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

We must ask if we are running to Jesus with our trauma. Or are we running away from Jesus and to sin to deal with our trauma? Sin only leaves the trauma more profound and the pain of it is never dealt with. When we run to Jesus, He is there to help us truly heal from that trauma. He walks with us in it, and through it, as He walked in it and through it for us in his life. He took upon himself all the curse of this world and that includes the trauma sin causes in this world. He knows, cares, and gave His life to do something about it. That is the Good News of the Gospel!

Hebrews 5:7-9 tells us that Jesus, “⁷ who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, ⁸ though He was a Son, **yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.** ⁹ And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him...”

In our trauma, Jesus can teach us more about his love, mercy, grace, character, nearness, in ways and in depths that we may never experience without that trauma. The Psalms are about Jesus. And in the book of Psalms, over and over again, we hear the voice of Jesus in those poems, songs, and prayers, pour out His heart to the Father in His trauma. The book of Psalms teaches us how to pour out our heart to Jesus in the midst of our pain. He loves us so much He even helps us with the words to teach us how to speak to Him in our pain.

What does 7:39 mean when it says “he spoke to himself”? What does Simon think of the woman? How has Simon’s opinion of Jesus changed? Why did it change?

Simon was thinking in his heart, not saying things out loud. This is yet another example of Jesus knowing the thoughts of the hearts of people. Jesus is the God-man and uses His attribute of omniscience (knowing all things).

Simon said, “who and what manner of woman” so he knows her reputation. No “reputable” rabbi would waste time with the likes of her he thought. For him holiness means having no contact with people like this. He then says, “if this man were a prophet” meaning that Simon did not believe that Jesus was a prophet. He may have considered it, but for him the fact that Jesus let this woman come to him shows that he must not be or else he would have been just as repulsed by her as he is. Simon is his own standard of holiness, the measure that he gages all others. He is self-righteous to the core. For this woman to even touch Jesus would spread her contagion of sin onto him. For Simon, sin comes from the outside, not from the heart. Consider again Mark 7:21-23, things from the outside of us do not make us unclean, but it is the sin in our heart that defiles us. Simon’s holiness was only skin deep.

What is the point of the story that Jesus tells? Who is the creditor? The first debtor? The second debtor?

Since Simon likes to judge, Jesus tells him a story that allows him to judge between two people and judge what their right response should be. In the story, the Creditor is God Himself. The first debtor is the woman. She knew the huge debt of sin she bore. The second debtor is Simon. True, he was not one of such outward sin as the woman, but he was still a sinner who owed a debt of sin he could not pay.

Jesus assumes and Simon does not contest that the right response for such grace is love. Simon knew that from many places in the law of God but one for example Deuteronomy 10:11-12, “¹¹ Then the LORD said to me, ` Arise, begin your journey before the people, that they may go in and possess the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.’ ¹² ”And now, Israel, what does

the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul..." God delivered them from slavery in Egypt and is giving them this land. Therefore, the right response is love for God who has delivered them.

In our culture, love is something inward focused, it is a matter of what we feel or what someone does for us. Love in the bible is outward focused. Love gives and lust takes. Love looks to the other and gives.

God's love to us is outward-focused. He looks at us even though we are sinners and could do nothing for him and extends His love to us. God is love and so He gives love. We receive His love and then want to give to Him our love in our obedience, worship, service, and affection to Him. And to the greater degree we see the love He has shed upon us, to the greater degree we pour our love upon Jesus.

Simon by his own judgment condemns himself. His love to Jesus and therefore to God is less than this woman who disgusts him. We will explore Simon's lack of love in our next lesson.

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