

# Sermon Title: A Lesson in Forgiveness

Sermon by Pastor Tom Harrington

Week of June 13, 2010

## Sermon Based Small Group Discussion Guide

**Big Idea:** Christians need to understand the importance in receiving forgiveness from God and the need to forgive and receive forgiveness from one another in order to maintain close communion with God.

### Icebreaker

#### Sermon Text: Luke 7: 36-50

*36Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37When 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, 38and 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. 39When 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."*

*40Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. 41"Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii,[d] and the other fifty. 42Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled." "You have judged correctly," Jesus said. 44Then 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. 45You did not give me a kiss, but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet. 46You did not put oil on my head, but she has poured perfume on my feet. 47Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little." 48Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"*

*50Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."*

1. Reread Luke 7:36-50. In verses 36-39, how is the woman described? Look carefully at what she does. What different emotions does she express here? How do you think she feels about herself? What would motivate this woman to crash a dinner party, bring this expensive gift

and weep before Jesus?

2. According to Warren Wiersbe, "The most miserable prison in the world is the prison we make for ourselves when we refuse to show mercy. Our thoughts become shackled, our emotions are chained, the will is almost paralyzed. But when we show mercy, all of these bonds are broken, and we enter into a joyful liberty that frees us to share God's love with others."

Look at the theme of knowledge: What does the Pharisee think he knows about:

- a) The woman
- b) Jesus
- c) Himself

What does Jesus claim to know about:

- a) The woman
- b) The Pharisee
- c) Himself

3. Reread the last three sentences of this passage. The term love and forgiveness seem to be such difficult words to define. The words seem to be used interchangeably in this passage. What does that tell you about each?

#### Examples of forgiveness:

Esau and Jacob. (Genesis 33:4 - 15)  
Joseph (Genesis 45:8 - 15)  
Moses (Numbers 12:1 - 13)  
David (2 Sam 19:18 - 23)  
Solomon (1 Kings. 1:52, 53)  
Jesus (Luke 23:34)  
Stephen (Acts 7:59-60)  
Paul (2 Timothy 4:16)

4. Notice the interesting turn that Jesus takes toward Simon in verses 44-47. How is Simon different from the woman? How is she better than he? Who do you think is the worse sinner here, the woman or Simon? (Note: this is not an easily answered question. There should be quite a bit of

discussion since there are good arguments on both sides.)

5. What might we learn here about approaching Jesus?
6. How would the gift of peace be realized in her life? What would have changed in her situation? Would she still be a prostitute? How would she handle the circumstances of her life differently now that she has met Jesus?

### Personal Reflection

1. Are there ways that you feel 'unclean' - labeled by yourself or by society? For example - someone might have a weight problem and feel like it is their fault or branded by that physical challenge.

2. What are ways you have labeled someone because of something you thought you knew about them - or assumed about them that was unfair? Did you work to change your attitude? Are there ways that the church might make a judgment upon a situation or person unfairly?

3. What does Jesus want our attitude to be toward those who struggle in life?

### **Taking it Home**

Have there been wrongs committed against you that you are still holding on to? Try this forgiveness activity.

How To Forgive in 5 Steps:

1. Make a list of the actions, not the people, that have hurt you.
2. Pray and ask God to heal those broken places that this has caused in your life and your relationship with Him.

3. Ask God to forgive you for your lack of forgiveness and to help you to release any anger or resentment you have held in your heart, to truly show you how to forgive.

4. Destroy the paper with the offenses on it once and for all!

5. Write the names of the offender(s) on a separate sheet of paper without their actions. Start using this as your prayer list. Commit to praying for these people regularly.

Once you have done this, you may still feel like you have not fully forgiven the person. But, forgiveness is a conscious spiritual decision. And you have made it. Sometimes it just takes a second for your emotions to catch up with your spirit.

If you have angry feelings about the offender again, just take that thought captive (2Corinthians 10:5)! Confess aloud that you have forgiven that person. Then begin to pray for them. Over time, your emotions will come in line with your spirit.

### **Prayer Requests and Praises:**

How can the group pray for you and/or the friend in need you identified during this Bible Study?