

To KNOW Christ and one another more deeply,
To CARE for one another in truth and in love,
To GROW as followers of Jesus.
- CG Mission Statement

Worship: The Love of God by Frederick M. Lehman

(Here is a psalm/song to help your group as you worship. You can go through it together or in groups in meditation and/or in prayer.)

The love of God is greater far	Were every stalk on earth a quill
Than tongue or pen can ever tell	And every man a scribe by trade.
It goes beyond the highest star	To write the love of God above
And reaches to the lowest hell	Would drain the ocean dry
The guilty pair, bowed down with care	Nor could the scroll contain the whole
God gave His Son to win	Though stretched from sky to sky
His erring child He reconciled	
And pardoned from his sin.	O love of God, how rich and pure!
	How measureless and strong!
Could we with ink the ocean fill	It shall forevermore endure
And were the skies of parchment made	The saints' and angels' song.

Icebreaker

What has been your most memorable dinner party?

Text for Discussion: Luke 7:36-50

Turn in your Bibles and read this passage aloud together.

Aid for Discussion: Sermon Summary

What does it mean to really know God personally? What does it look like? Luke 7 shows two very different encounters with Jesus that offer insight into these questions:

Simon, one of the religious elite, invited Jesus to dine at his house. This act took courage because his fellow Pharisees were hostile toward Christ, many even plotting to kill Him. But Simon was a religious seeker, curious about Jesus. He knew so much *about* God...but he didn't know God. Meanwhile, a prostitute hears that Jesus is eating nearby. Though she is irreligious (and at the opposite end of the spectrum from the Pharisee), she is drawn to an authentic experience with God. She has heard that Jesus will treat her with the love that all of us yearn for in our heart of hearts, and so she goes to Him.

Their interactions with Jesus have unexpected results. Simon leaves upset and frustrated; the prostitute leaves restored and in worship. Why? Because God flips the script on our expectations of what it means to be religious. He reminds us that there is nothing we can bring to the table to be holy in His sight. What God yearns for is relationship with us. What God desires of us is an acceptance of His supremacy and His sufficiency over all our lives. The Pharisee leaves rebuked because Jesus is saying that his religiousness isn't what is important. The prostitute leaves renewed because Jesus reminds her of how deeply loved she is by the One who matters most.

While meals like the one described were opportunities for public discourse, a prostitute showing up would ruin the moral purity of the home. She knew this, so to approach Jesus was a big risk. Immediately, she is overwhelmed by the possibility of who Jesus is. Instinctively, she cannot help but wash Jesus' feet with her tears and anoint him with the costly perfume of her trade. This is in contrast to the Pharisee, who seeks a discourse with Christ, yet hasn't extended the kindness expected of him as a host. By having Jesus' feet cleaned, Simon would have shown Him the respect his fellow Pharisees would not have condoned. As the prostitute cleans Jesus' feet, we see true intimacy. She has completely let her guard down. She forfeits her identity as a prostitute by using her perfume to anoint Jesus. It is a sign of her wholly giving up the life she has known – all so she can encounter Jesus.

If we want to know God – not just know about God – we must **surrender control of our life to Him**. Too often we treat God as a healthy addition to our lives. But Jesus is telling us, “I am King...or I am nothing to you.” To know God personally and to encounter Jesus requires a *whole-being* commitment to Him. We can no longer be the ones sitting on the throne of our lives.

To accomplish this, we need to **own a debt that we cannot pay**. This is the beginning to knowing God, and there’s no way around it. We need to adjust our view of ourselves, for as Jesus tells us: those who have been forgiven little, love little. Those who have forgiven much, love much. We all have grounds for forgiveness, yet so many of us are reluctant to admit it. And no matter how big our debt, none of us have the ability to pay back our debt.

And finally we must **trust Jesus has the ability to pay our debt**. We trust Him to pay the debt for us, recognizing we cannot do it ourselves. “God made Him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Cor 5:21). “Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God” (Eph 5:2). “For we are to God the pleasing aroma of Christ” (2 Cor 2:15).

Guiding Question of the Week

(This question is intended as a target for the whole conversation. Do not ask for responses now. It will be repeated later in the study.)

How have you experienced the forgiveness of Jesus in your life?

Questions for Discussion

(Remember it is better to wrestle deeply with two good questions than gloss over many. Sub-bullets are intended for potential follow-up.)

- 1) Looking at Luke 7:36-50, what stands out to you?
 - Which character can you identify most with in this passage? In what ways?
 - What is the significance of the prostitute letting her hair down? What is the significance of her pouring perfume out of the alabaster jar onto the feet of Jesus?
- 2) Did the Pharisee in this story have a right to be angry about what was happening? Why or why not?
- 3) **Guiding Question:** How have you experienced the forgiveness of Jesus in your life?
 - Are there areas in your life that are hard to surrender control of? What might Jesus be calling you to let go of?
 - Why do you think it’s spiritually important to see yourself as owing the larger debt?
- 4) Is there something specific in your life for which you need to experience God’s forgiveness?
 - Or is there someone in your life that you need to forgive?
- 5) How do you respond to Luke 7:47 “Whoever has been forgiven little loves little”?
 - Do you believe that one who is forgiven more loves more? Why or why not?

Praying for One Another

(Here are some ideas from the study to help focus your time in prayer as a group. Use by themselves or along with other prayer requests.)

- Pray that God would open our eyes to our brokenness.
- Pray that we would walk around with the fragrance of Jesus; the pleasing aroma of Christ (2 Cor 2:15).
- Pray that God will strip away any hints of self-righteousness and that we would run to Him in complete surrender, knowing that we are all broken and in need of a Savior.