

# **LifeWay Explore the Bible Series for Oct. 17: Christ is worthy of loving, sacrificial service\_100404**

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## **Christ is worthy of loving, sacrificial service**

Luke 7:36-50

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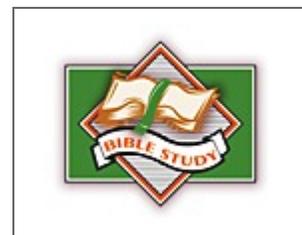
The Pharisees were a highly respected and influential group among the people. They also were religious leaders who emphasized their own version of purity rules.

A Pharisee invited Jesus to a banquet that took place after Jesus taught in a synagogue. It was considered a virtuous act to invite a teacher for dinner. It also was customary in the east for people to come and listen to the wise sayings from the guest teacher without an invitation to the banquet. This would explain the presence of the woman.

### **A sensitive heart and a noble action (vv. 36-38)**

Luke told us this woman was a sinner (v. 37). She might have been a prostitute or lived a morally loose life. Her bad reputation was known throughout the town. She may have heard Jesus' message before, and this message may have convicted her to repent from her sinful life.

On this particular occasion, she knew Jesus was eating at Simon's house and brought an alabaster jar of perfume. She used that fragrant balm on Jesus to show the extent of her gratitude.



There is no record of this woman in other gospels (Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9 and John 12:1-8 have similar narratives but should not be considered the same as Luke), and we do not know what Jesus had done for her. Most likely, she heard his message in one of the discourses, and the message of forgiveness convicted her.

Her conviction was so deep, she was willing to express her repentance publicly in a Pharisee's house during the banquet given in honor of Jesus. She was very humble and “stood behind Jesus at his feet weeping. She began to wet his feet with her tears, and wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them” (v. 38).

Even though this woman was a sinner, she had a sensitive heart. She heard Jesus' message and responded to it. Her response motivated her to do a very noble act to Jesus to show her love and appreciation.

### **Who has more reason to love Jesus? (vv. 39-43)**

This Pharisee, Simon, should have known more about Jesus than the woman, and probably had heard Jesus speak on many subjects many times. He almost certainly would have heard someone say Jesus was a prophet. Or he might have seen some miracles Jesus had performed, but he was very suspicious of him (v. 39). He invited Jesus for dinner, but he might have had other motivations—it definitely was not out of love and respect.

When he saw what the woman did to Jesus, he was grumbling (v. 39). Jesus responded to his criticism by telling him a parable and asking him a rhetorical question: “Which of them will love him more?” (v. 42). Simon answered, “I supposed the one who had the bigger debt cancelled” (v. 43). Since Simon was a very self-righteous man, he did not need Jesus' forgiveness; and he, of course, did not have any love and gratitude to Jesus.

Some Christians do not love Jesus very much, because they do not think they were forgiven very much. They may think they were not very bad, even though they had some sins. It was nice to be forgiven by Jesus so they could be better people than they were before. Jesus and the Christian faith are just the decorations in their lives. They love Jesus, but will not be as passionate as that woman.

### **The beauty of a grateful heart (v. 44-50)**

Our love and gratitude to Jesus determine our service to him. The service rendered by this woman to Jesus was so genuine and deep that it became an act of beauty. What that woman did for Jesus, Simon should have done when he first entered his house as an honored guest. Simon called Jesus teacher (7:40), but he did not treat him as someone worthy of respect.

We call Jesus our Lord, but do we treat him as our Lord in our daily lives? What kind of service should we render to Jesus? Will the service we do in church show our gratitude and love to Jesus? Will it be as public and sacrificial as that woman's? Will we be as willing to take on the role of a

servant, without thought for our own importance?

“Christian” is the most beautiful name on earth, for it reflects lives that have deep gratitude and love for Jesus. A grateful heart is like perfume that will fill the house with aroma. We will never completely understand why our Lord Jesus died for sinners like us. When we worship him with deep gratitude and thanksgiving, we will once again experience his awesome love.

### **Discussion questions**

- ◆ Who do you identify with, the Pharisee or the woman?
- ◆ Do the services you render to the church reflect your gratitude to Jesus?
- ◆ How can we make worship more of a priority during the week and not just something we try to do for an hour on Sunday?

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