

LifeWay Family Bible Series for Oct. 3: Showing love to others can bring about change_92004

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Showing love to others can bring about change

Luke 7:36-50

By Angela Hamm

First Baptist Church, Lewisville

This month's Bible study theme is Looking for Change. The responsibility of the Christian is to be willing to be changed and to be in a position where God's ways can be the believer's ways.

Winston Churchill said, "To improve is to change. To be perfect is to change often." By nature, individuals resist change. Change seems to shake one's comfort zone as it moves from the familiar to the unfamiliar. Yet for Christians, God calls us to the process of transformation. Change is a matter of being intentional with living a life which reflects Christlikeness. As we will see in this month's study, true change comes as Jesus Christ works his inner work in a believer's life.

Background

Some people have thought this passage in Luke is the same scene found in Matthew 26:6-13, Mark 14:3-9 and John 12:1-8. Although the stories are similar, their differences are distinct. Three characters dominate the scene in this narrative: Simon the Pharisee, a sinful woman and Jesus. In this passage, Luke is showing us what happens when God's love invades a person's life.

The story

Jesus was invited to dinner at the home of a Pharisee named Simon. While Jesus was reclining at the table, a sinful woman entered Simon's home. She brought a bottle of perfume and stood at the feet of Jesus weeping. She used her tears to wet the feet of Jesus and dried his feet with her hair and then poured the perfume on the feet of Jesus.



When the Pharisee saw Jesus was allowing the sinful woman to wash his feet, he said to his other guests, "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." He was offended and embarrassed by what was going on.

Simon knew what kind of woman she was, so as he judges her, he also judges Jesus. Simon thought, "If this man really were a prophet, he would know this is a sinful woman."

Knowing Simon's thought, Jesus tells him a parable. By telling the parable to Simon, Jesus was in essence saying, "Simon, you really don't know what it is like to be forgiven the same way this woman has."

Simon the Pharisee

In understanding this story, it's helpful to understand the etiquette and culture of Jesus' day. When a guest entered a house three things always were done: the guest was given a kiss of peace, cool water was poured on the guest's feet to cleanse them and a pinch of sweet-smelling incense was burned or a drop of fragrant oil was placed on the guest's head.

When Jesus arrived at the Pharisees' home, he received nothing. Simon does not give him a greeting, no cool water for his feet, and no anointing for his head. It is Simon who does not show Jesus hospitality. It is Simon the Pharisee who has not accepted or appreciated the love and forgiveness of Jesus.

The sinful woman

A woman enters the room because she wants to see Jesus. She must have heard he is a friend of sinners. She enters the room and goes directly to Jesus. The woman stood behind Jesus at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped her tears with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

The woman provided everything Simon failed to do for Jesus. She kisses Jesus' feet, she washes Jesus' feet, and she provides a fragrant aroma which fills the room. The woman says nothing in this narrative—a time when actions really do speak louder than words.

It is apparent the woman really knew Jesus. She had crossed the bridge of faith and experienced a changed life. Her extreme love for Jesus was proof she had been forgiven, cleansed and restored. She had discovered her deepest need, and it had transformed her life.

A changed life

The Christian life is a journey of transformation into the likeness of Christ.

A good measurement of evaluating the transformational process is for individuals to evaluate how they are growing in their love for God and in their love for people.

Ken Gire makes this observation: “So it's the end of the day, and each of us is lying in our bed, reflecting. Have I loved well? Has love been the beating heart pulsing through all my activities? Can it be heard in all my conversations? Seen in my eyes? Felt when other people are in my presence? Was the truth I spoke today spoken in love? Were the decisions I made today based on love? Were my reactions? My devotions? Have I loved well?”

Christians can proceed through all the motions of spiritual life—worship, Bible study, daily devotions, journal entries, service and giving—yet without love, all of these things are meaningless in relation to spiritual transformation.

Discussion questions

- What are three steps can you take this week to grow in your love for God and for people?

- Is love the foundation of your spiritual life? How do you know?

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