THE FORGIVEN WOMAN ENCOUNTERS JESUS  LUKE 7:36-50

For the leader:

WHAT’S THE CORE MESSAGE?
Simon the Pharisee and the forgiven woman illustrate two different reactions to Jesus. Simon sees Jesus as a merely another teacher not even worthy of common courtesy. The woman on the other hand has a radical reaction to Jesus. She reacts with great sacrifice (pouring out the expensive perfume), and undignified affection (wiping his feet with her hair). The woman’s reaction flows out of her profound recognition of Jesus forgiveness of her great debt. Simon’s reaction comes from the fact that he does not believe he needs much forgiveness (i.e. he believes his debt is small). One of the greatest inhibitors to being transformed by God is the lack of recognition of your own sinfulness.

SHARE CONTEXT  (1 minute)
In the passage before this one, Jesus’ interaction with John the Baptist’s disciples show what a controversial person Jesus has become. Here he attends a dinner party. Rather than sit on chairs, people in Jesus’ day reclined with their heads towards the table and the feet away from it. An alabaster jar with perfume in it was very expensive.

ENTER THE TEXT  (10 minutes)
Read the passage out loud.

Pretend you were at the banquet, standing along the wall observing. The woman’s behavior seems pretty weird to you. With a partner, discuss what you would be whispering about as the story unfolds.

ASK & ANSWER QUESTIONS  (30 minutes)
1. 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?
2. What would motivate this woman to crash a dinner party, bring this expensive gift and weep before Jesus?
3. In verse 39, how does Simon, the host, react to this uninvited guest? How do you think he feels about himself? How does he feel about Jesus? (Notice also the deference he gives Jesus in verse 40.)
4. Jesus responds to Simon with a story in verses 40-43. Notice all the facts. What is the point of the story? What is the significance of the creditor’s canceling the debts?
5. Why didn’t Jesus offer Jesus water for his feet, oil for his head, etc? What does this tell us about Simon?
6. Compare and contrast Simon and the woman. How do they react differently to Jesus? What does this tell us about them?
7. In verse 50 Jesus says the woman’s faith has saved her, yet faith was not explicitly mentioned before. How have her actions throughout the story demonstrated faith?
8. With which person in this story do you most identify? Why?
SUMMARIZE (3 minutes)
Simon is at the top of Jewish society: male, a Pharisee, honored, and privileged. The un-named woman is at the bottom: female, unmarried, “a sinner.” However, it is the woman who responds to Jesus, is reconciled to God, and receives public affirmation for her faith. Simon’s evaluation of Jesus completely misfires because he doesn’t see himself rightly; he does not recognize his own need for forgiveness. Consequently, he doesn’t recognize who Jesus is, receive forgiveness, and is called out publically for his lack of hospitality.

PROCESS & APPLY (10 minutes)
1. What sins in your past or present feel like they are beyond Jesus’ forgiveness? It may feel too risky to share but at least write them down a sheet of paper. Pray in pairs, perhaps using Psalm 32:1-5 or 1 John 1:8-9 to assure each other of God’s promise of forgiveness.

2. What is your reaction when you think about Jesus’ sacrifice to forgive you? Are you moved towards adoration like the woman or are you unaffected like Simon? Meditate on Jesus sacrifice for you and ask him to help you realize the depth of his love for you so that you will be moved to respond with radical love.

3. Would Jesus describe you as one who “loves much“ or “loves little”? If you would like that to change, what will help you to love Jesus more deeply?

4. Jesus has a pastoral concern for both the humble sinner and the proud sinner and speaks appropriately and graciously to both. For whom does Jesus want to grow your shepherd’s heart? What conversations, challenges or words of encouragement might he like to speak through you? Share and pray in pairs accordingly.