

## Luke 7:36-50

### Illustration (Excuses)

Philadelphia's Highway Patrol officers hear all kinds of creative excuses that drivers give for speeding. Here are some of the officers' favorites. By the way, none of them worked.

- A man told the officer he was rushing to the hospital because he had been stung by a bee, and was allergic. "There's the bee right there," he said, pointing to his dashboard. The officer looked. The bee was not only dead, but in an advanced state of decomposition.
- An officer stopped a man doing 80 mph. When he asked the driver whether he had seen the speed-limit signs, the man responded, "I went by them so fast I probably missed them."
- A man going south on I-95 was stopped near Washington Avenue doing 79 mph. "My engine misses, and I'm trying to clean out the carburetor," he told the officer. For good measure, he added, "If I don't go this fast, my car won't go at all."
- "I'm due in traffic court," one speeder said. "If I'm late, they're going to enforce the bench warrant."
- When an officer told a speeder that the speed limit on the Schuylkill Expressway was 50 mph, the driver responded, "Officer, where have you been? It's 65 now."
- One speeder said simply, "I'm trying to beat my wife home. Don't ask."
- An elderly person was stopped after doing 73 mph. When told he was getting a ticket, he asked the officer, "Is there a senior citizen's discount?"

### *Why do we make excuses? What is it about being human that makes it so natural?*

Today we're going to look at a story about a group of Pharisees being confronted with who Jesus was. They said that He couldn't be a prophet, but He proves them wrong. He is more. He is a divine prophet who has come to seek and save sinners.

### **THE SETTING (vv. 36-38)**

v. 36 – Guest of Pharisee, probably curious like Herod, thought he was a prophet (v39), Jesus didn't reject Simon just because most of the Pharisees rejected Him, Jesus dealt with the individual. Jesus was reclined (*katakline*) at the table to eat.

vv. 37-38 – *amartwlos* – a person of bad character (probably a prostitute). She seems to have arrived before Jesus (v. 45). Jewish women frequently wore vials such as the alabaster vial around their necks. If it was nard, it would have been a whole year's wage (Mark 14:3-5; John 12:3-5).

It seems odd that she is crashing the party, but that wouldn't have been uncommon in Jesus' day. They would have probably left the door open and allow people to sit on the sidelines. The problem was the fact that she touched him and the way she did it. She was a sinner, probably a prostitute letting her hair down.

*Surely if He was a prophet, Jesus wouldn't let her touch Him.* So, Simon assumed that He wasn't. Separationism was the name of the game. For spiritual people to remain spiritual, they

must not associate with sinners. This comes up several times in Luke (5:29-32; 15:1-2; 18:9-14). In contrast, Jesus eats, drinks, and is a friend of sinners v. 34.

***Does this happen with religious people of our day? Christians?***

She used the most glorious part of a woman, her hair (1 Cor 11:15) to wash the most ignoble part, Jesus' feet. She washed his feet with her tears. Surely this wasn't planned. She didn't do this quickly either for she continually kissed his feet. By constantly kissing (Gr. *kataphilei*, the imperfect tense) Jesus' feet, the woman was expressing her affection, respect, and submission (cf. 1 Sam. 10:1). Normally people anointed the heads of others, not their feet.

***What did the woman's worship of Jesus cost her?***

1. The expensive vial of perfume
2. The humility to kiss, wash, and dry the dirty feet of the Lord Jesus
3. The greatest price which she paid was facing the scorn and rejection of the self-righteous Pharisees and other dinner guests at that meal. She probably knew that this would be their reaction for she had probably seen it in the market, on the street, perhaps even in her family.

***What is the difference between our perception of the story thus far and the perception of those that were there while these events were unfolding?*** (They would have thought that Simon was the hero [protagonist] and the sinner was the villain (antagonist) A prostitute throwing herself at Jesus. Letting her hair down would have been sinful for a woman. → ***Her love compelled her to take a risk! Luke uses this reaction to get the audience's attention.***

**SIMON'S THOUGHTS AND JESUS' RESPONSE (vv. 39-47)**

v. 39 – The way Simon phrased his sentence, he is really saying “If this man were a prophet (but he is not).” Simon's reasoning:

**Premise:** If Jesus were a prophet, he would know people's character and have nothing to do with her b/c it would make him ceremonially unclean.

**Conclusion:** He clearly doesn't know her character, so he can't be a prophet. Thus, I can reject Him, His message, & His ministry.

***Why did Luke include the phrase “he spoke to himself”?*** (to show the audience and Simon that Jesus was a prophet)

v. 40 – Simon did not expect for Jesus to comment on something in Simon's head. Simon had concluded that Jesus couldn't decipher between sinners and non-sinners. Jesus knew what was in the heart (cf. 5:22). Simon addressed Jesus as a “teacher” (*didaskale*), Luke's equivalent to a rabbi, a respectful term but less than a prophet.

**Parable:** Two debtors = forgiveness (not a coincidence). The Pharisees were rich and would understand the creditor/debtor relationship well.

Simon doubts that Jesus was a prophet, and Jesus knew it. How ironic!

vv. 41-43 – two debtors, one owed 500 day’s wages and the other only 50. Both obviously were heavily in debt. The average household income in the US is about \$50k. This would be the difference between \$70k and \$7k. Who would be more excited, someone whose used car was paid off or someone whose mortgage was paid off? The Pharisee had the correct answer. Yet, he shows cautiousness. He knows that he’s in a trap.

**Was love a condition of forgiveness?** (Both debtors were forgiven and both loved the person that forgave them).

*Early in Andy Stanley’s preaching career, he bought a “new to him” Infiniti. On Saturday morning, while taking out the trash, he noticed that there was a large A scratched into the top of the hood. Furious, he went inside and confronted his boys. Quickly, one of his boys said, “It was Allie!” So, he called Allie out into the garage. Pointing to the hood, he asked her, “Did you do this?” Sheepishly, she said, “yes sir, I did it.” What was he supposed to do? There was no way to explain to her the significance of what she did...how much it would cost, how much trouble it would be to get fixed, how much it would be to get a rent a car. So what do you do in that kind of situation? Sever the relationship? Demand payment? Rant and rave? Of course not. He did the only thing he could do for someone he loved as much as he loved her. He knelt down and said, “Allie, please don’t do that anymore.” She said, “Yes sir daddy.” Forgiveness is extended to those that can’t pay. The sinner couldn’t pay and ironically, neither could the Pharisee. (He was probably thinking, “I don’t need a debt forgiven!”)*

vv. 44-46 – The story takes a twist. Simon becomes the villain and the sinner is revealed as the heroine. “Do you see this woman?” Jesus meant “You see a prostitute; I see a forgiven, loving woman.”

Simon	Woman
Gave me no water for my feet	Washed my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair
Gave me no kiss	Has not ceased kissing my feet
Did not anoint my head with oil	Anointed my feet with fragrant oil

**What did Simon do wrong?** (As a Pharisee, the law became obligation instead of love). Much like Matt 9 when the Pharisees were upset that Jesus was eating with sinners, Jesus replied “I desire mercy, not sacrifice” a quote from Hosea 6:6. The Pharisees’ problem was that they were keeping the law, but not out of love and mercy, but obligation. Just as in Hosea, sacrifice is offensive if it is not out of love.

v. 47 – Great love is the *result of* NOT *the reason for* great forgiveness. The faith saved her (v. 50). Jesus compared economic forgiveness to spiritual forgiveness. Just as a debtor has no bargaining position, nothing to bring to the table; only grace allows the debt to be removed.

### **JESUS' RESPONSE TO THE WOMAN (vv. 48-50)**

v. 48-49 – Jesus did not just forgive her. She had already been forgiven (*aphewntai/sosoken*). Her loving act was due to the forgiveness that she had already experienced. Some thought He was forgiving her sins, which brought up the question of who Jesus was (cf. v. 39; 5:21). Luke does not answer the question.

v. 50 – Jesus concluded the conversation with a word of clarification—it was her faith that *saved* her. This probably means more than just justification but “*your faith has made you whole.*” She was transformed from a debtor to someone who has been forgiven, filled with love for God.

*Matt 9:22; Mark 5:34; 10:52; Luke 7:50; 8:48; 17:19; 18:42 – faith has made you well (sosoken)*

*What happened to Simon? His companions?* Luke ends the story abruptly. We are left to wonder.

Simon surely did what he was culturally obligated to do. Yet, the woman went beyond the call of duty. Love often produces such a response.

If Jesus' reception of the sinner was a problem, forgiving her was huge! The Pharisees responded just as that of the Pharisees that witnessed Jesus forgive the paralytic. “Who is this man who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone” (Luke 5:21). Jesus had spoken the words of God, performed the miracles of God, and now claimed the power of God to forgive sin. The question for them then was “What will you do with Jesus?”

***What does this story tell us about Jesus' perception of women?***

***What does this say about Jesus' mission? (He came to save sinners) How should this change the way we live, minister, do church, etc.?***

Important Points:

1. Concern for women (similar to Mary Magdalene, but different incident cf. Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8—Simon the Leper and Simon the Pharisee are definitely not the same person)
2. Jesus' authority to forgive sins (Son of Man, cf. 5:24)
3. Lack of love from a religious man and deep love from a sinner
4. Only faith in Jesus can save (v. 50)