



Forgiveness

(based on Luke 7:36–50)

On silent feet, the woman crept through the streets. Life had been hard for her, and she had made many mistakes. People often told her she was a bad person and treated her unkindly. She kept to the shadows so no one would see her.

“I have to get to Simon the Pharisee’s (FEHR-ih-see’s) house,” she thought to herself. “I must see Jesus.”

When the woman reached the house, she slipped in quietly. Would she be able to get to Jesus? Would the servants let her go beyond the front door? She could see that Jesus was getting ready to eat with Simon. Silently, the woman crept up to Jesus. Crying with relief, she let her tears fall on Jesus’ feet. Then she kissed his feet, dried them with her hair, and poured some expensive perfume over them. The smell of the perfume filled the house.

Simon wasn’t impressed. In fact, he was shocked. “Doesn’t Jesus know that this woman has done bad things?” he thought. “If Jesus really is from God, he wouldn’t let this bad woman touch him!”

Jesus knew what Simon was thinking, and he wanted to teach the Pharisee about God’s grace, so he told a little story.

“Two people owed some money to a banker,” explained Jesus. “One of them owed five hundred silver coins, and the other owed fifty. Since neither of them could pay the banker back, the banker said that they didn’t have to pay him anything. Which one of them will love the banker more?”

“I suppose it would be the one who owed the most and didn’t have to pay it back,” Simon answered, reluctantly.

“Exactly right,” agreed Jesus.

Jesus turned toward the woman and asked Simon the Pharisee, “Have you noticed this woman? When I came into your house, you did nothing to welcome me. You didn’t give me water so I could wash my dusty feet. She has washed my feet with her tears. You didn’t greet me with a kiss of welcome. She hasn’t stopped kissing my feet. You didn’t even pour oil on my head, but she has poured expensive perfume on my feet.”

Simon had nothing to say.

“Life has not been easy for this woman,” continued Jesus. “She has made mistakes, but that doesn’t stop God from loving her. This woman knows that God has forgiven her, and she loves God even more because of it. That is why she has shown great love to me.”

Then Jesus smiled at the woman. “You are forgiven,” he said gently. “Go with God’s peace.”



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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story with your child—imagine and wonder.
- Invite everyone to act, stand, sit, and move as the characters in the story—to look shocked like Simon, to worship like the woman, or to tell a story like Jesus.
- Simon hosted Jesus for dinner, but he needed help from the woman and Jesus to learn about true hospitality. Retell or rewrite the story, helping Simon act differently toward the woman and Jesus.
- The woman worshiped Jesus with her whole body. Play some music and invite everyone to move, using their bodies to worship and praise God.



Responding to God's Grace

- The unnamed woman responded to Jesus' gift of forgiveness with her hair, her tears, her kisses, and her knees at Jesus' feet. Lead your child in singing and moving to the tune "Head, Shoulders, Knees, and Toes" with these words:

Hair, tears, and lips and knees,
lips and knees.
Hair, tears, and lips and knees;
lips and knees.
Forgiven she showed her gratitude.
Hair, tears, and lips and knees,
lips and knees.
- Read some of these verses assuring us of God's forgiveness: Psalm 103:8–12, Isaiah 1:18, Joel 2:12–13, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Ephesians 4:32, and 1 John 1:9. Choose one (or a key phrase) to memorize and say to one another if someone does something wrong or hurts someone's feelings.

Celebrating in Gratitude

- In gratitude for God's grace, place olive oil in a small dish. Invite everyone to stand in a circle. Take turns passing the dish, getting a bit of oil on one finger, turning to the person on the left, and making the sign of a cross on that person's hand or forehead. The anointer says, "Beloved, God loves and forgives you." The anointed replies, "Thanks be to God."
- Pray this prayer each day this week:

Gracious God, in gratitude, we worship and praise you for the gift of grace. Amen.