

Luke 7:36-50

Aim of lesson

To show the response of Jesus to one who is truly repentant.

Background study

Study the customs of Jewish hospitality and the attitudes and behaviour of the Pharisees.

Suggested outline of lesson

Hospitality - real or fake?

Introduce the lesson by talking about invitations. Jesus must have received many such requests from a variety of people, some of whom were his close friends, some in need of healing, some wanting to listen to his teaching and others to find fault. Simon invited Jesus to his house for a meal in order to provide an opportunity for him to question Jesus and put him to the test. He was curious to know why Jesus was so popular, but the warmth of his hospitality left much to be desired. He did not even extend to him the customary courtesies.

An open-hearted action

The Pharisees were rich and powerful, and Simon's house would probably have been quite luxurious. Such things, however, did not impress Jesus; he knew that only the hearts, minds and actions of people are of importance to God. Simon knew that Jesus kept company with all kinds of people including the poorest, but he was amazed when a woman with a very bad reputation sought out Jesus in his house. She had obviously met Jesus before and had heard his message of hope and forgiveness for people like herself. It must have taken great courage to enter the Pharisee's house, for she must have known how Simon despised her, but her thoughts were on Jesus alone. In deep gratitude she had brought with her a most expensive gift of perfumed oil to anoint the skin of Jesus. This was her way of honouring him and for her it was an emotional moment. Her tears expressed both her shame and misery at what she was, her intense joy in acknowledging Jesus as her saviour, and relief that she could be forgiven for all the wrong she had done.

A cold-hearted reaction

While this was happening, many thoughts were passing through Simon's mind. He was embarrassed at such a display of feeling, horrified that Jesus should allow such a person to touch him, and assumed that Jesus had failed to recognize the woman for what she was. However, he had not even opened his mouth to speak when Jesus revealed that he was able to read the innermost thoughts of both the woman and Simon himself. With masterly skill Jesus told the story of the two debtors to clarify the present situation. The story culminated in a question that forced Simon to recognize the extent of the

forgiveness of God and to acknowledge his own need for forgiveness. Jesus then spelled out the comparison between his host's attitude and that of the woman. Her every action demonstrated deep humility and love. Because of this response to Jesus her sins were forgiven. By contrast, Simon's neglect of his guest's needs manifested his pride and lack of love. Moreover, his self-righteous condemnation of the woman suggested that he felt himself to be righteous.

Echoes of salvation for us all

This story contains a summary of the gospel of salvation. First must come an admission of sin, then sincere repentance together with absolute faith that Jesus Christ will forgive our sins. This is exactly what happened to the woman: she recognized her sinfulness and her need for forgiveness, she had complete faith that Jesus could take away her sins and her faith was demonstrated in her loving actions. Jesus knew her heart, saw her need and recognized her faith. He then reassured her by saying: "Your sins are forgiven ... your faith has saved you". She, who had felt worthless and wicked, without true friends or self-respect, now felt free and loved and could indeed go in peace.

Relevance to the children's lives

This lesson has been mainly to do with repentance and forgiveness. We all do wrong and unkind things at times and feel sorry afterwards.

Can you think of times when you felt sorry after upsetting your parents, but found it hard to say: "I am sorry"? When you finally plucked up the courage to say the words, did you find that you felt happy and relieved afterwards? Perhaps, at times, you were not unselfish enough to apologize, and continued to feel bad inside.

Next time, remember how happy the woman in this story felt when she had been forgiven and show you really love your parents by asking them to forgive you.

Worksheets

The word change puzzle reads:

	A		S		I		N		N		E		R
	A	S		S	N		N		E		R		
	A	S		S	N		R		R		R		
	I	S		S	O		R		R		R		
	I	S		S	O		R		R		Y		
	I	O		R	S		O		R		R		Y
	I	O		R	G		O		V		R		Y
	I	O		R	G		O		V		E		N
AND IS	F	O		R	G		I		V		E		N

The remaining letters from the word search read 'Jesus said "Your faith has saved you"'.

Prayer

Dear Lord God, thank you for teaching us that when we do wrong we can be forgiven. Please help us to admit the bad things we have done and not to be too proud to say that we are sorry. Amen.

Memory verse

“ I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the LORD,” and you forgave the iniquity of my sin” (Psalm 32:5).