

Lenten Small Group

Session THREE • Mercy and Forgiveness • 60-90 Minutes

1. Welcome and Fellowship (10 minutes)

- Begin with a warm welcome and casual conversation.
- If applicable, share snacks or refreshments.
- Briefly check in with members about their week and Lenten practices.

2. Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

- Lead a prayer inviting God's presence and guidance for the discussion.
- Include a moment of silence to center hearts and minds on Christ.

3. Scripture Reading (5 minutes)

- Read Luke 7:36-50
- Read the passage aloud (Use multiple readers for engagement).

4. Group Discussion (30-60 minutes)

- Instructions: Have a group discussions on 3-4 of the following questions. The bolded questions are great starters. If time permits check out the DEEPER DIVE questions at the end of the list.
 - What is your reaction to the woman's actions of washing Jesus' feet with her tears and anointing them with ointment? What does this reveal about her heart?
 - **Why do you think Jesus forgave the woman's sins in this moment? What do you think this teaches us about God's mercy?**
 - Simon the Pharisee seems to judge the woman for her past. How does Jesus challenge Simon's perspective on forgiveness and mercy?
 - In what ways do you see ourselves sometimes acting like Simon, judging others or failing to extend forgiveness?
 - Jesus tells a parable about two debtors, one owing much more than the other. How does this parable help us understand the woman's actions and the significance of her forgiveness?
 - How does understanding the "size" of our own sins shape our gratitude toward God's forgiveness?

- How does receiving forgiveness from God inspire us to show greater love to others?
- The woman humbly approaches Jesus, acknowledging her sin. How does humility play a role in seeking and receiving God's mercy?
- How can we practice humility in our own spiritual journeys, especially in receiving forgiveness?
- Jesus extends forgiveness to the woman, despite her past. What does this passage teach us about forgiving those who may have hurt us?
- How does experiencing God's mercy and forgiveness impact the way you view your own relationships and your ability to forgive others?
- How can this passage shape your actions during this season of Lent, especially in seeking reconciliation with others?

Deeper Dive Questions

- How have you experienced God's mercy in your life?
- Is there someone you feel called to forgive this Lent? What steps can you take toward that?
- How does extending mercy to others reflect Christ's example?

5. Reflection and Response (5-10 minutes)

Each person pick one question and share

- What about today's discussion brings you hope?
- Share a "high and/or low" point from the week.
- Where did you see Jesus this week?

6. Closing Prayer (5 minutes)

- Pray over any specific intentions or challenges shared by group members.
- Offer gratitude for the discussion and guidance as the group continues their Lenten journey.
- Conclude with a communal prayer like the Lord's Prayer.

7. Announcements and Sending (5 minutes)

- Share any upcoming events, readings, or service opportunities for Lent.
- Encourage members to check in with each other during the week and utilize their Lenten Journals.

The Pardon of the Sinful Woman

Luke 7:36-50

A Pharisee invited him to dine with him, and he entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. Now there was a sinful woman in the city who learned that he was at table in the house of the Pharisee. Bringing an alabaster flask of ointment, she stood behind him at his feet weeping and began to bathe his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them, and anointed them with the ointment.

When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, that she is a sinner." Jesus said to him in reply, "Simon, I have something to say to you." "Tell me, teacher," he said. "Two people were in debt to a certain creditor; one owed five hundred days' wages and the other owed fifty. Since they were unable to repay the debt, he forgave it for both. Which of them will love him more?" Simon said in reply, "The one, I suppose, whose larger debt was forgiven." He said to him, "You have judged rightly."

Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? When I entered your house, you did not give me water for my feet, but she has bathed them with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You did not give me a kiss, but she has not ceased kissing my feet since the time I entered. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she anointed my feet with ointment. So I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven; hence, she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little."

He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." The others at table said to themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" But he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Small Group Guidelines & Expectations

To ensure a respectful, meaningful, and Christ-centered small group experience, it's helpful to establish clear expectations. Here are some suggested rules:

1. Respect Confidentiality

- What is shared in the group stays in the group.
- Avoid gossip or sharing others' personal stories outside the group.

2. Listen Actively

- Give full attention when someone is speaking.
- Avoid interrupting or side conversations.

3. Participate, But Don't Dominate

- Everyone should have an opportunity to share.
- Be mindful of how much you're speaking and allow space for others.

4. Stay on Topic

- Keep the discussion focused on the scripture, lesson, or theme.
- If a conversation drifts too far, the leader should gently refocus.

5. Be Honest and Open

- Share authentically but within your comfort level.
- Encourage each other without judgment.

6. No Fixing, Preaching, or Debating

- Offer encouragement rather than trying to "fix" someone's struggles.
- Avoid theological debates that could become divisive.

7. Be Punctual and Committed

- Arrive on time and be consistent in attending.
- If you can't make it, let the leader or group know in advance.

8. Respect Differences

- Everyone is on their own spiritual journey.
- Show kindness and understanding even when opinions differ.

9. Be Prayerful

- Pray for each other throughout the week.
- Approach discussions with a spirit of humility and openness to God.