

## Lesson 8

# Loving People Who Don't Have It Together

## Class Objectives

- **We must actively work to get past our biases and external judgments ... and see the person and their need, Luke 7.37-38. This is agape love in action.**

The fact that Jesus allowed a sinful woman to approach and anoint him with costly perfume shows us that he was willing to ignore every social cue and focus on the person's greatest need.

- **We must come to recognize the opportunity that exists when “sinners” are loved.**

We don't ignore the sin, but we must recognize that it can be reversed when they receive God's love.

We are the channel for God's love to flow toward the person who doesn't have it all together.

- **When helping others who don't quite have things together, we must take the long-term view, factoring in God's ability to transform, 1 Corinthians 1.4-9.**

In 1 Corinthians Paul pointedly dealt with serious problems of division, carnality, pride and self-centeredness, and the abuse of spiritual gifts.

But he also took the long-term view, giving them the space to work things out, and trusting in God's ability to accomplish His purposes with them. Will we have the patience to bear with each other in love?

## Think About It

1. How do you react when a notorious sinner walks into the room?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Is their sinfulness so much an issue that you cannot see the person?

## What the Savior Said

Luke 7:36–39 (CSB)

### MUCH FORGIVENESS, MUCH LOVE

<sup>36</sup>Then one of the Pharisees invited him to eat with him. He entered the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. <sup>37</sup>And a woman in the town who was a sinner found out that Jesus was reclining at the table in the Pharisee's house. She brought an alabaster jar of perfume <sup>38</sup>and stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears. She wiped his feet with her hair, kissing them and anointing them with the perfume.

<sup>39</sup>When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "This man, if he were a prophet, would know who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—she's a sinner!"

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In first century, Jewish culture, it was considered virtuous if you invited a prominent teacher over for dinner, especially if the teacher were from out of town or had just taught at the synagogue. The Pharisee in our text, Simon, was probably not too serious in following Jesus. In fact, he most likely doesn't regard Jesus as a legitimate teacher at all, but because of Jesus' popularity with the people he decides to host a banquet in his home. Let's set the scene.

As a Pharisee, Simon is well connected with access to important people in the Jewish religious community and perhaps other community leaders. He is in the upper class as he has a home large enough to host a banquet.<sup>4</sup> He is dressed well . . . with clothing that identifies his status. Everything about him, his dwelling, the banquet, *everything*, shouts that he has arrived, he is a man of stature, he . . . *has it together*.

These types of events were often open to the public, who would gather and sit around the perimeter of the room listening and observing the conversation and information being discussed around the table where the important guests had gathered in the middle of the room. At appropriate times the commoners would even engage in conversation with the guest(s) of honor. Often poor people would come hoping to pick up some of the scraps off the table to feed their family. None of what we read in these opening verses is unusual for the time.

What is unusual however is what we read in v. 37. An immoral woman, most likely a prostitute, enters the gathering uninvited. That isn't so shocking. But what is, is that she has walked directly up to Jesus and he has let her approach him. As long as she remained in the background, everything was fine. But when she steps into the spotlight, people became upset.

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<sup>4</sup> See Luke 7.36. That they are "reclining" rather than sitting indicates that they are using couches rather than chairs and that this is a banquet, perhaps in honor of the famous guest teacher. See Keener, Craig S. *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993.

Unlike Simon, she doesn't have it together. In fact, everything she does violates the cultural norms. In fact, her actions are outright offensive, outrageous, and intolerable.

- She approaches the guest of honor and becomes emotional.
- She lets her hair loose.
- She kisses Jesus' feet ... an intimacy shunned in the culture.

How does Jesus respond to the woman? What can we learn from this?

How does Simon respond to the situation? What is going through his mind?

Read Luke 7.40-50. What can we learn about loving people who don't have it together?

Why were the woman's sins forgiven?

Do people who appear to *have it all together* actually *have it all together*? i.e., who was closer to God in this story ... the sinful woman ... or the lofty Pharisee? Explain.

## A Passage to Explore

1 Corinthians 1:4–9 (CSB)

### THANKSGIVING

<sup>4</sup>I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus, <sup>5</sup>that you were enriched in him in every way, in all speech and all knowledge. <sup>6</sup>In this way, the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you, <sup>7</sup>so that you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>8</sup>He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you will be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup>God is faithful; you were called by him into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

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This passage is amazing. What is the status of the Corinthians before God? What have they received?

Would you classify the Corinthian church as one who had it all together? What were some of the problems going on inside the church?

Did Paul ignore the problems? What does 1 Corinthians 1.4-9 tell us about his motive in the corrective measures he takes in this book? How does the long-term view factor in?

What can 1 Corinthians 1.4-9 teach us as we love those who don't have it together? Will we take the long-term view, give others the benefit of the doubt and give them the space and time to work things through?

## Life Application

This week, make some time each day to spend a few moments alone with God. Every day, we will consider how we can demonstrate our love by helping those who struggle and don't quite have it all together. Take your time with each passage(s) so you can concentrate on what is being said. Use the questions as a springboard for your positive thoughts throughout your day.

### *Monday*

Read John 4.7-26. Jot down some of your observations about the Samaritan woman. How does she not have it all together?

Now, on what basis does Jesus address her? What does he see?

How can we apply this to the way we look at and accept others?

### *Tuesday*

Read Mark 1.39-42. Describe the leper. How did he not have it all together?

What can we learn about the opening three words of Mark 1.41?

What will you do today to look through all the problems and see *the person* who desperately needs God?

## ***Wednesday***

Read Matthew 10.1-4. As you give careful consideration to the 12 apostles and who they are at this moment, pick out one or two and describe how they didn't have it all together. What would have been some of their weaknesses and shortcomings?

Jesus demonstrated great love, mercy, and grace in choosing them. How did His expression of love here produce an incredible opportunity? After His death, what would these men accomplish by His power? How did his love fuel and empower their transformation?

Who is someone you know that needs you to channel the love of God to them? What are some of the opportunities that could come about through their spiritual transformation?

## ***Thursday***

Read Acts 15.36-41. Do you think John Mark had it all together? Yes? No? Explain.

Read 2 Timothy 4.11. What was Paul's view of John Mark at this time?

What does the 2 Timothy passage teach us about forgiveness, patience, and reconciliation? How can we apply this as we think of those who we feel don't quite have it all together?

## ***Friday***

Read Mark 9.33; Luke 22.24; Matthew 17.4; Matthew 16.22-23; John 13.8; Matthew 26.74; Galatians 2.11. What are some of Peter's notable failures? Did he always have it all together?

How did Jesus respond to Peter in these situations?

As we learn about the life of Peter, how can we identify? How does Jesus respond to us? How will we respond to others?