

Small Group Guide

Leader Notes for September 20, 2026

Icebreaker

What is something you were really excited about when you first got it or started doing it, but over time the excitement wore off?

Observation

1. Read Luke 7:36–39. What differences do you notice between Simon's response to Jesus and the woman's response to Jesus?

Simon invited Jesus into his home, but the woman demonstrated an entirely different level of love and gratitude. She wept at Jesus' feet, wiped them with her hair, kissed His feet, and poured expensive perfume on them. Simon, meanwhile, focused his attention on what was wrong with her.

Follow up: What do their different responses reveal about how each of them viewed Jesus and themselves?

2. According to Luke 7:39, what was Simon thinking as he watched the woman worship Jesus?

Simon immediately labeled her by her sin. Instead of being amazed by Jesus or moved by the woman's response to Him, Simon became a critic. He was more conscious of her sin than of his own need for grace.

Follow up: Why can it become easier to notice what is wrong with other people than to recognize what God still needs to change in us?

Interpretation

3. Think about the scale from the message, critical on one end and compassionate on the other. What can a growing critical spirit reveal about our own hearts?

The longer we follow Jesus, the temptation can be to become increasingly comfortable with our own sin while becoming increasingly bothered by the sins of others. Simon's critical spirit revealed that he had lost sight of his own need for grace. The more we remember the grace we have received, the more compassion we should have for people who need it.

Follow up: What are some warning signs that we may be moving toward the critical side of that scale?

4. Read Luke 7:41–42. What was Jesus trying to help Simon understand through the story of the two debtors?

One person owed 500 pieces of silver and another owed 50. Their debts were different, but Jesus emphasized what they had in common, **neither could repay what they owed**. Simon was comparing himself to the woman and thinking, "I'm not like her." Jesus wanted him to understand that both of them needed grace. Simon had made sin into a **beauty contest**. He thought his own self-righteousness looked better than her sin.

Follow up: Why is comparing our sin with someone else's sin such an easy trap to fall into?

5. What was the real difference between Simon and the woman?

The difference wasn't that the woman needed grace and Simon didn't. They both had a debt they could never repay. **The difference was that she knew she needed grace**. Her awareness of her sin produced gratitude, humility, and love for Jesus. Simon's failure to recognize his own need produced criticism and spiritual pride.

Follow up: How can forgetting how much we need God's grace cause our love for Jesus to slowly grow cold?

Application

6. Read Luke 7:44–47. What connection does Jesus make between experiencing forgiveness and loving Him?

Jesus points Simon toward the woman's response and explains that her great love flowed from an awareness of great forgiveness. Our love for Jesus grows when we remain aware of how much grace we have received. This doesn't mean some people need grace while others don't. Every one of us has a debt we could never repay.

Follow up: What helps you maintain a fresh awareness of what Jesus has forgiven you of and done for you?

7. Read Luke 7:48–50. What do Jesus' final words to the woman teach us about how He wants forgiven people to live?

Jesus tells her, **"Your sins are forgiven," "Your faith has saved you," and "Go in peace."** He doesn't tell her to keep punishing herself or spend the rest of her life trying to make up for her past. He wants her to live in the freedom of the grace she has received.

Follow up: Why can it sometimes be difficult to accept God's forgiveness and truly "go in peace"?

8. Which of the three challenges from the message do you most need right now?

1. **Stop playing the critic.**

2. **Lay down my comparisons.**
3. **Drink from His fountain of grace daily.**

When our love for Jesus grows cold, the answer may not be learning something new about Jesus. It may be developing a fresh awareness of the grace we have already received from Him.

Follow up: What would putting that challenge into practice look like for you this week?

Challenge

Read Lamentations 3:22–23 each morning this week:

"The faithful love of the LORD never ends! His mercies never cease. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each morning."

Take a few moments each day to remember the grace you have received. Thank Jesus specifically for His forgiveness. Ask Him to help you see others with the same grace and compassion He has shown you. Remember, the fountain isn't a new salvation every morning. It is living every morning in the reality of the grace you've already received. Yesterday's failures don't exhaust today's grace.

Prayer

Father, thank You for the grace You have given us through Jesus. Forgive us for the times we are more aware of the sins of others than our own need for grace. Help us stop criticizing, stop comparing, and remember the debt we could never repay. Thank You that through Jesus our sins are forgiven and we can go in peace. Give us a fresh awareness of Your mercy each morning, and let the grace we have received from You produce greater love for Jesus and greater compassion for others. In Jesus' name we pray, amen.