**Live in Community**

 Small Group Study

**Volume Overview**

**Pursue Jesus**

“If you look for me wholeheartedly, you will find me.” ([Jeremiah 29:13](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Je29.13))

*Jesus’ offer is remarkably clear: If we look for Jesus, we’ll find Him. He’s not hiding from us, but closely connecting with Him does take us being intentional. We’re called to follow Him, to pursue Him. In this volume, we’ll look at how individuals pursued Jesus through the challenges of their circumstances. Pursuing Jesus is not only a mental exercise for personal growth, but it also means living out our faith in tangible ways: showing up, listening carefully, receiving grace, and trusting Him.*

**Session Overview**

**Receive Grace**

**Biblical Encounter:** A Sinner Comes Humbly to Jesus ([Luke 7:36–50](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk7.36-50))

**Outcome:** Don’t let past sin and shame keep you from pursuing Jesus.

*In this session, we’ll encounter the story of an unwelcome guest who interrupted a dinner to pour a bottle of perfume on Jesus’ feet. This woman’s past sin and reputation caused quite a stir among the other guests and with the host. After all, they thought that if Jesus was who He said He was, He should have known what type of woman she was and turned her away. Instead, Jesus used this interruption to give us a clear picture of how He addresses past sin and the shame that can prevent people from approaching Him. We’ll see a woman who came humbly to Jesus to express her love and devotion to Him.*

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| ***You Will Need*** *• Note cards, one per student* *• Pens, one per student****Getting Ready*** *• Set up a time trial course by placing pieces of paper randomly on the floor (or ground) as checkpoints for students to step on. This can be done inside or outside your meeting room.* *•* ***First time leading* Live *for Youth? Look here for the*** [**Facilitator Guide**](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf)***.*** |

*To access session content and videos from a computer, visit:* [***BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads***](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

**Welcome**

*Take this time to welcome everyone, introduce new students, learn names, and thank everyone for coming. Your friendliness here can create a comfort level that encourages student participation later.*

**Opening Prayer**

*Prayer thoughts: Thank God for every individual in the group and the opportunity to grow together as a group of Christ-followers as you study God’s Word together. Ask God for the Holy Spirit to speak to every student in an individual way so that they can understand and apply His Word to their everyday life.*

**Introduction**

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| **QUESTION**Have you ever had an embarrassing moment? If it’s not too personal, what happened? |

• *You may want to have a personal embarrassing moment to share first. This will help students push past their hesitation about sharing their experiences with the group.*

We’ve all had embarrassing moments in life. Embarrassment is, well, embarrassing. We’ve all been there. It’s one thing to be embarrassed when you’re alone. It’s quite another experience in a room full of people. Today, we’ll look at a Bible story where a group of people at a dinner thought a woman should have felt embarrassed. But Jesus talked with the woman, accepted her, and understood her at a deep level. Speaking of understanding others, let’s get to know each other better with our opening activity.

**Group Activity**

**Getting to Know You**

To begin this activity, I need everyone to pair up into groups of two—girls with girls and guys with guys. If possible, choose someone whose last name you don’t know. When you have a partner, sit next to one another.

• *Pause while kids pair up and sit together.*

• *If needed, help ensure students are grouped with someone they don’t know very well.*

One at a time, I’m going to read a list of questions that both of you must answer. The idea here is to help you get to know each other by talking about things you may never think to talk about. In fact, some of these questions may engage things you’ve never even thought about yourself before.

• *Ask as many questions as you have time for, giving time for students to share answers.*

If you could be any age for ten years, what age would you be?

If you could live anywhere else in the world for a year, where would it be?

If you could choose a different name for yourself, what name would you choose?

If you could be a different height, how tall would you be?

If you could know one thing better than anyone in the world, what would it be?

If you could speak any other language, which one would you choose?

If you had a million dollars and had to give it to a charity, which one would you choose?

If you could be any animal, which animal would you choose to be?

If you could be a movie star in any movie you’ve seen, which movie would you choose?

• *Optional: Ask each student to share something they learned about their partner.*

Great job getting to know each other better! We talked earlier about being embarrassed by something we did. But sometimes, we can be embarrassed about who we are or what our life is like. After asking some pretty weird questions, you may have discovered some things about each other you didn’t know. You also got to know your partner a little better. Up to this point, you may have had certain ideas about your partner for the activity. But you now may have a completely different thought about who they really are.

That’s a lot like what happened in today’s Bible story. We’ll encounter a woman who probably felt like people only knew her in one certain way. But her life was different because of Jesus. Others discovered that they didn’t really know her because of how Jesus can change a life. Let’s watch this video before we dive into our discussion.

**Watch**

**Consider What the Bible Says**

*Ensure each student has access to a Bible, preferably the same version.*

In today’s Bible account, Jesus was eating dinner when a woman approached Him. Because of her past, others at the dinner didn’t think she was worthy to be around Jesus. She had lived a sinful life, and they all knew it.

But Jesus viewed her differently. The woman decided to go into the dinner because she had heard that Jesus would be there. Imagine the emotions she must have experienced as she entered a room filled with people who knew her past. What they didn’t know was the extreme change that had taken place in her life.

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| **QUESTION**Have you ever entered a room full of people you didn’t know and wondered what they were thinking about you? What did you worry about? |

**Did You Know?**

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| Today’s Bible account includes an incredibly expensive gift—a perfumed ointment in an alabaster container. This container was a long-neck flask likely made of a soft material called alabaster—a white or light-colored variety of gypsum stone. The material, often imported from Egypt, was believed to help preserve ointments and perfumes. Though the passage does not say, if the cost of this perfume and container were similar to others in the Gospels, it could be worth as much as a year’s wages. |

**The Immoral Woman Gives Extravagantly**

Read [Luke 7:36–38](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk7.36-38).

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| **QUESTION**How do you think this woman felt while she was crashing the meal? |

One reason we don’t like being embarrassed in a situation like this is it can make us feel shame. Feeling out of place for whatever reason can be very awkward. But embarrassment often stems from the belief that we don’t belong or did something bad. Shame comes from the belief that we *are* bad because of things that happened or just are.

This woman probably felt both embarrassment from her sin and shame because of how people treated her. Sure, she might have been embarrassed about interrupting a dinner she wasn’t invited to. But things were no longer the same for her. So, she decided to bring something with her—something that had great value.

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| **QUESTION**How does the Bible describe the woman in the story? |

Even how the woman is described is a reminder of her shame. The Bible doesn’t tell us a lot about this woman, other than she was immoral. We don’t even know her name. What we do know is that she was a sinner. Notice how she came humbly to Jesus despite her sins.

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think the woman wept as she anointed Jesus’ feet? |

Later in the story, we find out that she has been forgiven, and she’s there in response to that. Her tears and displays of love were an outpouring from that change. We should feel emotional when we recognize all that Jesus has forgiven us for. The change this woman experienced in her life after meeting Jesus had great meaning.

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| **QUESTION**What does it say about this woman that she chose to ignore what others might have thought while she washed Jesus’ feet? |

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| **QUESTION**Have you ever been in a situation where you didn’t care what others thought of you following Jesus or worshipping Him? Tell us about it. |

• *On this questions and others, you may want to have a story of a time when this was your response. It will help others feel safe in answering.*

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| **QUESTION**What message might the woman be sending Jesus by washing His feet with expensive perfume and then drying them with her hair? |

The extreme change in her life, her humility, and her not caring what others thought of her love for Jesus were evident to those watching. Humility and shame are very different things. Humility brings you to Jesus, and shame tries to make you hide from Him. The woman pushed past her own shame. She understood the forgiveness Jesus had for her. The change inside her resulted in an outward change in her life.

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| **QUESTION**What was your response to realizing what Jesus has done in your life? You didn’t wash His feet like the woman, but how have you shown that you’ve changed? |

**The Pharisee Who Didn’t Really Know**

Read [Luke 7:39–46](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk7.39-46).

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| **QUESTION**What did the Pharisee seem to be thinking when he saw the woman with Jesus? |

The Pharisee didn’t think the woman was worthy of being with Jesus. But Jesus used the situation as an opportunity to teach the Pharisee, a Jewish religious leader, something he didn’t understand. This woman’s beautiful expression of love was the outward sign of the great internal forgiveness she had received. She was moving forward despite her past.

There are moments like this one when Jesus teaches us through the lives of others. He may do this through the life of someone from the Bible, or He may teach us through someone in our life. Either way, He wants us to see how He brings about change in people’s lives to change ours. He wants to show His depth of love and forgiveness.

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| **QUESTION**Have you ever judged someone by their actions or the way they expressed their love to Jesus? What happened? |

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| **QUESTION**What are some differences between the way the woman and the Pharisee engaged with Jesus? |

One difference was how they connected with Jesus. The woman came in humility to where Jesus was. She didn’t try to pull Jesus to where she was. She heard He was somewhere, and she went there.

On the other hand, the Pharisee asked Jesus to come to his place, his home. While the Pharisee’s invitation may have been kind, it was certainly the more humble gesture to move to Jesus rather than ask Him to move.

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| **QUESTION**What does it mean to have humility? |

This woman showed humility as she came to Jesus without pride or arrogance. She saw how Jesus was seated and positioned herself to serve His needs. Though her past may have left her feeling like others at the meal were judging her, humbly serving Jesus was far more important in that moment.

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| **QUESTION**Have you ever felt others were judging you for things you have done in your past and no longer do? Is anyone willing to share an example? |

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| **QUESTION**Why is it others have a difficult time accepting the fact that people can change from who they once were? |

**Her Sins Were Forgiven**

Read [Luke 7:47–50](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Lk7.47-50).

We see here that Jesus knew the woman’s sins. He stated that her sins were many. The men at the dinner also knew about the woman and her sin, but they had a different reaction from that of Jesus. They even questioned Jesus and His authority to forgive sin.

We can learn a great deal from this story. Just like the woman, we can come humbly to Jesus, expressing our love and our need for His mercy. Jesus knows our sins as well and stands ready to forgive each and every one of them.

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| **QUESTION**What do you think it means when a person who is forgiven little shows only little love? |

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| **QUESTION**How might this woman’s life had been different if she had thought she was just too sinful to approach Jesus? |

This woman needed mercy at some point, and Jesus had offered it. She just had to receive it. That started with coming to Jesus despite her shame. If she had never come to Jesus, she would have continued to live in her sin, shame, and guilt. She might never have experienced God’s love and grace. And we may have never known the story of her kindness to Jesus in response.

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| **QUESTION**How do you suppose the woman felt when she heard Jesus say, “Your sins are forgiven”? |

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| **QUESTION**How is your life different knowing Jesus forgives your sin? |

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| **QUESTION**What is something we can all learn from this Bible story? |

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| **QUESTION**In what ways might the Holy Spirit have been involved in this encounter? |

**Reflect**

**Don’t let past sin and shame keep you from pursuing Jesus.**

Going to Jesus is the way we receive peace from our past. Trying to hide it or fix it ourself can bring about more anxiety. We may have shame, but there is no shame that Jesus can’t heal. Jesus stands ready to give us mercy when we come to Him with humility.

This woman knew that she needed Jesus. But she didn’t just come to Jesus to get something *from* Him. She came to give something *to* Him. She anointed Jesus’ feet with expensive perfume, wiping it up with her hair and her tears. It was more than words. Her actions spoke volumes to Jesus and the people around them.

**Listen to God**

Let’s take time to consider how our life demonstrates a real trust in the Bible. These questions are meant to serve as a conversation between you and God. Sharing your responses with the group is completely voluntary.

• *Pause for a few moments of silent reflection before asking students if they want to share.*

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| **QUESTION**Have there been moments in your life when past sin kept you from following Jesus? What helped you work through it? |

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| **QUESTION**Is there a sin in your life that you feel ashamed of? If so, what do you need to do to overcome it? (*Personal reflection only, answers are not to be shared*.) |

In a moment, we’re going to close in prayer. As we do, I encourage each of you to take your sin and shame to Jesus. Ask for His forgiveness and come to Him. Accept the peace He offers.

**Activate**

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| ***You Will Need*** *• Note cards, one per student* *• Pens, one per student**No prep needed for this activity.* |

We may not have an expensive perfume to give Jesus, but we can show our love for Jesus and accept the forgiveness He offers. Each of you will receive a note card and pen. I want you to reflect on what Jesus has forgiven you for. Then write down how you can demonstrate how grateful you are for Jesus’ forgiveness in your life.

• *Give students time to pray and then write their thoughts on the note card.*

Let me encourage you to hang on to this note card as a reminder. You may want to put it in your Bible or in your room where you will see it and remember all that Jesus has done for you.

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| **Salvation Opportunity***Include this if you think there may be some in the group who do not have a personal relationship with Jesus.*Maybe you’re sitting there, and you can’t write anything on your card because you haven’t gone to Jesus for forgiveness yet. Now is a great time to do it! Sometimes pursuing Jesus is as simple as saying yes to Him despite the shame that tries to keep us hidden from Him. Jesus’ love for you is bigger than shame. Jesus’ love for you is bigger than your sin. It’s why He died on the Cross for you. He paid the price for every sin, and He desires a relationship with you.**Is anyone here that we can pray for who doesn’t have a relationship with Jesus or wants to renew their relationship with Him?***Take a moment to acknowledge those who respond, and thank them for their desire to make things right between themselves and God. Pray with them as you close in prayer or after the group time is over. Following group time, talk more about where they are in their walk with God and how you might be able to help.* |

**Conclusion**

The woman with the expensive perfume didn’t let her sin keep her from what she really needed—Jesus. It was her humility that led her to the feet of Jesus, even though her shame would have pushed her to hide from Him. For her, coming to Jesus in humility meant receiving His mercy. She became an example to others of what humble pursuit of Jesus looks like when we know we need Him. Jesus doesn’t demand perfection before we can come to Him. He is simply calling us to come.

**Prayer**

Jesus, thank You for Your endless grace over our lives. You choose us despite our sin. We choose to come to You despite our shame. Thank You for Your love. I pray that You would help us to live in humility and grace every day. We know that we need You because we’re nothing without You. In Your name, we pray. Amen.

**Dismissal**

Don’t forget the daily devotions on the app. These devotions give you time in God’s Word on your own as you put into practice what we’re learning together. I look forward to seeing you next time as we continue our journey in God’s Word.