



# STORIES **AND** RITUALS

## LESSON 22

### Stories & Rituals: The Bible in Broad Strokes

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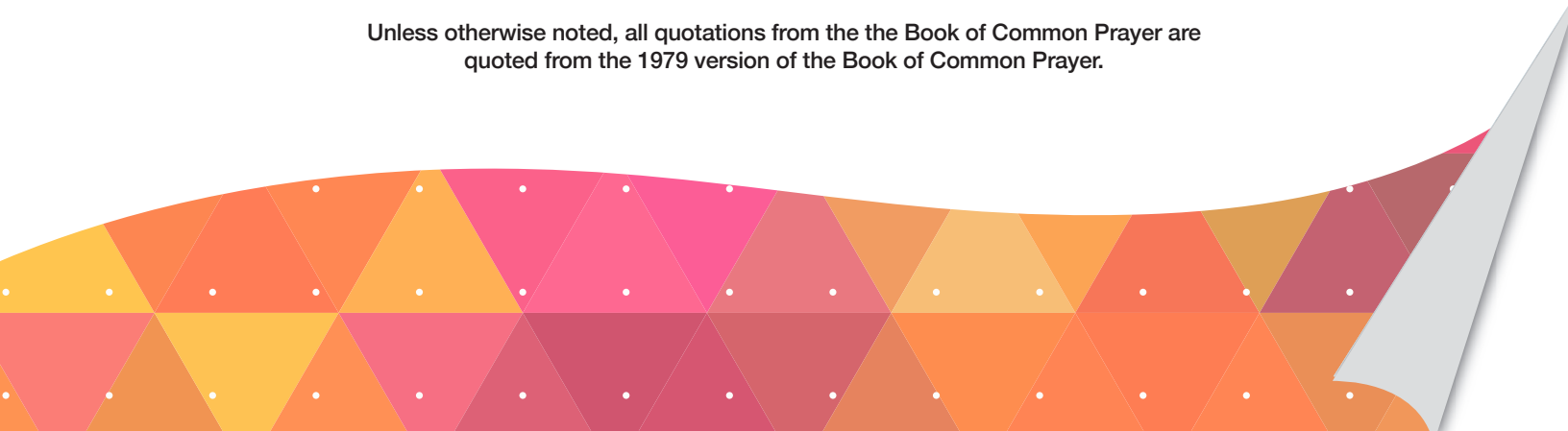
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# A Sinful Woman Weeps at Jesus' Feet

**Texts:** Luke 7:36-50

**Big Idea:** God gives us love and forgiveness.

## Lesson Objectives

### Participants will:

1. Illustrate that God accepts who we are and makes us new by completing a group challenge.
2. Recognize that God gives us love and forgiveness by recalling the story of a sinful woman at Jesus' feet.
3. Demonstrate an understanding of God's redemptive love by participating in a prayer ritual.

### ACTIVITY (TIME)

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Dive In (10 minutes)  
**Group Check-In**

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Community Builder (15 minutes)  
**Something from Nothing**

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The Story (15 minutes)  
**A Sinful Woman Weeps at  
Jesus' Feet**

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The Ritual (15 minutes)  
**Broken Hearts**

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Dig Deeper (10 minutes)  
**Thistle Farms**

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Wrap it Up (5 minutes)  
**Closing Prayer**

### MATERIALS NEEDED

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- Nothing

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- Garbage bag filled with junk
- Rolls of duct tape
- Markers • Paint • Glue

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- Copy of Lesson Sheet 22.1

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- Soft, instrumental music (optional)
- Method for playing music (optional)
- Lesson Sheet 22.2
- Scissors • Markers • Tape

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- Smartphones, tablets, or other devices  
that can connect to the Internet

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- Nothing

# LESSON OVERVIEW



## What's the Story?

The story in Luke 7:36-50 may be a familiar one to your group. It has themes of inclusion and exclusion; the imperfection of the choices made by people; and the redemptive love of God – all relevant messages to us today. In this lesson Jesus is at the home of a Pharisee. While there a woman from the city who heard he was there, enters with an alabaster jar of ointment and begins to weep and bathe his feet.

It's an awkward scene that Jesus turns into a teachable moment about love and forgiveness. We continue to use this story to teach about love and forgiveness today, too.



## What's the “Big Idea?”

The big idea for today's lesson is that *God gives us love and forgiveness*. Although the Bible story is set in ancient times, its message is timeless. People still make choices that separate them from God. But, when we fall into sin, we can feel so much shame and be so hard on ourselves that we do not remember how God takes our brokenness and makes us whole again through love and forgiveness. Especially for young believers, it's a message worth hearing over and over.



## What's the Symbol?

Because this story centers on Jesus' forgiveness, find a heart for your altar. You may be inclined to use more than one. They can be three-dimensional and made of stone or wood, or they can be made of paper. Let your heart lead you and listen to what would “talk” to your group and what is easily available for you to use.



## What's the Ritual?

Participants will be invited to reflect on a time of brokenness when they needed forgiveness and then write it anonymously on a paper heart. The hearts are torn in half to symbolize their brokenness and placed around the floor. Participants will be asked to spread their arms over the broken hearts and pray for the situations and people in the room. The hearts are taped together and placed on the altar to symbolize God's redemptive forgiveness.



## Setting Up Your Space

Create a sacred space by designating a table to use as an “altar.” Drape your worship area with fabric if you can. Place a large cross and candles on the altar. Gather heart symbols and place them around the altar, too. Gather the other supplies needed for the Community Builder, Ritual, and Dig Deeper activities, if you plan to complete them.

## DIVE IN (10 MINUTES)

### Group Check-In

#### *Materials:*

- Nothing

#### During the session:

- Open your session with a quick prayer. Use this one or a prayer of your own:  
**Holy Lord, open our eyes, ears, and hearts to see your love and faithfulness in the world around us. Help us see your love for us in your Word. In Jesus name we pray. Amen**
- Let's start our time together by sharing some of the great and not so great things that have happened to us this week. What were the highs and lows of your week? Go around the group and invite everyone to share.

## COMMUNITY BUILDER (15 MINUTES)

### Something from Nothing

#### *Materials:*

- Garbage bag filled with junk
- Rolls of duct tape (one per team)
- Markers
- Paint
- Glue

#### Before the session:

- Fill a large garbage bag with "junk." Examples of items you can use are: empty containers, boxes, toilet paper and paper towel tubes, mismatched socks, craft supply odds and ends like google eyes or buttons, chenille sticks, etc. If you have a large group, you may wish to fill more than one bag.

#### During the session:

- Divide the group into teams of three or four each.
- Invite each team to take a handful of the junk items, one roll of duct tape, and some paint or markers.
- Give each team about 5 minutes (or longer, depending on your group) to create the weirdest, funniest, most artistic sculpture using items from their junk pile.
- After groups have finished creating, invite them to share their sculptures with everyone.

## COMMUNITY BUILDER - CONTINUED

- After everyone has shared their creations, discuss the following questions:
- **Was it easy or hard to make something new from these materials? Why?** *[Answers will vary. Accept all answers.]*
- **How did you feel when you took “junk” and made it something new?** *[Answers will vary. Accept all answers.]*
- **How does God take our “junk” and makes something new out of us?** *[Answers will vary. Accept all answers.]*



## THE STORY (15 MINUTES)

### A Sinful Woman Weeps at Jesus' Feet

#### *Materials:*

- Copy of Lesson Sheet 22.1

#### Before the session:

- Make a copy of Lesson Sheet 22.1
- Practice reading through the story several times so you are familiar with it.

#### During the session:

- Tell the story on Lesson Sheet 22.1.
- After the story ask: **What is this story telling us about God?** *[Answers will vary but may include: God's word touches the hearts of many people, God is accepting of many different people, God loves all, God forgives us, etc.]*
- **What is this story telling us about humanity?** *[Answers will vary but may include: People in every age and time experience brokenness in their lives, we make assumptions about people that keep us from loving them, we look for forgiveness, etc.]*
- **What is the story telling us about the world?** *[Answers will vary, but may include: Sometimes the world is not forgiving, the world is in need of forgiveness, there are many people in the world who need to know the love of Christ, etc.]*



# THE RITUAL

## (15 MINUTES)

## Broken Hearts

### Materials:

- Soft, instrumental music (*optional*)
- Method for playing music (*optional*)
- Lesson Sheet 22.2
- Scissors
- Markers
- Tape

### Before the session:

- Make copies of Lesson Sheet 22.2 for each participant. Cut out the paper hearts.

### During the session:

- If you are using music, start it playing softly.
- Give each participant a heart.
- **Spend a few minutes reflecting on times in your own life when you felt bad about something you did, or didn't do. Think about an action or event that made you feel separate from others, or maybe a little embarrassed or ashamed of yourself. Write it down on your heart. Don't include your name or any identifying factors. Make it an anonymous offering of "brokenness" to God.**
- Give participants time to think and write.
- **Tear your heart in half to symbolize our "broken hearts," and then place them on the floor.**
- Ask the group to form a circle around the broken hearts and stretch out their arms to cover them. Invite everyone to say a silent prayer to yourself, for these situations under the feet and hands of the people in the room.
- Pray this prayer or one of your own: **Lord we come to you as we are – people who have had broken hearts. We ask for your forgiveness. Heal us and replace our brokenness with your love. Amen.**
- Play a worship song (*optional*) and have participants tape the hearts together and place them on your altar space.

# DIG DEEPER

## (10 MINUTES)

### Thistle Farms

#### *Materials:*

- Smartphones, tablets, or other devices that can connect to the Internet

#### Before the session:

- Thistle Farms ([www.thistlefarms.org](http://www.thistlefarms.org)) is an organization devoted to helping women who are victims of prostitution, human trafficking, genocide and addiction. (This relates to the “woman with many sins” in the story!)
- Download videos or digital media kits to use in planning a service project for your group.
- Research whether there are related non-profits in your area. Organizations like Women’s Shelters, Addiction Recovery Centers, Human Trafficking Prevention Centers, etc. Contact them regarding projects your group could do to help them.

#### During the session:

- Ask participants to visit the Thistle Farms website ([www.thistlefarms.org](http://www.thistlefarms.org)). Find the mission webpage and begin to explore who they are and what they do. (Note: Becca Stevens, an Episcopal priest, started this group.)
- Have the group watch a video on the farm’s mission and explore the website for ways your group can help with the work.
- Ask participants to view their 24 principles for living at this link: <http://thistlefarms.org/pages/our-mission>
- Discuss how your group might use any of these principles.
- Brainstorm ideas on ways you can help Thistle Farm. For example, you can join the Hope Candle Campaign, invite a speaker from Thistle Farms (or a related non-profit) to speak at your church, learn about the farm through web and social media outlets, etc.
- As a group, create a list of projects you can complete together. Pick one and follow through with completing the project. Encourage your church to get involved!

# WRAP IT UP

## (5 MINUTES)

### Closing Prayer

Invite participants to share any prayer requests they may have for the week. Then, close with prayer. Use the following prayer, or use your own:

**Please let me get out of the way.**

**Remove all my old ego stuff.**

**Let me make this day an offering and be open to the spirit moving---in my talk, in my conversations, and in my heart.**

**Forgive me all my impatience and worry.**

**Thank you for loving all of us.**

**Thank you for this chance to make new friends and for the work of Thistle Farms.**

**Amen.**

**--The Rev. Becca Stevens**



# Lesson Sheet 22.1

## A Sinful Woman Weeps at Jesus' Feet

### A story from Luke:

A Pharisee named Simon invited Jesus to dine with him at his house. Jesus took his place at the table, and as was the custom then, he reclined at the table with his feet stretched out on the couch behind him.

A woman from the city, who was described as having many sins, heard that he was eating at the Pharisee's house and entered carrying an alabaster jar of ointment. In those times, houses seem to have been more open than today's houses, allowing people to enter unexpectedly. She stood behind Jesus, at his feet. She probably intended to anoint Jesus' head, a symbol of respect, but was overcome with humility and thankfulness, and began to weep, her tears falling on his feet, and she used her hair to dry them off. She started kissing his feet and anointing them with her ointment, weeping and showing great gratitude and humility. The Pharisee felt embarrassed by this and thought to himself that if Jesus really were a great prophet, he would know that the woman had led a sinful life and not allow her to behave in this way.

Jesus, of course, knew in his heart what his host was thinking, and posed a question to him. He said, "Imagine that there are two people who owe you money: one owes a little bit, and other owes a lot. Both of them can't pay, so you forgive both debts. Which person would love you more?" The host replied, "The one who owed more money."

Jesus said he was correct and turned his attention toward the woman. He pointed out that when he arrived at Simon's house, he was not given water to bathe his feet, yet the woman bathed his feet with her tears and dried them off with her hair. She anointed his feet with ointment. Even though she had many sins, she was forgiven because she had shown great love through her actions. He then said, "But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little."

Jesus told the woman, "Your sins are forgiven." This caused the other people at the table to talk among themselves and ask: "Who exactly is Jesus, this man who forgives sins?" Jesus told the woman her faith had saved her and to go in peace.

# Lesson Sheet 22.2

## Broken Hearts

