

## Session 4: The Uninvited Guest

## SESSION GOALS

*Every session has a point—what each participant should walk away from the discussion knowing, feeling, and doing.*

**Main Idea:** Recognizing our own sin and accepting God's forgiveness frees us to extend grace to others.

**Head Change:** To know that we are no better than other sinners, equally in need of forgiveness.

**Heart Change:** To feel compassion for others that comes from humility in recognizing our own sin.

**Life Change:** To acknowledge our own sinful tendencies and decide to forgive those who hurt us.

Each session in *Table Talks* corresponds to a video segment featuring a recipe. Feel free to watch the video as a group, make the recipe together, and use the icebreaker question below to spark conversation while you eat.

**OPEN**

**When the headlines announce another scandal, what is your first reaction? Why do you think you react that way?**

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## VIEW

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## REVIEW

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one of the religious leaders in Israel. Pharisees were generally wary of—and sometimes hostile to—Jesus, so the invitation is somewhat surprising.

## Have you ever received a surprising invitation?

**If you attended the event, how were you**

## welcomed?

Bianca referenced the value of hospitality in Jesus's culture. Guests were to be treated with honor, including a welcoming kiss and an offer to wash their dusty, sandal-wearing feet. Look back at verses 44–46. **How did Simon treat Jesus?**

### What does his behavior as the host tell us about his attitude toward Jesus?

Bianca also explained some of the social customs of Jesus's time. Dinner party guests reclined to eat—their tables were low to the ground and surrounded by comfortable pillows. Guests would lie down, propped on their elbows with their feet behind and to the side of them. The sinful woman entered without objection likely because the doors would have been left open for onlookers to gather around the edge of the room due to Jesus's fame. **How do details about cultural customs help you understand this scene more clearly?**

The woman who came to see Jesus had a reputation for living a sinful lifestyle. No details of that sin are given. But anyone with a reputation for sin would have been avoided and condemned by some religious leaders as an outcast from the spiritual life in the community. But she was on a mission to bless Jesus. Approaching him at the Pharisee's home took courage. **When have you risked censure or rejection to do something you felt God had prompted you to do? What feelings dominated you during that event? Would you do it again?**

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God's plan to restore his people to relationship with him is a central theme threading its way through the biblical story. From the Garden of Eden in Genesis to the New Creation in Revelation, God constantly forgives rebellious, hard-hearted people. The word *forgive* applies in a variety of scenarios, spiritual and material. For instance, in Luke 7, both financial debts and sins are forgiven. In what sense are debts and disobedience related? Let's explore the concept of forgiveness in the Bible.

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## Who is forgiving whom? What is being forgiven?

Let's explain the lender's forgiveness using different terms. For instance, "The lender waved away their debt." **How else could you describe what happened?**

**When have you been forgiven a debt, monetary or otherwise? How did you react when you learned you'd been forgiven? What happened next as a result? (Did you experience freedom to pay other obligations, to give or save? Were you able to pursue a different goal? Try to connect the events.)**

Just as being forgiven a tangible debt influences our everyday lives, so being forgiven for actions and words affects our spiritual lives, which leads us to the next question.

*How does forgiveness influence our relationship with God?*

Read Luke 7:44–50. Jesus explains the woman’s motivation to Simon, then tells her, “Your sins are forgiven.” **In what ways are the financial debts in the parable different from the woman’s debt of sin? How are the debts similar?**

If money is owed, it can be given back. But if you have hurt someone, can that action be reversed or undone? Of course not. Likewise, the woman's sins happened and could not be blotted out. But, when Jesus told her, "Your sins are forgiven," he was releasing her from the guilt she carried for those sins. He was allowing her to depart from the punishment of what she'd earned through her actions. She no longer owed God any spiritual debts for her sins. **How can knowing you are**

**free from guilt propel you to a greater sense of peace with yourself and with God?**

The New Testament is full of references pointing to the forgiveness Christ offers those who trust him. A sampling:

Romans 4:7 — "Blessed are those whose lawless acts are forgiven and whose sins are covered."

Colossians 1:14 — "In him we have redemption,  
the forgiveness of sins."

1 John 1:9 — “If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

**According to the quoted verses above, what is required to be forgiven?**

## What changes for us after we receive God's forgiveness?

## What do we learn about God's character when he forgives us?

Jesus offers us freedom from the guilt of our sin. He paid our debt on the cross, declared those who trust in him to be righteous, and intends us to live in freedom—from shame, guilt, fear—and in holiness. **What freedom have you found since accepting Jesus's forgiveness?**

When God's forgiveness restores our relationship with him, he expects us to replicate that harmony with those around us.

*How should our forgiven status with God influence our relationships with others?*

Bianca closed the session with an astute observation: Often, we start out like the sinful





## LAST WORD

Our lives are filled with occasions in which we owe others. We may owe something tangible, but more often we tend to need forgiveness for emotional and spiritual debts. The church looks more like Jesus when we reflect his grace toward us in our relationships with each other. The more we recognize our sin, the more we love and thank God for forgiving us like the women with the alabaster jar. We wash others' feet and offer our very best to be a fragrance to the world as our way to love God. As 1 John 4:19 reminds us, "We love because he first loved us."

## DEEPER WALK

**Reflect:** Spend time thinking about the forgiveness you've received from God. Whatever your story, his love is greater than your sin. How have you responded to his grace? In what ways might you need to humble yourself to him again and confess your need for him?

**Host:** Prepare and host a small gathering, perhaps using the soup and sandwich recipe from today's session. As a small sign of grace, prepare a small gift to send home with everyone. Perhaps print a recipe card, or purchase a set of small decorative kitchen towels, or bake an extra loaf of bread for everyone. Nothing fancy—just a little something extra to say “thanks for coming.”

**Serve:** Find an opportunity to serve tangible needs in your community. Spend time “washing the feet” of those in humbler circumstances.

**Pray:** Ask God to help you identify the ways in which he has forgiven you and specific ways you can reach out to forgive those who've hurt you or bless those who are hurting.

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Written by Kelly Matthews.

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