

# The Moralist and the Immoralist

Encountering Jesus - part 9

Luke 7:36-50; April 6, 2014

## DAY 1: The Moralist & the Immoralist

1. This week we'll study two opposite kinds of people: the Immoralist and the Moralist. The "**Immoralist's**" objective is to feel good now, as often as possible. They believe that they can do what they want "as long as it doesn't hurt anyone." Of course, the Immoralist believes they aren't hurting anyone. But try asking the people they claim not to be hurting to see if they share the same opinion he does!

2. The second person is the "**Moralist.**" A moralist is someone who believes that they are "good enough." This can be good enough "with" God or on their own. They believe they're not "bad."

3. "Good enough" presupposes that (a) God grades on the curve, and (b) He'll grade like you would. Those are two HUGE assumptions! There are three different kinds of moralists: the atheistic moralist, the "Good Guy" moralist, or even a "Christian" moralist, but all miss the boat!

4. There are two main characters in this week's story: a Moralist and an Immoralist. Simon the Pharisee hosts a dinner party in Jesus' "honor." Suddenly, a woman "of the town" crashes the party. Let's pick up the story.

*Luke 7:36 Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table.*

5. A Pharisee was a Jewish religious leader that was the quintessential Moralist. All of his outward deeds were done scrupulously. No one could accuse him of doing anything wrong. He would be seen as a "pillar of the community."

*Luke 7:37 When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume,*

6. Who "crashes" the dinner party?

7. What does Luke tell us about her?

8. What would you guess is going through the Pharisee's mind toward this uninvited "guest?"

9. What would have been going through your mind if you were hosting this dinner party?

10. Do you think of yourself more like the Moralist or the Immoralist? Why?

## **DAY 2: The forgiven Immoralist**

*Luke 7:37 When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume,*

*Luke 7:38 ... and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.*

1. Why do you think the woman showed up at the dinner party thrown for Jesus?
2. Why do you think she brought an alabaster jar of perfume?
3. Where does she go once inside the Pharisee's house?
4. In that culture, everyone ate around a table about one foot off the ground. Instead of sitting in chairs, people reclined around the table, resting on an elbow.
5. As the woman is standing behind Jesus, what does she begin to do?
6. What do you think prompts her tears?
7. Her tears dripped down off her face and onto His bare feet. If you had been her, with everyone staring at you from around the table, what would you have felt?
8. How does she begin to handle the problem of wetting Jesus' feet?
9. After trying to clean the mess she made on his feet, she kisses His feet. Why?
10. She then pours perfume on His feet. Why do you think she did that?

### DAY 3: The "justified" Moralist

1. Each downward step of the woman resulted in greater disgust for Simon the Pharisee. She was uninvited! She was *that* woman! "She's ruining my dinner party. She's making a terrible scene in front of my friends and in front of Jesus. I'll be the laughing stock of the town and among my friends." This whole scene just became too much for Simon the Pharisee.

*Luke 7:39 When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."*

2. The final act of the woman was to open her jar of perfume. As the fumes from that jar wafted through the room, what do you think went through the Pharisee's mind?

3. How does Simon's contempt show itself toward the woman?

4. How does Simon's contempt show itself toward Jesus?

5. Does Simon see anything wrong with himself at this time?

6. How does the idea of being critical and contemptuous of Jesus Christ strike you?

7. Would Simon say his critical spirit and contempt were justified?

8. Jesus tells Simon a story.

*Luke 7:41 "Two men were in debt to a banker. One owed five hundred silver pieces, the other fifty. Neither of them could pay up, and so the banker canceled both debts. Now which of them will love him more?"*

*Luke 7:43 Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled."*

*Luke 7:43 "You have judged correctly," Jesus said.*

9. Why do you think Jesus told Simon this story?

10. Which of the two, the Immoralist or the Moralist, currently has the greater "debt?"

11. Why?

#### **DAY 4: The forgiven Immoralist compared to the unrepentant Moralist**

*Luke 7:44 Then he turned toward the woman and said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I came into your house."*

*Luke 7:44... "You did not give me any water for my feet,"*

*Luke 7:44 "...but she wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair."*

*Luke 7:45 "You did not give me a kiss ..."*

*Luke 7:45 "...but this woman, from the time I entered, has not stopped kissing my feet."*

*Luke 7:47 "Therefore, I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven—for she loved much. But he who has been forgiven little loves little."*

1. Jesus compares how the Moralist and Immoralist treated him and others.
2. Middle eastern culture had water and towels ready for sandaled travelers to wash the dust and dirt from their feet. How did Simon, who was the host do in this department?
3. How did the woman, who was not the host do in this department?
4. Middle easterners greeted each other much like they do today, with a kiss on the cheek. How did Simon the Pharisee do?
5. How did the woman do?
6. In Luke 7:47, Jesus tells what made the difference. How would you summarize what Jesus is saying?
7. How's your capacity to love? Are you closer to the forgiven Immoralist or the unrepentant Moralist?
8. How much of your love for people flows out of an awareness of how much you've been forgiven?

**DAY 5: Moralism is no substitute for forgiveness.**

1. Think back about the story Jesus told Simon. One man owed 5,000 silver pieces, while another owed 50,000 silver pieces. Both debts were forgiven. Which man would be more grateful?

2. This story is "overlaid" on Simon and the woman. She is now a woman who loves richly because she's forgiven so much! Why do you think this is true?

3. Why do you think Simon loves so poorly?

4. Don't get this lesson backward! We are NOT forgiven because we love so well. We love well BECAUSE we're aware of the enormity of how much we've been forgiven!

5. Let's finish this story:

*Luke 7:48 Then Jesus said to her, "Your sins are forgiven."*

*Luke 7:49 The other guests began to say among themselves, "Who is this who even forgives sins?"*

6. How are Simon's own dinner guests like Simon?

7. They are contemptuous of Jesus, just like Simon had been. Did they pick up the message of the story Jesus told about the two debtors?

8. How was their love "quotient" doing right then?

9. Think about the Moralism of any kind--atheist, "Good Guy," or "Christian." Do you relate to the Moralism? If so, how does the story we studied this week strike you at the end of the week?

10. It is impossible to be a Moralism ("I'm good enough.") and love well. Instead, what people will sense from you is criticism, nit-picking, and contempt.

11. What is your biggest take away from this week's study?