

## Define the Relationship

Yada

Frankton – 01/11/15

Scripture: Luke 7.36-48 Jesus anointed by immoral woman

Proposition: Jesus wants an intimate relationship with us

We started talking last week about the difference between being a [SLIDE] fan of Jesus and being a follower of Jesus. As quickly and simply as I can, here's the difference, and this comes from Kyle Idleman's book, *Not a Fan*. A fan is an enthusiastic admirer. It's the guy who goes to the football game with no shirt on and a painted chest. He stands and cheers for his team. He's got a signed jersey hanging on the wall of his family room (much to his wife's chagrin). But he's never in the game. He sacrifices nothing to be a fan of his team. And truth be told, give his team a few losing seasons and his enthusiasm begins to wane. On the other hand, a follower makes sacrifices. He gets in the game. Even when the losses pile up, the follower keeps following: doing what the leader did. That's a follower. So let's get continue talking about fans and followers of Jesus.

Several times throughout the gospels we read about a group of men who are the religious leaders of the day. They are known as the Pharisees. They aren't bad guys, just a little miss-directed. You remember them: they are always the ones who are testing Jesus, trying to trip him up and show him as the "false god" he really is. These Pharisees knew a lot about God. When someone wanted to play God Trivial Pursuit, or God-opoly they would dominate the game. They knew about God, but what we discover is they really didn't know him. In Matthew, Jesus describes them this way: [SLIDE] *These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.* [15.8] In other words, these men had plenty of knowledge about God, but they didn't really know him. Unfortunately, that same description seems to fit a lot of Christians I know. Like the Pharisees, many of them have studied about God, but they never surrendered their hearts to him. This is one of the things that separates the fans from the followers: the difference between knowledge and intimacy.

In Luke 7, Jesus has been invited over for dinner by one of these Pharisees. His name was Simon, a common Near-Eastern name of the time. Most likely, Simon extended his invitation to Jesus after Jesus finished his teaching for the day. For Simon, having a rabbi as well-known as Jesus over for a meal would have been considered a religious coup. It would be like you having Billy Graham or Adam Hamilton over to your house for dinner. Jesus should have been considered the guest of honor for this meal, but it quickly becomes apparent that Simon was spending time with Jesus out of a sense of "look who's at my house" instead of a desire to honor Jesus or to get to know him.

In our day, if we invite someone of Jesus' stature over for dinner there are probably a few things that we would do to get ready for the meal. The house would get cleaned up, or at least a "lick-and-a-promise." We would most assuredly get out the matching and not stained placemats. Some people would get out the good china or at least serve or matching dishes other than Chinet. You would greet him at the door with big smiles and firm handshakes or hugs, followed by a gracious, "Come on in." The guest would get to set in the easy chair both before and after dinner and at the

## Define the Relationship

head of the table during dinner. In other words, we have some customs of hospitality that we might follow if someone of Jesus' stature is coming over for dinner.

In the Ancient Near East, the same thing was true. There were certain rules of etiquette for a dinner like this. For instance, the customary greeting for an honored guest would have been a kiss – not on the lips, but rather on the cheek or on the hand. To neglect the kiss of greeting was the equivalent of openly ignoring someone. It would be like having a person come to your house and refusing to even acknowledge their presence in some way. Not saying hi, not shaking hands, or not even giving them the head nod. Another part of hospitality of the day involved washing the guest's feet. Remember: dusty roads and sandals at best. If you truly wanted to show honor to your guest, then you would wash their feet yourself. If not, you might have your servant wash them. At the very least, you would simply provide a bowl of water so that your guest could wash his own feet. Finally, you would provide them with oil for anointing their head. It was very inexpensive oil, but still considered an especially hospitable gesture.

So, when Jesus came to Simon's house, he was expecting some of these things to happen as a show of hospitality on Simon's part. Big problem: none of them happened. No kiss when he arrived. No water to wash his feet. No oil to anoint his head. You might think, "Well, Simon just forgot." I don't think so. As a Pharisee, Simon would have known well these hospitality tokens. He would have expected them had he been invited to dinner at someone else's house. He has probably done these things when other Pharisees have dined at his house. Make no mistake about it, these were not accidental oversights. This was quite deliberate. Jesus was ignored and insulted.

So let's step back. Don't miss the irony of this dinner party. Simon has probably spent a lifetime studying the Jewish scriptures. He had spent years in school learning, even memorizing the Torah, and studying the rest of the Jewish Holy book (what we call the Old Testament). He had studied over and over the scriptures relating to the prophecies of the coming Messiah. That's the event all Jews were, and still are, waiting for. They wait for the day God will fulfill his promise and send them the Messiah, much like we wait for the day that Christ will come back to earth in victory. Pharisees knew these prophecies about the Messiah by heart. Yet the Messiah now sits at Simon's table with a cheek that hasn't been kissed, feet that haven't been washed and a head that hasn't been anointed. He knew all about the coming Messiah, but didn't know the Messiah in front of him.

I'm going to do something right now that I don't do very often. I want to talk about word "know" in the original language of the text. I want to go to Genesis 4.1: **[SLIDE]** *Adam made love to his wife Eve...* In the King James, it's this: *Adam knew Eve his wife...* If you look at these two verses, then to know someone goes much deeper than knowledge, it's intimacy. Making love is the most intimate act two people can do together. So knowing is intimacy. And the Hebrew translated most often for "know" is "yada," which means: **[SLIDE]** to know completely and to be known completely. So you get the picture? It's this intimate connection on every level. It's the picture that helps us get at what it really means to know Christ. Other Hebrew words can be translated to describe the act of sex, and they are used later in scripture. But here the word is "yada". Clearly when the Bible uses the word for "know" it means much more than to have knowledge of. It describes the most intimate of connections.

## Define the Relationship

So, if you trace the usage of “yada” throughout the Old Testament, you’ll find it used over and over again to describe God’s relationship with us and how God wants to be known by us. In fact, Psalm 139 uses “yada” numerous times: [SLIDE]

*O Lord, you have examined my heart and know everything about me. You know when I sit down or stand up. You know my thoughts even when I’m far away. You see me when I travel and when I rest at home. You know everything I do. You know what I am going to say even before I say it, Lord. [1-3]*

Think about that! The same word used to describe a husband and wife is used to describe how God knows you and how he wants to be known by you. Instead of identifying ourselves as a follower of Jesus because we know about him, understand that we are followers of Christ because we know Jesus.

Back to Simon the Pharisee. He knew about Jesus, but he didn’t know Jesus. Luke tells us that Jesus is eating at Simon’s house. This probably was happening in a courtyard where other people could walk by and see them, and even listen in on the conversation if they wanted. A woman arrives and things start to get awkward when she comes uninvited up to the table where they are eating. Moreover, Luke writes that this woman is an [SLIDE] “immoral woman.” That’s Ancient Near East code for prostitute. So now we have Simon the Pharisee, Jesus the Messiah, and an unnamed prostitute taking center stage.

What would have driven this woman to interrupt the dinner and approach Jesus? She had to have heard of Jesus’ teachings and healings and they must have touched her heart. What touched her? Maybe as she listened to him speak, their eyes met and there was no condemnation in his eyes. Maybe it was that she heard him speak on being a child of God – that she was God’s beloved daughter. Maybe Jesus’ teaching on forgiveness – which God wants to forgive us. After she heard Jesus, maybe she understood that God loved her and hadn’t given up on her. She might have thought, “Maybe it’s not too late for me.”

We don’t know how she found out that Jesus was having dinner with Simon, but she did. She knew she would never be invited to that dinner, but she was desperate to see Jesus. Being in her profession, she had felt the condemning glares of the Pharisees. She had avoided being around any Pharisees. But now she was determined to get near Jesus, even if he was with a Pharisee. Imagine what chutzpah it took for her to walk uninvited into that courtyard. Imagine her focus on Jesus to the point of completely ignoring the glares of Simon and the others. Her walk toward Jesus was impulsive, inappropriate, reckless, and exactly the kind of thing Jesus wants from his followers.

Now remember, and this is important, they didn’t use chairs to sit at a table and eat like we do today. They reclined at a low table to eat. Their feet would have been out away from the table. Imagine her walking toward Jesus. Everyone knows who this woman is. Those at the table probably grow very silent, however their glares at her are speak volumes. She approaches Jesus and then stands at his feet – remember that they are dusty and dirty because Simon didn’t offer any water to wash them. She can feel the familiar glare of condemnation on her. But there’s one person who isn’t glaring at her – Jesus. He seems to know what has happened to her heart. My guess is, he even gives her a warm smile.

## Define the Relationship

She begins to tear up, and then the tears won't stop. They keep flowing down her cheeks. She kneels to the ground and begins to kiss Jesus' dusty, dirty feet and her tears fall on his feet as well. She looks at his feet and she realizes that they haven't been washed, so she lets her hair down and washes Jesus feet with her tears and dries them with her hair. Now a woman letting her hair down in front of a man who was not her husband was unthinkable in Jesus' time. So I imagine when she lets her hair down to dry Jesus' feet, there is probably a quiet, but audible gasp from the folks in the room. Then she takes an alabaster jar of ointment from around her neck. Most women had one around their own neck; it was perfume. I'm guessing that due to her profession, she had used a lot of perfume one drop at a time – one drop each time she had been with a man. Now she completely empties it on Jesus feet. The whole thing. She's not going to need it any more. She uses the whole contents on Jesus' feet.

Simon is incensed that a woman of her profession would enter his courtyard – how rude. He is incensed that a woman of her profession would interrupt his dinner party – how arrogant. He is incensed that a woman of her profession would let her hair down in front of so many of his friends – how inappropriate. But Jesus can tell his thoughts and they have a short conversation that ends with Jesus telling Simon how Simon - a learned Pharisee, an upstanding citizen of the community – failed to show hospitality to Jesus when he entered Simon's house, but an immoral woman did. So, in the end, the religious leader with all the knowledge is the fan of Jesus, while the prostitute who intimately expressed her love for Jesus was the follower of Jesus.

Here then is the question I have for you: **[SLIDE] Who** are you most like in the story? When was the last time you poured yourself out for Jesus? When was the last time you had tears streaming down your face as you expressed your love for Jesus? When was the last time you demonstrated your love for Jesus with reckless abandon? When was the last time you risked condemnation for Jesus? When was the last time...? I'm not asking if you know about Jesus; I'm asking if you know Jesus.