



BIG IDEA: Real love looks past judgment and sees people with God's eyes.

SCRIPTURE: *Luke 7:36-50, James 2:1-4*

BY THE END, WE WANT STUDENTS TO KNOW that Jesus sees people fully and with compassion... even when others only see their reputation.

WE WANT STUDENTS TO BE ABLE TO begin recognizing how they judge or exclude others and reflect more of God's love instead.

Have you ever felt like someone judged you before they even knew you? Like they made up their mind about you based on one small detail, like your clothes, music taste, the people you hang out with, or maybe even your car?

[Teacher's Notes: Share a lighthearted story about a time you felt judged or noticed because of something outward; what you were wearing, driving, doing, or associated with. This could be a funny or slightly awkward moment where you sensed people making assumptions about you. Keep it playful and relatable. The goal is to introduce how quickly we form opinions about others based on limited information.]

It is so easy to do this with other people; to size them up, slap a label on them, and move on without ever really knowing who they are. We do it all the time: at school, online, in our friend groups, even here at church. We categorize people: popular, awkward, weird, athlete, band kid, theater kid, try-hard, loner, whatever.

Sometimes it's based on what people wear, how they talk, who they hang out with, or what they post. Other times, it's based on a single mistake or a rumor that never seems to go away.

We label people because it's easier. It saves time. It lets us feel like we understand someone without having to do the work of knowing them. And it's not just the labels we put on others. It's also the labels that have been put on us. The ones that follow us around, even when they're not true

anymore. Quiet...awkward... flirt... bully. Sometimes we even start to believe those labels are all we'll ever be.

Our world runs on quick judgments. We scroll, we size up. We move on. But when we only see labels, we miss seeing the people. We stop being curious about who they really are, what they're carrying, what they've been through, what they might long for. And the most dangerous part is that we start to believe that it's okay; that these labels we attach to others or that have been attached to us are true.

Thankfully, that's not how God sees people. God looks beyond the labels, the rumors, and the reputations—straight to the person underneath. And that's what we're going to see Jesus do in this story from Luke's Gospel. We're going to go through it moment by moment. Let's start with the first two voices of the story.

READ LUKE 7:36-38 NIV

When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. 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.

Let's set the scene. This wasn't like a casual dinner with friends. This was a formal event hosted by a man named Simon, who was a Pharisee, one of the religious elite of the city, a powerful and influential man.

Meals like this were a big deal in that culture. They wouldn't have sat at tall tables with chairs. They would gather around a low table in a courtyard with low couches to recline on, leaning on one arm with their feet stretched behind them.

It would have been considered an honor to host a traveling teacher like Jesus. You would want to invite other well-respected men from the community to sit at the table. But that's not all who would be there. The doors to the courtyard stayed open. Anyone from the town could stand along the walls and watch. Imagine if all the people watching a group dinner on *The Real Housewives* were physically there watching and listening in person.

Then a woman entered; a woman who was carrying with her not only an alabaster jar of perfume, but also a very unfortunate reputation in the town. She entered uninvited and approached Jesus. Somewhere along the way she may have encountered Jesus. Maybe she heard Him teach or maybe He had shown her compassion when no one else would. Or, maybe all of this was based on Jesus' reputation. For whatever reason, she heard Jesus was at Simon's house, and she grabbed the most valuable thing she owned and went straight there.

She wasn't thinking about the cultural rules or what anyone else might have been thinking. She might not have even cared. She was so undone by grace that she did something completely scandalous for those days. She touched a man in public which was forbidden. She let down her hair, which was shockingly intimate. She wept openly, which was seen as shameful, and she washed Jesus' feet with perfume.

If you were to picture this alabaster jar of perfume, it was a small, beautiful stone bottle filled with very expensive oil. This wasn't something you would spray on yourself once in a while to smell nice. This was something special that might be saved for a wedding or even a burial. And the bottle couldn't be opened and closed. It was sealed, and the only way to open it was to break it. This woman didn't just give Jesus something expensive. She gave something that she couldn't get back.

READ LUKE 7:39-43 NIV

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."

Jesus answered him, "Simon, I have something to tell you."

"Tell me, teacher," he said.

"Two people owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he forgave the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?"

Simon replied, "I suppose the one who had the bigger debt forgiven."

"You have judged correctly," Jesus said.

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