

081824Dark Side of the Moon

1. Warm up: On Sunday we began a new sermon series called “Dinner With Jesus.” Jesus had many momentous dinner conversations with people. What’s one of the most momentous dinner conversations you’ve ever had?
2. Our focus this week is on a dinner hosted by Simon the Pharisee. What happened there spotlights our powerful human tendency to minimize our own failures, while amplifying the failures of others. Psychologist Mark McMinn says, “One of the clearest conclusions of social science research is that . . . we think better of ourselves than we really are. We see our faults in faint black and white rather than in vivid color. We assume the worst in others, while assuming the best in ourselves.”
 - a. In one study, a million high schoolers were asked how well they got along with their peers. Not one of them rated themselves below average – not even one. Do you think you share the tendency to overestimate yourself? Why or why not?
 - b. In their book “Mistakes Were Made (But Not By Me),” social psychologists Carol Tavris and Elliot Aronson say, “The vast majority of couples who drift apart do so slowly, over time, in a snowballing pattern of blame and self-justification. Each partner focuses on what the other one is doing wrong, while justifying their own preferences, attitudes, and ways of doing things. . . . From our standpoint, therefore, misunderstandings, conflicts, personality differences, and even angry quarrels are not the assassins of love. Self-justification is.” Tell us about a time in your life when you’ve seen this pattern at work in a relationship of yours or in someone else’s relationship. (It doesn’t have to be a spousal relationship.)
3. Let’s read together what happened at Simon’s dinner with Jesus, as described in Luke 7:36-50, printed on p. 3.
 - a. Imagine yourself at Simon’s dinner. Picture the moment when the woman with a reputation enters uninvited and begins touching Jesus, anointing and kissing his feet. Being as honest as you can, what thoughts and emotions would have likely arisen with you?
 - b. Simon is a reminder that religious people often have a special propensity to see themselves as better than they are – and to see others as worse than they are. Why is that?
 - c. Pastor Jeff shared a story about a time at Pride Fest when a young man dressed like a female prostitute asked to take a picture with Jeff and he agreed. How do you feel about that – and why?
 - d. Jesus tells Simon a story about two debtors. Their creditor forgave one of them \$30,000 in debt, and the other \$3,000. Jesus asks Simon which debtor would love

the creditor more. Do you think Jesus was saying that the woman was a far worse sinner than Simon? If not, what point was Jesus trying to drive home for Simon?

4. None of us wants to be wrong. We all want to do the right thing. We have a lot of psychic energy invested in seeing ourselves – and wanting others to see us – as people who do the right thing. As a result, admitting to ourselves and others that we've done something wrong is deeply painful. Yet the Bible repeatedly exhorts us to do just that. Jeff suggested there are at least three reasons why the Bible exhorts us to “confess your sins to one another.” James 5:16. **First, confession frees us from the heavy psychic burden of denial and constant self-justification.** It requires a lot of psychic energy to live in a state of denial. Confession allows us to lay down that burden, turn the page, and frees us to make a fresh start. Tell us about a time when you have done the hard thing and confessed a failure of yours. What happened? Was it painful to confess? How did you feel right before you confessed? How did you feel afterward?
5. **A second major benefit of confession is self-growth.** I can't become a better person if I won't admit I have stuff I need to work on. Confession positions us to grow and get better.
 - a. Great athletes like Steph Curry and Aaron Rodgers love being coached because coaches point out the weaknesses in their game, so they can focus on those weaknesses and get better. Do you love being coached? Tell us about a time someone in your life pointed out a weakness of yours. How did you respond?
 - b. If the first step toward self-growth is admitting I have stuff to work on, we all need to fight the urge to live in denial and instead cultivate self-awareness. Tell us an area of weakness in your life where you need to grow and get better.
6. **A third major benefit of confession is how it causes us to be more compassionate.** When I get in touch with my own failures, I'm much more likely to be empathetic toward others. In his dinner conversation with Simon, Jesus made clear that there are two primary ways to view life, as illustrated on the graph on the next page.
 - a. Has there been a time in your life when you, like Simon the Pharisee, were on your high horse looking down at others? If so, how did that way of seeing things affect you? Alternatively, have you ever known someone who saw the world saw the world like Simon? How did that affect them?
 - b. Jeff told how George W. Bush's failures around alcohol caused him to be compassionate toward others who fail. Jeff said, “The best and strongest people I've known are the quickest to confess their imperfections and seek help,” then he ended the sermon with this question, “Are you strong enough to be weak?” What do you think he meant by that?
 - c. Jeff also asked, “Are you strong enough to let others around you be weak?” What do you think he meant by that?

Luke 7:36-50

One of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and took his place at the table. ³⁷And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he was eating in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment. ³⁸She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment.

³⁹Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw it, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what kind of woman this is who is touching him—that she is a sinner.' ⁴⁰Jesus spoke up and said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' 'Teacher,' he replied, 'speak.'

⁴¹Jesus said, 'A certain creditor had two debtors; one owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. ⁴²When they could not pay, he cancelled the debts for both of them. Now which of them will love him more?' ⁴³Simon answered, 'I suppose the one for whom he cancelled the greater debt.' And Jesus said to him, 'You have judged rightly.'

⁴⁴Then turning towards the woman, he said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has bathed my feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. ⁴⁵You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not stopped kissing my feet. ⁴⁶You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. ⁴⁷Therefore, I tell you, her sins, which were many, have been forgiven; hence she has shown great love. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little.' ⁴⁸Then he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' ⁴⁹But those who were at the table with him began to say among themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?' ⁵⁰And he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'

Two Vantage Points on Life

Looking Down



Posture: On my high horse looking down at others from a position of self-superiority

Result: Self-delusion

End Product: Judgmentalism

Looking Up



Posture: On my knees looking up from a posture of humility.

Result: Self-awareness

End Product: Compassion