

The Story:

Simon, a high profile religious leader in Capernaum, wanted a closer encounter with a controversial nomad named Jesus. He invited Him over for dinner with a few other religious citizens, but was careful enough not to be seen as associated with Him. He avoided the customary greeting and, in general, was quite rude to Jesus, who took it in stride and reclined by the table laid out on the floor.

Dinner was underway and the nosy hosts were just getting a chance to ask their devious questions, when a commotion erupted at the doorway. A known prostitute pushed her way into the room and made a beeline for Jesus. The other guests were shocked and disgusted. They pulled back from the table and squinted their judgmental faces as the reckless woman withdrew a bottle of perfume from her jacket. Before anyone could stop her, the woman started crying and soaked Jesus' feet with her tears. She poured the perfume she had previously used to attract other men to herself onto Jesus' feet. Without saying a word, she bent over and dried His feet with her unravelled hair. She continued to caress His feet with kisses, continuing her uncontrolled expression of emotion. Jesus didn't flinch. He took it all in, made her feel welcome, and gave her the uninterrupted moment she had always wanted. The moment that would make her feel special.

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- How would you feel inside if you were in Jesus' shoes as the woman wept at your feet?

+ How do you think you would react if one of the most rejected people in school started to talk to you when all the cool people were watching?

Jesus is often very different than what we perceive Him to be. Our perspective of Jesus is usually shaped by how religious people act. It is important to get to know Him for yourself before making assumptions based on other people's actions and ideas.

- What do you think the other people in the room were thinking while watching this woman?
 - + What rumors do you think started to spread about Jesus?

If you have read other stories in the Bible, you realize that this was not the first time Jesus had gained a bad reputation for Himself. There were rumors going around that He was a greedy drunk and that He was not the sort of person respectable or religious people should be associated with. But Jesus seemed to care more about loving others than how anyone else viewed Him.

- Have you ever had people spread rumors about you?
 - + How did it feel?

Rumors can significantly damage people. It is important to learn how to avoid spreading opinions and images of someone if it is not encouraging. Be careful not to presume that your opinion of someone is correct - instead, think of ways to make him or her feel special and cared for.

- Why do you think Jesus was able to focus on the woman and ignore the others' judgment?
 - + Would you like to be able to act like Jesus did in this situation?

Jesus will not let anyone stop Him from making someone feel loved and accepted. He gives people His undivided attention and is not distracted by trying to protect Himself or His image. He doesn't care what others call Him, as long as He has an opportunity to love the unloved. He knew the most important thing for this woman was for someone to recognize her heart and love her for who she was more than for what she had done. He understood her actions when she poured the perfume on His feet. She had found true love and was giving up on searching for anyone else's love. She did not need someone to tell her that what she had been doing was wrong - she just needed to see the genuine love that could bring her the fulfillment she really longed for.