

**WEEK 3**  
**LESSON GUIDE**



**BIG IDEA**

Jesus can rewrite our stories.

**BIBLE**

Luke 7:36–50; Galatians 3:23–29;  
1 John 1:9

**ABOUT THIS WEEK**

Every great story has parts that have been edited or rewritten to help make it more engaging, interesting, and inspiring. This week, we'll hear about a woman pouring expensive perfume on Jesus' feet as she understood who he was. His response revealed a new part of her story, and it helps us see how **Jesus can rewrite our stories.**

*WHAT? What are we talking about today?*

**ACTIVITY | Solar System Slam**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** For this activity, gather 32 hula hoops and throw balls safely. Divide your group into two teams, and each team will construct a solar system featuring four planets using hula hoops—one on the floor, four forming the sides, and one on top. Allow teams time to assemble their planet structures before starting the game. Once both teams have their solar systems set up, the goal is for players to throw balls to topple the opposing team's planets while defending their own. A point is earned for each planet successfully knocked down. A center line divides the game area, preventing players from crossing to retrieve balls. Teams have the option to rebuild their planets but must strategize when it's worthwhile to do so, balancing defense and offense. The team that successfully topples all of the opposing team's planets first wins.
- Welcome back to *More to the Story!* We've already explored a great story worth knowing and sharing. When you gaze up at the night sky, it sparks a sense of wonder.
- You encountered so many challenges while setting up those solar systems. We often feel overwhelmed in life's challenging moments, making rebuilding seem impossible. Navigating situations when it feels like the odds are against us and our path seems set can be challenging, especially when the outcome doesn't appear promising.

**DISCUSSION**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups.
  - **What's the ending of a movie or book that you didn't like? How would you change it?**
  - **Have you ever had a moment in your life you wish you could do over?**

**IMAGE | Story Rewrites**

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** As you teach, show an image of the book *The Hobbit*, [like this](#) one from Unsplash. These images are free for you to use under the [Unsplash license](#). For more information on how to legally use copyrighted material for educational purposes, [read this!](#)

- Some very popular stories began quite differently from what we see on screen or read in books. For example, when *The Lord of the Rings* grew into a multi-book saga, JRR Tolkien revisited his earlier stories to match them to his freshly created works. *The Hobbit*, the first of his novels set in Middle Earth, required some extra tweaking.
  - He had to rewrite a whole chapter when one of the main characters, Bilbo, discovered the all-powerful ring. After answering a set of riddles, he won it from the tragic character Gollum.
  - But in the new stories Tolkien wrote, the ring was so powerful that Gollum would never give it up. So, he went back and changed his story. He made it so Bilbo found the ring in the dark before he ran into Gollum. Tolkien strategically rewrote it to make it better!
- Have you ever considered how you'd rewrite your story if given the chance? Would you introduce new characters to offer support during challenging times? Maybe you'd prefer to erase some uncomfortable or painful memories?
- Just as writers face limitations in editing published works, we can't entirely alter every aspect of our personal stories once they've unfolded. But does that mean we are stuck continually revisiting our challenges, full of shame and regret? Let's dive into a story from Jesus' life to shed light on these questions.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
  - **Have you ever discounted yourself because of moments in your past you wish you could do over?**
  - **Have you ever overlooked someone because of their past mistakes?**

*SO WHAT? Why does it matter to God and to us?*

## SCRIPTURE | Luke 7:36–39

- Have you ever regretted a decision, fearing it might shape your future indefinitely? Have you experienced pain so profound that it seems to influence the narrative of your life? Sometimes, it's easy to believe that people in the Bible had everything figured out. Yet, the reality is that apart from Jesus, everyone struggled with the effects of the evil and sin we learned about last week.
- The good news is that God didn't run away from their messiness. God ran toward it. We see this in Jesus. He hung out with misunderstood people, often deemed "too far gone," and in the most complicated situations. Jesus wasn't scared of their stories and wouldn't run from your story, either.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Luke 7:36–39.*
- This story introduces us to a woman who has lived far from God. We don't know her name, but we know about her past. She was vulnerable, and people marginalized her because of her mistakes. We don't know how she got into her situation, but most people don't choose a life of being ostracised from their community unless they have no other options. Most likely, she found herself where she was because of heartbreaking circumstances. It was as if she wore a "label" that said "ruined."
- But she was still curious about Jesus. She'd probably seen him connecting with others in her community defined by their past. She saw that Jesus was kind and gracious and befriended vulnerable people others had pushed aside.
- She courageously went into a home where she was not exactly welcomed. One of the religious leaders, a pharisee named Simon, was not thrilled she was there. But she didn't let his attitude get in the way of connecting with Jesus.

- She washed Jesus' feet with perfume. This was a massive sacrifice on her part. The perfume was worth one year of her wages. Not only was it a financial sacrifice, but her decision to honor Jesus this way was dangerous. She didn't know what the religious leaders would do to her for breaking all the cultural rules.
- Jesus protected her and helped her see she wasn't defined by the labels she and others had placed on her. She was not ruined. She was forgiven and loved. Through her encounter with Jesus, her future was now filled with possibilities. There was so much more to her story.

## SCRIPTURE | Luke 7:39–50

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Luke 7:39–50.*
- The woman who anointed Jesus had a very different story than the religious leader in Simon's story. Simon lived with an air of superiority. He thought he was better than the woman and was skeptical about Jesus. He thought there was no way a holy person would associate with a woman like this. So, Jesus asks a question, "Do you see this woman?"
- Jesus doesn't put any labels on Simon. He doesn't call him an "elitist." Instead, he asks Simon a question. It was as if he was saying, "Do you see past her history and what everyone says about her? Do you see her like I see her?" Jesus was inviting Simon to see people's stories differently than he was used to. Simon's story had been limited because the way he saw others was limited.
- He believed he was only good because he had lived by the rules, thought he was important because he had worked hard, and felt loved because he kept up a specific image. Soon, Simon saw how Jesus loved the woman, not for what she had done but for who she was—a child of God who was so loved.
- Jesus was inviting him to a new way of living. Simon didn't have to find his worth in slapping labels on people or meeting specific standards. If he chose to sit with Jesus and think about these moments in his home, his story could be forever changed.
- As we read this story today, some of you might resonate with the woman's experience. You feel like others have labeled you based on your past choices. Others of you might connect with Simon. You find your identity by pretending to have it all together. It may make you feel better to point out the brokenness in other people's lives instead of addressing your own.
- But for both of you, God's invitation is the same—Jesus forgives you, sees beyond your sin, and wants to help you envision a new future. There is always more to the story.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
  - **Who do you relate to more within the story, the woman with perfume or Simon? Why?**
  - ★ **Why do you think it's important we see others and ourselves, not through our past mistakes but based on how God sees us?**
  - **How can thinking of yourself as better than others be an obstacle to connecting with Jesus?**

## STORY | My Jesus Story Story (Part One)

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Tell a story about a moment you wish wasn't a part of your story. Maybe it was a time when you lost a friendship because of your choice. It could be a time when you tragically lost someone you love. Maybe it was when someone walked out on you, leaving you to feel abandoned. Why did you wish it wasn't a part of your story? Don't resolve the story here. There is a time below to share how Jesus re-wrote your story. You could also invite a student or volunteer to share.*

## SCRIPTURE | Galatians 3:23–29

- In Luke, we saw two people who needed God’s grace. The woman needed to know her past did not define her, and Simon needed to know he wasn’t defined by comparing himself with others.
- We can see our story differently when we realize we’re loved for who we are, not what we do. An Early Church leader named Paul wrote about this in a letter to a church community in what’s now modern-day Turkey.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Read Galatians 3:23–29*
- The Early Church had been arguing about who could be part of what God was doing in the world and what was required to be part of that community. Some people said they could only be part of God’s community if they observed all the old religious customs. Even after Jesus had overcome the power of sin and death, they believed they still had to check religious to-dos to be made right with God.
- In this passage, Paul says those religious customs were helpful for a time, but now Jesus has come, they’re not required to connect with God. Those rituals had their time. They were like a babysitter for a season, helpful but not a permanent solution.
- Paul is saying our relationship with God and each other is made right through what Jesus has done in his life, death, and resurrection. And now, we simply have to have faith in him, trusting Jesus has the power to rewrite our story.
- We are quick to accept the labels people put on us. Sometimes, we even put labels on ourselves. But Paul is showing us that we need to learn that what Jesus says about us is the most important and truest thing about who we are.
  - You aren’t your past mistakes.
  - You aren’t defined by the person who walked out on you.
  - You aren’t the trophies on your shelf.
  - You aren’t the D on your report card.
  - You aren’t living in your older sibling’s shadow.
- You are loved. God made you to have a good story! Sin may have derailed what God hoped for you, but your story can be completely different because of what God has done in Jesus. Jesus has the power to rewrite any story. Through his death on the cross and resurrection, your story and our world’s story don’t have to end in brokenness, darkness, and defeat. **Jesus can rewrite our stories.**

*NOW WHAT? What does God want us to do about it?*

## STORY | My Story (Part Two)

- Earlier, you heard part of my story that was difficult. We’ve read throughout the Bible that Jesus doesn’t expect us to clean up our stories on our own. He invites us to come as we are with our stories and have faith he can make things right.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *Revisit the story you shared earlier. Why did you wish it wasn’t a part of your story? Resolve the story here. How have you learned from it? Share how you felt when you saw Jesus rewriting your story, using that moment to help you see that God loves you and you can have hope even in difficult moments. You can also invite a volunteer to share their experience.*
- **Jesus can rewrite our stories.** He re-wrote mine, and he can do the same for you. If you want to open yourself to that reality this week, here is how to do that today.
  - **RECOGNIZE:** Take a look at the reality of your life, your relationships, and our world. We have all contributed to the damage. How have you defined good and evil for yourself and tried to get your needs met in ways God never intended? Tell God you are sorry for how you have hurt yourself, others, and the world.

- **RECEIVE:** Once we apologize for damaging the world, each other, and our relationship with God, Jesus offers us forgiveness. It's more than a one-time thing. Jesus wants to give us a new way of operating in the world, his way of living and seeing the world, ourselves, and others. Jesus gives you the same power to live and work in the world that animated his life.
- **REORIENT:** Receiving God's forgiveness is an amazing start to a new life with God. Jesus gives us the same power that motivates and moves in him. We don't need to return to living out our old story. For Jesus to rewrite our story, we must reorient our entire life to follow him and his way of life. This may take some time, and we won't always get it right. Thankfully, when it comes to following him, Jesus simply asks us for growth, not perfection. Begin to rethink your life and consider what Jesus did.
- Recognize that in Jesus, God took all the evil we have made in the world into the grave with him. God disarmed its destructive power in our lives when God raised Jesus from the grave. You have done nothing to earn this—the invitation is available to receive Jesus' presence and trust that he can direct you in every season and moment of your life.
- Choose one thing Jesus did and start doing that this week. Then the next week, do something else. With Jesus, your story can be written and rewritten, one chapter at a time.

## DISCUSSION

- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *If you have more than 15 students, skip this discussion and save it for small groups. If you conduct this discussion, the starred questions are designed for high schoolers, so you may want to skip them for middle schoolers.*
  - **Read 1 John 1:9. What is something you sense you should be honest with God about when it comes to how you see God or what God can do in your life? Do you want to ask for forgiveness?**
  - ★ **What do you think is the biggest obstacle to realizing forgiveness is being offered to you? How can you overcome that obstacle today?**
  - **Today, what's one change you can make to begin trusting that Jesus can rewrite your story?**

## REFLECTION | Dissolving Damaging Stories

- Jesus can rewrite our stories. Let's spend some time recognizing how we have been living a story that isn't aligned with what God hopes for us.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this reflection, teenagers need a half sheet of [water-soluble paper](#), something to write with, and a big tub of water. Have them write down how they have hurt themselves, others, their relationship with God, and the world. As they write, have them ask God to forgive them. Once they're done, if they would like to receive forgiveness and accept God's story as theirs, as a symbol of their receiving God's forgiveness, have them put the paper in the water and watch it dissolve. NOTE: Next week, a module will use this water as part of it. If you decide to do this module, keep this water.*
- When we re-align our life with Jesus' life, Jesus takes all the damaging stories we have written and dissolves them. We can receive forgiveness and allow God to direct us from this moment forward.

## PRAYER | Receiving God's Story And Your Story

- If you'd like to allow God to rewrite your story, I have a few leaders here who would love to pray with you.
- **INSTRUCTIONS:** *For this prayer time, have a few adult volunteers available to pray for teenagers after they dissolve their paper in the water. Have volunteers ask students what it means for them to allow Jesus to rewrite their story and what that may look like for them. Then, have the leader pray for them. In addition, the volunteer should guide them in praying to God.*
- Last week, we discussed how sin isn't the end of the story. Today, we talked about how, through Jesus, God can take our story and make something different out of it. When we see no hope, Jesus sees possibility because Jesus can make all things new. **Jesus can rewrite our stories.**