

Supplement to the Agenda for Classis Heartland
Wednesday, September 16, 2026 - 8:30 AM

The following items were received by the clerk after the agenda was sent out and need to be included in our deliberations as Classis Heartland.

1. List of questions from credentials (p. 2)
2. CIC Report from September Meeting (p. 3)
3. Classical Stewardship Committee
 - Minutes from September Meeting (p. 4)
 - Classical Ministry Shares Proposal (p. 5)
4. Classical Discipleship Committee Report (pp. 6-7)
5. Timothy Leadership Training – Developing and Multiplying Leaders (pp. 8-12)
6. Sermon Notes
 - Mr. Del Walinga (pp. 13-17)
 - Mr. Scott MacDougall
7. Link to CRC Loan Fund Video –

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1zJuyW192FsCuePcuHWNOP1KXpZ-gpurm/view?usp=sharing>

Questions from Credentials

1. How will Classis Heartland respond to the CRCNA's call to plant new churches?
2. How does your church address the issue of low or "0" givers? What has been the outcome of these strategies?
3. How are we as a classis multiplying pastors and leaders in our churches? What are individual churches doing in these areas? What are roadblocks to fulfilling this call?

Classical Interim Committee Report for Classis

September 2, 2026

1. All members present: Rev. Brian Hofman (chair), Rev. Aaron Greydanus (vice-chair), Rev. Nate Kuperus (clerk), Rev. Stephen Terpstra, Mr. Pete Van Velzen (stated clerk)
2. CIC prepares for the upcoming classis meeting with Rev. Kevin Muyskens (program director), Rev. Lee Khang (upcoming classis chair), Rev. Chad Van Ginkel (upcoming classis vice-chair)
3. CIC asks all committees, groups and staff that are mentioned in the Rules of Procedure fully review the Rules of Procedure, consider what changes are necessary to sections pertaining to them, and propose these changes to the Stated Clerk by January 15, 2027.
 - a. The Rules of Procedure are far outdated (last updated in 2016) and no longer guiding the work of classical committees and positions.
 - b. CIC expects to draft an updated Classical Rules of Procedure to the March 2027 meeting of classis.
 - c. The present Rules of Procedure can be found at <https://www.classisheartland.com/rules-of-procedures>

CLASSIS HEARTLAND STEWARDSHIP COMMITTEE

Minutes of September 3, 2026 meeting at 1:00PM Dordt Atrium (John Baas Conference Room)

1. The chair called us to order and opened with prayer.
2. Roll call:
All Present: Rev. Keith Hoekstra, Ms. Leandra Hulstein, Rev. John Klompier, Mr. Eric Kroese, Rev. Nathan Kuperus, Dr. Randy Smit.
3. Reviewed a new set of rules of procedure/mandate for our committee.
 - a. Agreed with changes to Mandate and Membership and Responsibilities.
 - b. Moved to recommend this to the CIC and to eventually adopt as the mandate for Classis Stewardship Committee. Passed.
4. Report by our Classis Treasurer
 - a. After our Treasurer calculated all the ministry shares needed, he altered the number of Dordt University to get us to the nearest round dollar number.
 - b. Our Classis Home Missions Committee Representative (Hoekstra) reported some updated decisions regarding giving to Classis Home Mission causes. Excess funds from church planting are coming back toward the Ministry Opportunity Fund. An attempt is being made to assist Siouxland Unity to become more involved with Kheo's successor(s) following his retirement.
 - c. Due to a slight surplus, our treasurer is recommending we stay at \$4.00 ministry share per member. So moved. Motion carries.
 - d. Treasurer also noted that our Classical Stewardship Committee chair serves as our internal auditor. Our chairperson noted that this is stated otherwise in the present job description for the Classis Treasurer in our Classis rules of procedure. The Treasurer will propose a new job description at our next meeting; a job description which is in keeping with our present practice of auditing by the chair.
5. "Education on how to more effectively promote healthy stewardship practices at a congregational level as well as a classical level" - words from our classis mandate.
 - a. How are we doing? Should we be brainstorming?
 - b. Discussion: Meeting a budget is not a concern locally. Most churches meet budget. Present a need, it will be met. But is this true of all churches?
6. Our next agenda will include a time to recommend the names of those who might stand for nomination as alternates and/or future members of our Stewardship Committee.
7. Next Meeting will be February 4, 2027 at 12:15PM at the Atrium, D.V.
8. Rev. Keith Hoekstra closed in prayer.

Classis of the Heartland

2026 and 2027 Ministry Shares

		Per Member		%
		2026	2027	Change
Classical Ministry Shares				
	Dordt University	71.37	70.82	-0.77%
	Classical Expense	4.00	4.00	0.00%
	Student Aid Fund	0.05	0.05	0.00%
Campus Ministries				
	Geneva Campus Ministry - U of I	1.89	1.98	5.16%
	Areopagus - ISU	2.26	1.98	-12.37%
Church Planting				
	Lincoln - Chaplain	3.77	3.97	5.16%
	Lincoln - F Street Immerse	1.89	1.98	5.16%
	Argentine (Kurt Rietema)	1.89	1.98	5.16%
	Cornerstone Prison Ministry	2.83	2.98	5.16%
	Opportunity Fund	3.77	5.95	57.74%
	Residency Program	1.89	3.97	110.32%
Ethnic Ministries				
	Laotian Ministry - Sioux City	7.17	6.75	-5.91%
	Amistad Cristiana	4.53	4.76	5.16%
Other				
	Established Church Development	1.13	0.40	-64.95%
	Discipleship Committee (Formerly Ed.)	0.50	0.50	0.00%
	Youth Consultant	8.68	9.52	9.73%
	Classical Home Missions Committee	0.38	0.40	5.16%
		118.00	122.00	3.39%
		2,650	2,520	

REPORT OF THE CLASSICAL DISCIPLESHIP COMMITTEE TO

CLASSIS IN SESSION, - September 16, 2026

Immanuel CRC, Sheldon, IA

REPORT ON THE WORK OF THE CDC

Esteemed Delegates:

The Classical Discipleship Committee met on August 25, 2026. Members present were Rev. Brian Dunn, Rev. Jesse Walhof, and Rev. Ben Wiersma. Jesse opened with prayer. Brian closed in prayer.

Topics discussed at the meeting included:

1. Providing Continuing Education
2. Ministry Support on behalf of Classis Heartland
 - a. Classis Prayer Coordinator (Ms. Barb Hibma)
 - b. Minn-I-Kota Youth Network (MIK) (Ms. Lee DeGroot)
 - c. Safe-Church Team Heartland and Iakota (Ms. Abby Vanden Bosch)
3. Financial Reports

Details of items discussed:

1. Providing Continuing Education
 - a. **Timothy Leadership Training**
 - i. Del Walinga will be contacted about speaking at the fall Classis meeting
 - b. **Abide Project** –
 - i. Abide does not have any events coming up.
 - ii. They are promoting the Three Forms Conference in Hudsonville, MI on October 23-24.
 - c. **Dunamis** – There are two Dunamis Projects in the tri-state area for those who want to attend.
 - i. DP #5: Spiritual Warfare, October 1-4 in Milford, IA. To learn more or register, visit www.primi.org/dpimilford
 - ii. DP #6: Listening Evangelism. November 5-8 in Viborg, SD. To learn more or register, visit www.primi.org/dpviborg
 - d. **Dordt University** –
 - i. At Work in the Garden: The Faith and Work Conference – September 17-19
 - ii. Called: an event to encourage and inspire those who might feel a call to ministry. November 14, 9am-noon.
2. Ministry Support on behalf of Classis Heartland
 - a. **Classis Prayer Coordinator (Ms. Barb Hibma)**
 - i. The CDC is staying in contact with Barb to discuss ways to incorporate prayer in the work and ministries of the Classis.

b. Minn-I-Kota Youth Network (Ms. Lee DeGroot)

- i. Please refer to the MIK-Youth report in the agenda.
- ii. The Discipleship committee has approved the 2027 MIK Youth/+ Budget to be brought before Classis by the Stewardship Committee. This will include a \$1000 increase for Classis Heartland.

c. Safe Church

- i. The Safe Church Team has been working with some churches in Heartland and Lakota Classes.
- ii. The Discipleship committee motions Classis to increase Abby's stipend by \$1000 to an annual stipend of \$2000.
 - 1. Grounds: This was the stipend that Dr. Boer was receiving.
- iii. The Discipleship committee will look into where Abby can receive funds for mileage reimbursement.

3. Financial Reports

- a. The CDC continually discusses how to best steward the funds that have been provided through the Classis ministry shares.
- b. Current balances will be reported by the Classis Treasurer.

ITEMS FOR CLASSICAL INFORMATION

The Classical Discipleship Committee has been working to fulfill its calling to provide educational and discipleship opportunities for church leaders in Classis Heartland. The CDC has been working to support the Timothy Leadership Training team as well as Dordt University as it provides learning opportunities. The CDC has been offering ministry support to the Classis Prayer Coordinator, Minn-I-Kota Youth Network, and the Safe Church Team. The CDC has been working to be good stewards of the funds that have been allocated to the CDC as well as the Classis Prayer Coordinator.

ITEMS FOR CLASSICAL ACTION / RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1: The CDC motions Classis to increase the Safe Church stipend for Abby VandenBosch by \$1000 to an annual stipend of \$2000.

Recommendation 2: The CDC motions Classis to approve the MIK Youth/+ 2027 budget increase.

Recommendation 3: That Classis approve the work and report of the Classis Discipleship Committee.

Respectfully submitted by the members of the CDC: Rev. Brian Dunn, Rev. Jesse Walhof, Rev. Ben Wiersma

Timothy Leadership Training: Developing and Multiplying Leaders

I have spoken before about **Timothy Leadership Training**, so my purpose today is to consider this question:

How can we make greater use of these materials to intentionally develop leaders within the churches of Heartland Classis?

TLT was developed to meet growing churches, without enough adequately trained leaders to serve them. Particularly in other countries of the world.

Yet, our churches need equipped leaders as well. We need to become intentional about **identifying and developing the people who may become tomorrow's leaders.**

Leadership Is More Than a Position

Romans 12:8 identifies leadership among the gifts God gives His church. However, we do not have to possess the gift of leadership before we begin influencing others in a Christlike way.

Jesus calls His followers to be **salt and light**. At its most basic level, this involves influence. God has placed each of us where our lives influence others. So perhaps the question is not: **“Am I a leader?”** A better question may be: **“What kind of influence am I having with the people God has placed around me?”**

Leadership effectiveness requires development and Scripture must shape the Leader

The greatest leadership resource we possess is **God's Word**. Scripture addresses our **character, values, motives, identity, decisions, relationships, and calling**. Biblical leadership asks **Who is the leader becoming?** Throughout Scripture we see God developing leaders and ultimately the perfect pattern of leadership in Jesus Christ. God does not simply give people positions. **He develops them.**

The Church Needs Developed Leaders

Too often we identify someone willing to serve, appoint them, elect them, install them, and then expect them to know how to lead. Perhaps we should ask: **What are we intentionally doing to prepare people before they lead, and to continue developing them while they lead?**

That is where I believe Timothy Leadership Training can serve our churches particularly well. TLT is biblically based, interactive, practical, and built around application. Resonate describes this as training leaders who can go on to train others. A multiplication principle drawn directly from 2 Timothy 2:2.

Not to dismiss another valuable resource being made available to our churches in **Thrives Elder Essentials and Deacon Essentials**. These materials will provide focused orientation and development for those preparing to serve, or already serving, in these particular offices. They need not replace or diminish the broader leadership formation offered through TLT; rather, they can

complement it. **Thrive helps equip a leader for the particular responsibilities of elder or deacon. TLT helps develop the person as a biblical leader.**

Making TLT More Accessible

One thing I have been exploring through Adult Education is presenting **overviews of TLT material**. I would never suggest that we diminish the full modules. But we also recognize the reality of time. So perhaps we can expand the ways this material is used.

A complete module provides the fullest experience. A condensed module could communicate its central biblical principles as well. Condensed modules could work within a council, shepherding team, Adult Education class, leadership retreat, or ministry team.

The purpose is not to **water down the material**. But, utilize different settings, different time commitments with the same objective: **Developing faithful, biblical leaders.**

From Developing Leaders to Multiplying Leaders

But there is another reason TLT matters. The CRC is placing significant emphasis on church planting and multiplication. Resonate itself describes its work as helping create a healthy church-planting system and equipping congregations and leaders for mission.

But church plants require church planters. And **church planters do not suddenly appear**. They are discipled, discovered, encouraged, mentored, tested, and developed over time within the life of Christ's church.

That is where I believe our conversation about TLT becomes much larger. As we intentionally develop elders, deacons, shepherds, teachers, and emerging leaders, we may discover that God has already placed among our congregations some of the people He intends to use in broader ministry.

Some may become stronger elders. Some may become ministry leaders. Some may become pastors. Some may become missionaries. And some may eventually become church planters. **If we want to multiply churches, we must become intentional about multiplying leaders.**

Re-Forma: A Possible Next Step

And TLT does not have to stand alone. As emerging leaders are identified, **Re-Forma provides another resource worth considering for deeper biblical and ministry formation.**

Re-Forma organizes ministry formation around what leaders need to **know, do, and be**. It is intentionally a standard for non-formal or informal biblical ministry training rather than an accredited academic degree program.

That makes it potentially valuable as another step in the developmental process. Not everyone who participates in TLT will move into Re-Forma. And certainly not everyone who receives additional training will become a church planter.

That is not the objective. The objective is to create an environment in which gifts can be recognized, character can be developed, leadership can be practiced, calling can be discerned, and leaders can be mentored. Leadership development begins years earlier in the discipleship ministry of the local church.

Transformational Leadership

Ultimately, our goal is **transformational leadership**. Leadership through which God changes people from the inside out. Leaders that remain teachable and sufficiently grounded in God's Word and to stand courageously for truth. That kind of leadership leaves a legacy. And that transformation must begin with the leader.

A Challenge to Heartland Classis

My encouragement to Heartland Classis is relatively simple: **Let's not allow good leadership-development material to remain on the shelf.** Let's put it into the hands of elders and deacons. Let's use it with shepherds. Let's introduce it through Adult Education. And let's intentionally watch for those emerging leaders whom God may be preparing for something more.

Because the challenge before us is **needing to develop disciples who become leaders. Leaders who develop other leaders. And leaders whom God may eventually send to establish and strengthen churches.** That is multiplication. And TLT, together with resources such as Thrive and Re-Forma, gives us material already available to help us begin.

CARING FOR GOD'S PEOPLE

Becoming the Presence of Christ in the Lives of Others

Key Truth

The ministry of care is not reserved for pastors and elders alone. Every mature believer is called to participate in Christ's ministry of **shepherding, encouragement, comfort, guidance, healing, and reconciliation**.

"God caring for people through people."

The Five Marks of Caring Ministry

1. PRESENCE — Show Up

Before God spoke to Adam and Eve after the fall, He came looking for them.

Scripture: Genesis 3:8-9; Matthew 25:35-40

The first ministry of caring is often simply to _____.

Question: Who in your life may need someone simply to show up?

2. LISTENING — Hear Before Speaking

Many people do not need quick answers nearly as much as they need someone willing to listen carefully and patiently.

Remember:

- Listen to understand **facts**.
- Listen to understand **feelings**.
- Listen before giving **advice**.
- Listen before quoting **Scripture**.
- Listen so you know how to **pray**.

Scripture: James 1:19

Question: When have you felt truly heard by another believer?

3. COMFORT — Enter Another Person's Pain

Jesus did not merely explain suffering. He entered it.

Sometimes ministry looks less like answers and more like:

- Sitting **quietly**.
- Sharing **tears**.
- Offering **prayer**.
- Bringing a **meal**.
- Making a **visit**.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Question: What forms of comfort have meant the most to you during difficult seasons?

4. GUIDANCE — Share Wisdom, Not Control

Biblical guidance helps people grow in wisdom and dependence upon God rather than dependence upon us.

Good guidance asks:

1. Who is the person?
2. What is the question?
3. What is the situation?
4. What does Scripture say?

Scripture: Psalm 32:8; James 1:5

Good guidance creates dependence upon _____ rather than dependence upon _____.

Question: Why are Christians often tempted to give answers before asking questions?

5. RECONCILIATION — Move Toward Peace

The gospel is a story of reconciliation. Christ reconciled us to God and now entrusts us with the ministry of reconciliation toward others.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 5:18-20

Question: Which of these 8 steps is hardest for most people; confrontation, remorse, repentance, confession, forgiveness, rebuilding trust, celebration, or restitution? Which is hardest for you?

Three Questions for Every Christian

1. Who around me needs encouragement?
2. Who around me needs someone to listen?
3. What small act of obedience might God be asking me to do this week?

Final Challenge

Churches rarely fail because they lack programs. More often they struggle because people suffer quietly, drift unnoticed, grieve alone, or carry burdens in silence.

The ministry of caring for God's people begins when ordinary believers decide to become available to God and attentive to others.

The question is not: *"Am I qualified to care for others?"*

The better question is: *"Who has God already placed in my path to love in Christ's name this week?"*

Write down the name of **one person** to intentionally encourage, visit, call, or pray with during the coming week.

Mr. Del Walinga – Sermon Notes

Who Is This?

Opening

Some questions can be answered incorrectly and very little change. . . Which restaurant is better? . . . Who will win the game? . . . Which road will get us there sooner? Then there are questions, where getting the answer wrong can change everything. Is that building safe to enter? . . . Is that the person they are looking for? Is that person armed? Some questions carry consequences. Luke confronts us with one of them.

Jesus Arrival and Presence

In the preceding verses of chapter seven, Jesus has come from Capernaum, where He healed a centurion's servant from a distance. Now He comes to Nain, He encounters a funeral procession and raises that widow's son back to life. The crowd glorifies God, declaring, "*A great prophet has arisen among us!*" John the Baptist has sent messengers asking, "*Are you the one who is to come?*" Jesus points to what he has done before their eyes as the answer. The sick are healed, the blind see, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. And Jesus says; "*blessed is the one who is not offended by me*". We are told that the Pharisees and lawyers have "*rejected the purpose of God for themselves.*" by refusing John's baptism. A distancing of themselves from John's life style and message. As well as from Jesus for being too accepting of those believed to be unworthy

Luke 7:36–50

A Proud Host & Humble Sinner

One of the Pharisees, invites Jesus into his home for a meal. We are not told why. Perhaps to continue observing Him. Jesus accepts the invitation and "*reclines at the table*".

We are then introduced to "*a woman of the city, who was a sinner.*" We are not told her name or the specific sins behind her reputation. We are simply told that she "*learns*" that Jesus is there. This is no chance meeting. She has intentionally sought Him out. As Isaiah 55:6 reminds us "*Seek the Lord while he is near*"

She enters carrying an alabaster flask of expensive perfume. She makes her way behind Jesus close enough for her tears to fall onto His feet, wipes them with her hair, repeatedly kisses them, and anoints them with perfume. She holds nothing back. Not ashamed of Jesus and not hesitant or embarrassed by her actions. Just a very grateful display of affection.

The Pharisee sees this and thinks, "*If this man were really a prophet, he would know who is touching Him and what kind of woman she is*" The Pharisee is evaluating Jesus apparent lack of discernment. Jesus however, is evaluating the Pharisees heart. The Pharisee sees the woman's reputation. Jesus sees something much deeper. Jesus turns to him: "*Simon, I have something to say to you.*" Simon replies, "Say it, Teacher." Can you hear a little attitude? Maybe somewhat arrogant and dismissive. As one commentator noted; "*someone who is satisfied with his own goodness, dignity and importance.*"

Jesus then tells a parable about two debtors. One owes five hundred denarii, The other owes fifty. The debts are different, but the debtor's conditions are exactly the same. . . neither can pay. Yet, the creditor graciously forgives them both. Both need what they cannot provide for themselves; the grace and mercy of the one who is owed in full.

Jesus then asks, *"Which of them will love him more?"* And Simon answers, *"The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt."* Perhaps we can hear some reluctance in Simon's answer: "I suppose" Whether reluctant or not, Simon cannot escape the logic of Jesus' question. Simon acknowledges the obvious here because the logic of the parable leaves nowhere else to go. And Jesus responds, *"You have judged rightly."* Simon should be realizing that Jesus is no longer talking about two un-known debtors and a creditor. Jesus is talking about himself, the woman and him.

Simon has reached the correct conclusion, but reaching the correct conclusion is not the same as having a surrendered heart. One thing I learned in law enforcement is that acknowledging the evidence is not the same as admitting guilt. A suspect may realize where the evidence leads and even say, *"I guess you got me."* But acknowledging evidence alone is not a willingness to change, to repent, and go a new direction.

The reality for Simon should be in realizing that his religious activity has not really removed his guilt? That his outward righteousness has not eliminated his need for forgiveness. That he has failed to acknowledge his own need to repent. As Matthew Henry noted; *"Instead of grudging great sinners the mercy they find with Christ, we should be stirred up by their example to examine ourselves."*

The problem isn't outward sin, its inward pride. Pride that compares horizontally. A pride that compares oneself with people whose failures are more obvious. Jesus however is bringing the comparison vertical. Moral improvement cannot resolve pride, guilt or self-righteousness. Jesus turns the comparison vertically to consider the question; Can I pay the debt I owe to a holy God? The answer for both debtors, and us, is no.

Jesus now turns toward the woman, but continues speaking to Simon: *"Do you see this woman?"* As if to say, see this is proof! Of course, Simon sees her, but does he really take note of her? Simon sees her past. Jesus shows him a forgiven sinner. Simon sees someone unworthy to touch a prophet. Jesus shows him an outward expression of an inward change. *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, they are a new creation"*. (2nd Corinthians 5:17-21) "We do not know everything that led this woman into Simon's house that day. But Scripture tells us something about anyone who truly comes to Christ: *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him."* John 6:44. Salvation begins with God's gracious initiative to truly know forgiveness. God the Father calls us according to His gracious purpose. God the son accomplishes our redemption.

Romans 3:23-24 *"All have sinned and fall short of the Glory of God and are justified by His grace as a gift through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus"*

Then in verses 44-46 Jesus makes the comparison between the two. Simon had made several social errors in neglecting Jesus as his guest. And yet, Jesus is not teaching that the women's actions earned her forgiveness. He is showing the response to what forgiveness looks like. Her worship does not produce forgiveness; her worship flows from forgiveness. *"We love because He first loved us."* (1 John 4:19)

When Jesus says, *"Therefore I tell you her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much, but he who is forgiven little, loves little."* He is not saying she is forgiven because she demonstrates love. Rather her affection demonstrates her awareness of forgiveness received. Her affection is the evidence of forgiveness, rather than its cause. Jesus is showing the response to knowing Gods' forgiveness. Believing

righteousness begins with human performance is self-affection and leads to neglecting the forgiveness only God can offer. Jesus is teaching that righteousness begins with God's divine mercy and grace. Only in realizing the depth of our condition will we appreciate the depth of the forgiveness God offers.

The Heidelberg Catechism reminds us that we must begin with realizing our sin and misery. . . - we have nothing to offer, . . . before leading us to our deliverance - Christ alone, . . . and finally to a life of gratitude - responding out of love and obedience. That order is not accidental. A person believing a debt is small, feels there is little to be forgiven and repent from. Never fully rejoicing in the forgiveness offered. And, the one who knows, that regardless of the sin, there is nothing to offer God, will treasure Christ above everything else. The problem is never the size of the debt we owe. The problem is believing we can manage it. Human inability is central to the scriptures, and to the gospel.

The Ultimate Question

Then Jesus looks directly at the woman and declares, *"Your sins are forgiven."* A declaration based on the words of Jesus alone and verifying the certainty of who he is.

Everything has been leading to this moment. They all understand the implication. God alone has authority to forgive sin. Jesus was doing what only God has authority to do. Either Jesus has spoken blasphemy, or He is exactly who He has shown himself to be.

Luke has shown Jesus' authority over demons, nature, disease, and even death. Now we see His authority over humanity's greatest problem. . . sin. We are beyond merely calling Him a great teacher, a prophet, or a miracle worker.

Who is this?

It is a question that cannot remain theoretical. It demands a response. If Jesus is merely a teacher, we can consider His advice. A prophet, we can admire His courage. Merely an example, we can attempt to imitate His life. But if Jesus is God. . . and He is, then He is not some good teacher or a prophet about to die for his beliefs. He is the promised Prophet (Deuteronomy 18: 15-18) The high Priest (Psalm 110:45) The King (2 Samuel 7:12-16) as foreshadowed by God in the Old Testament. Bridging the gap between a sinful people and a Holy God.

And from the New Testament. "The Word was God," (John 1:1) and "The Word became flesh." (John 1:14) In (John 8: 58) Jesus declared, "Before Abraham was, I am." At (John 10:30) Jesus said, "I and the Father are one." Thomas stood before the risen Christ and confessed, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28). And if He has authority to forgive sin. . . and He does. Then we must acknowledge and respond to Him. The answer to the question is right before them and us.

A Saving Declaration

Jesus looks at the woman a final time and says, *"Your faith has saved you; go in peace."* Not your works. Not your perfume. Not your tears. Not even your love. But *"Your faith has saved you."*

Faith that does not save because faith itself has merit. Faith saves only because it receives the saving power that rests entirely in its object. . . Christ Jesus. *"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith, and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast"*. Eph. 2:8-9.

The woman entered Simon's house with a past she could not change and a reputation she could not erase. She leaves with something she could never earn and no one could take away; peace with God. A peace that is more than just a feeling. It is that peace of assurance that comes from being reconciled to God. That in Philippians 4:7 Paul tells us is a *"The peace of God that surpasses all understanding"*.

Some believe their past is simply too great a mess for God to ever forgive them. This passage answers that fear; our sins are never greater than His grace. Charles Spurgeon stated it like this *"The gate of mercy is wide enough for the greatest sinner outside of hell."* Allistar Begg said; *"Our greatest qualification for grace is recognizing our need of it"*. And it is Isaiah 55:7 that reminds us that God *"abundantly pardons"*.

Others face a different danger. They become so familiar with Christianity that they gradually trust in their own goodness. . . own obedience, own morality, own church attendance, or own reputation. . . more than God's mercy. This passage answers that deception too. The Christian never outgrows the gospel. R.C. Sproul said it like this, *"the closer we draw to God, the more aware we should become of our need for His grace"*

Two people were in the presence of Jesus that day. One had a known reputation for righteousness; the other had a known reputation for sin. One was confident in what they had done; the other had nothing to bring but their need. Yet the ultimate question Luke leaves us with is not, *"Am I more like Simon or more like the woman?"* The greater question the other guests begin asking, remains today; *"Who is this, who even forgives sins?"*

Which raises the question. How can a just and holy God forgive the debt?

The debt in Jesus' parable did not simply disappear or get ignored. Someone had to absorb the cost. The creditor forgave and assumed the debt. God cannot and does not abandon or overlook justice in order to show mercy. The road from Simon's table ultimately leads to the road of the cross and another table.

At the cross, justice and mercy meet perfectly. Christ bears the punishment we deserve so that you and I may receive the forgiveness we could never earn. Our debt is not canceled because it no longer matters. It is canceled because Christ paid it in full.

And at the Lord's Table, that same gospel is proclaimed visibly before us; a body given, a debt paid, Christ received by faith, and our gratitude renewed. As one commentator noted; for *"A prophet who is the truth. A Priest whose offering we receive and the Father accepts, and a King who reigns forever"*.

The Catechism also reminds us in Q & A 16-17. Our Savior had to be truly man because God's justice requires that human sin be paid for by a human. Yet He also had to be truly God so that, by the power of His divine and perfect nature, He could bear God's wrath and obtain for us righteousness and life.

The order of the gospel never changes; Grace awakens faith. Faith receives Christ. Christ grants forgiveness. Forgiveness produces fruit in grateful obedience. All of it rests upon the finished work of Jesus Christ. The One who still says to every sinner who comes by faith in Him; *"Your faith has saved you; go in peace."*

Hebrews 3:15 reminds us, *"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts."* And as Paul reminds us in 2 Corinthians 6:2 *"Behold, now is the day of salvation."*

We do not come to Christ because our record is clean. We come because His grace is sufficient. We do not come because of the size of our sin debt. We come because Christ paid what we could never pay. We do not come because we are worthy. We come because He is. We come in response to His word. We come in response to His word. We come because He draws us to His Son convincing you and I about Jesus and a restored relationship with God.

Who is this, who even forgives sins? The One who has authority to forgive. The One who bore the debt we could never pay. The One in whom sinners find peace with God. True God and true man. The Savior of sinners. Christ Jesus our Lord.