

- D) Christ's answer did not mean that she couldn't be stoned, but that those who would stone her had to be completely innocent of any participation in setting up the crime, encouraging the adultery, and that the leaders had made every effort to prevent the crime from happening once they understood there might be a problem.
- E) Christ's answer completely disarms the accusing leaders. He did not deny the Law, but His compassionate limitation on who was qualified to "throw stones" effectively assured that no harm would come to the woman.
- F) John (author) paints a word picture of a ring melting away from around the woman. One by one, as if in a procession from oldest to youngest, the accusers leave Jesus and the woman alone in the center of the temple court (8:9).
- G) Jesus, perhaps with tongue in cheek, inquires whether anyone has condemned her (8:10). Her stunned response, "No one, Lord" is one of appreciation and astonishment.
- H) Finally, Jesus answers the question which began this horrible episode, "...what then do You say?" His response, "I do not condemn you, either" (8:11) is one of tremendous compassion and undeserved grace. It is a great picture of Christ's interest in seeing the sinner saved (John 3:17).
- I) Christ though, does not condone her lifestyle of sin, and warns her to "sin no more" (8:11). She is to make a clean break with sin. We shouldn't miss that Jesus says nothing about forgiveness. She has not yet confessed repentance or faith. Jesus embodies John 7:24, "judge according to righteousness," and examples for us to do the same.

Compassion

Long Beach Alliance Church • December 5th, 2004 • Pastor Chris Lankford

**"HE WHO IS WITHOUT SIN AMONG YOU, LET HIM BE THE FIRST TO THROW A STONE AT HER."
~JOHN 8:7B (NASB)**

1) Important Textual Notes

- A) Clearly, John 7:53-8:11 was not part of the original text of the book of John. Most Bibles designate this section with brackets and some notation regarding its questionable authenticity to the original text of John.
- B) You might notice that the story-line (The Feast of Tabernacles) which has been progressing through John 7:52, is picked back up again without comment in John 8:12. This is probably because, in its original form, there was no 7:53-8:11 section to break up the text.
- C) The linguistic usage in John 7:53-8:12 are not consistent with John's writing (e.g., "scribes" in John 8:3). In fact, they are much more similar to Luke's writing style and typical word usage.
- D) Despite these textual discrepancies, the authenticity of the passage is not in question. The passage seems to be completely authentic, despite its "foreign" placement.

- E) The content of the passage is consistent with the character of the passage (and the larger corpus of NT teaching), and finds support in other passages for its theology. In other words, unlike more difficult passages (cf. Mark 16:9-20), the theology of this passage is not considered spurious.

- F) Even if the story is not part of John's original Gospel, we can have confidence that the story is true to the character of Jesus Christ. Almost all conservative scholars believe that the passage is both genuinely ancient (from/of Jesus), and historically true (authentic).

2) A Scandalous Trap

- A) After spending the night on/near the Mount of Olives (which overlooked Jerusalem), Jesus is in the center of the temple "outer court," teaching the people (John 8:1-2).

- B) The "scribes and Pharisees" bring a woman caught in the act of adultery to where Jesus is teaching, and place her in the center of the court, right next to Jesus. Clearly, the leaders were trying to make a public spectacle of the woman, the situation, and of Jesus (8:3).

- C) The leaders who have caught her emphasize that they have witnessed her "in the very act" of adultery (8:4). Based on their own testimony, the leaders reason (questionably) from the Law of Moses (Leviticus 20:10; Deuteronomy 22:22-24) that the woman should be stoned (8:5).

- D) The true intentions of the leaders are revealed as being a test (lit. "tempt") for Jesus Christ to fail (8:6). Many, if not all, scholars agree that the reason there is a conspicuous absence of the "man caught in adultery" is because the whole

scandalous situation was orchestrated by select leaders to trap Christ and destroy the adulterous woman in the process.

- E) If Christ affirmed the lynch mob's desire to stone the woman, he would be in clear violation of local Roman law (which did not sanction the death penalty for adultery) and (more significantly) would destroy His reputation as a "friend of sinners" (Luke 7:34).

- F) If Christ affirmed that she should not be stoned, He was in clear violation of the Law of Moses, and His authority would be destroyed. The question was a loaded dilemma!

3) Judging With Righteous Judgment

- A) Jesus "stoops" down to the level of the woman (kneels next to her), and begins to write on the ground. The same finger which had originally written the Law (Exodus 31:18) was now writing on the ground for the men to see (John 8:6).

- B) The leaders "persist" in asking Him what His verdict in the situation is going to be. A.W. Pink notes, "they no more grasped the force of His action of writing on the ground, than did Belshazzar [Daniel 5:1-9] understand the writing of that same Hand on the walls of his palace."

- C) Christ stands up to answer her accusers and, in one of the most compassionate sentences in all of history, encapsulates hope for the sinner "caught in the act" (John 8:7). After answering, Jesus stoops back down, and continues to write on the ground (8:8).

Small Group Bible Study Questions

- A) Judging according to what we see is pretty common, especially for those of us who are Christians. We have a tendency to “judge” (in the negative sense) by exterior ‘signs’ which we deem to be accurate, but often are not. Tattoos, piercings, wild clothing choices, wild hair choices, etc., are sometimes all we need to make pejorative judgments about people. Do you find you struggle with judging people according to appearance?
- B) Of course, in Jesus’ case (John 8:1-11), the judgment He was faced with had to do with a woman caught in the “very act” of adultery. There was no doubt as to her guilt. She was a genuine sinner, caught sinning. Have you, or someone you know, ever been confronted with a sinner whose brazen sin you/they were confronted with? What happened?
- C) At the heart of Jesus’ dealings with the adulterous woman was His attitude toward sin. Do you think Jesus was bothered by the adulterous woman’s sin? Explain why or why not.
- D) How does God feel about your sin? Is God surprised by your sin? Is God disappointed in you when you sin? Is God pleased with you when you don’t sin? When do you feel like God is happy with you? Who/what is most damaged by sin?
- E) John 8:34 (we’ll be chatting about this passage in a few weeks) says that “everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.” If our devotion to Christ is real, we will be people who live out Christ’s words to the adulterous woman, “Go... and sin no more” (John 8:11). Our “slavery” will not be to sin, but to Christ. James 5:16 says that we ought to “confess our sins to one another” so we can be healed. Why would the Bible say that? Because, in confessing to Christ for forgiveness and to one another for accountability, we deal sin the death-blow of exposure. Secrets are Satan’s playground. So, even though this might be a risky proposition -- take some time in your group, or with someone you absolutely trust -- and spill your sin. Pray for one another. When you listen, be like Christ (John 8:10-11).

Small Group Bible Study Questions

- A) Judging according to what we see is pretty common, especially for those of us who are Christians. We have a tendency to “judge” (in the negative sense) by exterior ‘signs’ which we deem to be accurate, but often are not. Tattoos, piercings, wild clothing choices, wild hair choices, etc., are sometimes all we need to make pejorative judgments about people. Do you find you struggle with judging people according to appearance?
- B) Of course, in Jesus’ case (John 8:1-11), the judgment He was faced with had to do with a woman caught in the “very act” of adultery. There was no doubt as to her guilt. She was a genuine sinner, caught sinning. Have you, or someone you know, ever been confronted with a sinner whose brazen sin you/they were confronted with? What happened?
- C) At the heart of Jesus’ dealings with the adulterous woman was His attitude toward sin. Do you think Jesus was bothered by the adulterous woman’s sin? Explain why or why not.
- D) How does God feel about your sin? Is God surprised by your sin? Is God disappointed in you when you sin? Is God pleased with you when you don’t sin? When do you feel like God is happy with you? Who/what is most damaged by sin?
- E) John 8:34 (we’ll be chatting about this passage in a few weeks) says that “everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin.” If our devotion to Christ is real, we will be people who live out Christ’s words to the adulterous woman, “Go... and sin no more” (John 8:11). Our “slavery” will not be to sin, but to Christ. James 5:16 says that we ought to “confess our sins to one another” so we can be healed. Why would the Bible say that? Because, in confessing to Christ for forgiveness and to one another for accountability, we deal sin the death-blow of exposure. Secrets are Satan’s playground. So, even though this might be a risky proposition -- take some time in your group, or with someone you absolutely trust -- and spill your sin. Pray for one another. When you listen, be like Christ (John 8:10-11).