

John 8:1-11
August 3, 2025

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Why do you think Jesus' forgiveness comes with a command to "sin no more?" [Let people engage]

Transition: Relationships can be difficult and challenging. Sometimes they end "happily ever after" and other times the end more like a train wreck. Today our text starts with the story of a woman who made a bad relational choice. She might have made this choice once, several times, or for several years. We don't know all the details, but she ends up getting caught. Her bad choice puts her in a place that she never imagined she would be.

Today's story shows us religious leaders who were trying to trap Jesus so they could have a reason to arrest Him. These religious leaders treat an adulterous woman with *no compassion*. But we're going to see the *compassion of Jesus who invites us to drop our stones, especially for those of us who tend to be judgmental*. He wasn't "soft on sin." *Instead, He invites us into obedience. He tells us to "sin no more."* Let's read the text.

BOOK:

8 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. (The Feast of Tabernacles had ended, but Jesus took advantage of the opportunity to minister to the pilgrims in the temple.) ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" ⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, **"If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."** ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, **"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"** ¹¹ "No one, sir," she said. **"Then neither do I condemn you,"** Jesus declared. **"Go now and leave your life of sin."**

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What stood out to you? What questions do you have? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about man? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? [Let people engage]

Q: What is your takeaway? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

The Law was given to reveal sin (Rom. 3:20), and we must be condemned by the Law before we can be cleansed by God's grace. Law and grace do not compete with each other; they complement each other. Nobody was ever saved by keeping the Law, but nobody was ever saved by grace who was not *first* indicted by the Law. There must be conviction before there can be conversion.

Christ's gracious forgiveness should not be seen as a license to keep on sinning. "Go, and sin no more!" was our Lord's counsel. Let's pray that God's forgiveness and compassion toward us motivates us to live a holy and obedient life to the glory of God.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible Exposition Commentary (Vol. 1, pp. 319-320). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Is the story of the woman taken in adultery a part of Scripture? If it is, where does it belong in the Gospel record? John 7:53–8:11 is not found in some of the ancient manuscripts; where it is found, it is not always in this location in John's Gospel. Most scholars seem to agree that the

passage is a part of inspired Scripture (“a fragment of authentic Gospel material,” says Dr. F.F. Bruce) regardless of where it is placed.

To many of us, the story fits right here! In fact, the development of the entire chapter can easily be seen to grow out of this striking event in the temple. Our Lord’s declaration on His being the Light of the world (John 8:12) certainly fits, and so do His words about true and false judgment (John 8:15–16, 26). The repeated phrase “die in your sins” (John 8:21, 24) would clearly relate to the judgment of the woman; and the fact that the chapter ends with an attempt to stone Jesus shows a perfect parallel to the opening story. The transition from John 7:52 to 8:12 would be too abrupt without a transitional section.

Our Lord found Himself again in conflict with the Jewish religious leaders; but this time, they set a trap, hoping to get enough evidence to arrest Jesus and get Him out of the way. However, their plot failed; but a controversy followed. In this chapter we see a series of contrasts that reveal the graciousness of Christ and the wickedness of man.

Grace and Law (John 8:11)

The Feast of Tabernacles had ended, but Jesus took advantage of the opportunity to minister to the pilgrims in the temple. During the feast, word had quickly spread that Jesus was not only attending but openly teaching in the temple (see Luke 21:37). He taught in the court of the women at the place where the treasury was situated (John 8:20). The scribes and Pharisees knew where He would be, so they hatched their plot together.

They would not be likely to catch a couple in the “very act” of adultery; so we wonder if the man (who never was indicted!) was part of the scheme. The Law required that *both* guilty parties be stoned (Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22) and not just the woman. It does seem suspicious that the man went free. The scribes and Pharisees handled the matter in a brutal fashion, even in the way they interrupted the Lord’s teaching and pushed the woman into the midst of the crowd.

The Jewish leaders, of course, were trying to pin Jesus on the horns of a dilemma. If He said, “Yes, the woman must be stoned!” then what would happen to His reputation as the “friend of publicans and sinners”? The common people would no doubt have abandoned Him and would never have accepted His gracious message of forgiveness.

But, if He said, “No, the woman should not be stoned!” then He was openly breaking the Law and subject to arrest. On more than one occasion, the religious leaders had tried to pit Jesus against Moses, and now they seemed to have the perfect challenge (see John 5:39–47; 6:32ff; 7:40ff).

Instead of passing judgment on the woman, Jesus passed judgment on the judges! No doubt He was indignant at the way they treated the woman. He was also concerned that such hypocrites should condemn another person and not judge themselves. We do not know what He wrote on the dirt floor of the temple. Was He simply reminding them that the Ten Commandments had been originally written “by the finger of God” (Ex. 31:18), and that He is God? Or was He perhaps reminding them of the warning in Jeremiah 17:13?

It was required by Jewish Law that the accusers cast the first stones (Deut. 17:7). Jesus was not asking that sinless men judge the woman, for He was the only sinless Person present. If our judges today had to be perfect, judicial benches would be empty. He was referring to *the particular sin of the woman*, a sin that can be committed in the heart as well as with the body (Matt. 5:27–30). Convicted by their own consciences, the accusers quietly left the scene, and Jesus was left alone with the woman. He forgave her and warned her to sin no more (John 5:14). We must not misinterpret this event to mean that Jesus was “easy on sin” or that He contradicted the Law. For Jesus to forgive this woman meant that He had to one day die for her sins.

Forgiveness is free but it is not cheap. Furthermore, Jesus perfectly fulfilled the Law so that no one could justly accuse Him of opposing its teachings or weakening its power. By applying the Law to the woman *and not to themselves*, the Jewish leaders were violating both the letter and the spirit of the Law—and they thought they were defending Moses!

The Law was given to reveal sin (Rom. 3:20), and we must be condemned by the Law before we can be cleansed by God’s grace. Law and grace do not compete with each other; they complement each other. Nobody was ever saved by keeping the Law, but nobody was ever saved by grace who was not *first* indicted by the Law. There must be conviction before there can be conversion.

Nor is Christ’s gracious forgiveness an excuse to sin. “Go, and sin no more!” was our Lord’s counsel. “But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared” (Ps. 130:4). Certainly the experience of gracious forgiveness would motivate the penitent sinner to live a holy and obedient life to the glory of God.

Blum, E. A. (1985). *John*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 2, p. 302) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

7:53–8:11. Almost all textual scholars agree that these verses were not part of the original manuscript of the Gospel of John. The NIV states in brackets that “The earliest and most reliable manuscripts do not have John 7:53–8:11.” The style and vocabulary of this passage differ from the rest of the Gospel, and the passage interrupts the sequence from 7:52–8:12. It is probably a part of true oral tradition which was added to later Greek manuscripts by copyists. For more discussion on the subject and an exposition of the passage, see the *Appendix* before the *John Bibliography*.

White, J. E. (1998). *John*. In D. S. Dockery (Ed.), *Holman Concise Bible Commentary* (p. 476). Broadman & Holman Publishers.

Sinless Judge (7:53–8:11)

This story is certainly in line with Jesus’ character and teaching, but it does not appear in the earliest and most reliable manuscripts. This does not deny the story’s authenticity, only that it may have been added at a later date. (See NIV note.)

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees had brought a woman who had been caught in adultery to the feet of Jesus in order that He might pronounce the proper judgment upon her. The purpose

was to trap Jesus, for if He neglected to suggest stoning, as the law required, He could be charged with being a lawbreaker. (The actual law prescribed stoning only if she was a betrothed virgin; the man was to be stoned as well, see Lev. 20:10; Deut. 22:22–24.) If, however, Jesus did advocate stoning, then He would bring the wrath of the Roman government to bear upon Himself. How did Jesus handle the dilemma? “If any of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.” Brilliantly, He did not break the law; yet He ensured the woman would not be stoned. When all had left, Jesus addressed the woman’s two greatest needs, self-esteem and a new life. For her self-esteem, He assured her that He, who was without sin, did not condemn her. For her deepest need, that of a new life, Jesus said, “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

Allen, J. P. (1972). *John*. In H. F. Paschall & H. H. Hobbs (Eds.), *The Teacher’s Bible Commentary* (p. 674). Broadman and Holman Publishers.

The Light of the World (John 8:1–11)

The passage—John dwells on the disputes between Jesus and the Jews far more than any other writer. He does it because it is testimony about himself from the mouth of Jesus. In dialogue many facts about a man emerge. It is good for Jesus’ friends to hear him talk about himself. The scene is in the Temple area (v. 20). It is the same or following day from chapter 7.

Special points—The section from 7:53–8:11 presents a problem. It was not a part of John’s original text. No manuscripts before the 12th century show it. And after it appeared it varied in location. Sometimes it was found at the end of John, sometimes after 7:36, and also after Luke 21. Thus, it is omitted in nearly all 20th-century versions.

The narrative has every mark of truthfulness. It is probably an apostolic tradition. John clearly says that many deeds of Jesus were not written (20:30; 21:25). Indeed, all the stories of Jesus’ life were told orally before they were ever put in writing. Most scholars accept it because it is so much like Jesus, in attitude and action. One wonders if it was put here because it illustrates verse 15.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). John 8:1-25. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.