

WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY

John 7:53 - 8:11

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Jesus, the religious leaders, and the woman

Key-location: Temple in Jerusalem

Key-repetitions:

- Adultery: woman caught committing adultery (Jn 8:3); religious leaders told Jesus she was caught committing adultery (Jn 8:4).
- Persistence of woman's accusers: Religious leaders questioned Jesus (Jn 8:4); they used a question to trap Jesus (Jn 8:6); they kept on questioning Jesus (Jn 8:7).
- Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground: The religious leaders questioned Jesus about stoning the woman caught in adultery, and Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground (Jn 8:6); they kept questioning and Jesus said, "If any one of you is without sin, let him throw the first stone at her." Again Jesus bent down and again wrote on the ground (Jn 8:8).
- Accuse: Religious leaders accused the woman of adultery (Jn 8:4); Jesus asked the woman, "Does no one accuse you?" (Jn 8:10); Jesus told the woman, "Neither do I accuse you" (Jn 8:11).

Key-attitudes:

- Religious leaders' deception.
- Woman's embarrassment.
- Jesus' frustration at the woman's accusers.
- Religious leaders' shame when they walked away.
- Jesus' compassion for the woman.

Initial-situation:

The third year of Jesus' ministry is divided into two halves. During the first half, Jesus went on three retreats seeking to be alone with his disciples.

During the second half, Jesus made three trips to Jerusalem to participate in three religious festivals. The first trip was for the Feast of the Tabernacles. Jesus taught at the feast and experienced some in the crowd and the Jewish leaders arguing with him.

Initial-problem:

The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees brought into the temple a woman caught committing adultery.

Final-situation:

Jesus told the woman that he did not condemn her, and for her to leave her life of sin.

BIBLE STORY

When evening came, each person went to his own home. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn, Jesus returned to the temple courts. People gathered around Jesus and he sat down to teach them (Jn 7:53 - 8:2).

Teachers of the Law and Pharisees brought in a woman they had caught committing adultery. They made her stand before everyone and questioned Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught committing adultery. In the Law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. What do you say?" They used this question to trap him into saying something incriminating so they could bring charges against him.

Jesus bent down and wrote on the ground with his finger. They persisted in questioning Jesus about the woman. Finally, Jesus straightened up and told them, "If any one of you is without sin, go ahead and throw the first stone at her." Again Jesus bent down and again wrote on the ground.

The teachers of the Law and Pharisees heard Jesus' words; they began to go away one at a time, beginning with the oldest. Finally, Jesus and the woman were left alone. Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Does anyone accuse you?"

She answered, "No one, sir."

Jesus declared, "Then neither do I accuse you. Go now and leave your life of sin" (Jn 8:4-11).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. How were the religious leaders trying to trap Jesus when they brought the adulterous woman to Jesus?
2. How did Jesus treat the woman's accusers?
3. Contrast the way the religious leaders treated the woman against how Jesus treated her.
4. What was the significance of Jesus' words to the woman's accusers?
5. What was the significance of Jesus' words to the woman?
6. How did Jesus' words to the woman reveal that he both takes sin seriously while he has compassion for the sinner?
7. How does the way Jesus treated the woman help us when we have done wrong?
8. How does the way Jesus treated the woman help us deal with people who have done wrong?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. **Legalistic religious people are selective in the sins and the people they condemn.** The Jewish leaders disregarded the law by arresting the adulterous woman without the adulterous man (Jn 8:4). Old Testament Law required that both parties in the adulterous act were to be stoned (Lev 20:10; Deut 22:22).
2. **People who are zealous for the punishment of others, should neither be guilty of the same nor of similar crimes.** Jesus exposed the hypocrisy of the woman's accusers when he said, "If any one of you is without sin, go ahead and throw the first stone at her." The accusers began to go away (Jn 8:7-8). The words, "without sin," implies "without this particular sin." Their consciousness of sin showed the state of public morals was corrupt, and that Jesus was justified in declaring that it was an adulterous and wicked generation (Mat 16:4).
3. **Age and experience can replace youthful self-righteousness.** Jesus told the woman's accusers, "If any one of you is without sin, go ahead and throw the first stone at her." The accusers began to go away one at a time, beginning with the oldest (Jn 8:7-8).
4. **Jesus offers the sinner forgiveness instead of condemnation.** Jesus, who had never sinned (Jn 8:46), forgave the adulterous woman (Jn 8:10-11). On the cross, Jesus took the sinners' sins upon himself (Rom 8:1, 3).
5. **The person whose sins are forgiven does not have a license to sin.** Jesus ordered the adulterous woman to leave her life of sin (Jn 8:11). See Romans 6:1-14.

LEARNING ACTIVITIES

Role-playing Drama:

The storyteller tells the story once. Then the storyteller designates four people to dramatize the story.

- One dramatizes Jesus.
- One dramatizes the adulterous woman.
- Two dramatize two Pharisees who are the woman's accusers.