

“Breakthrough!” in 2022

GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide
SB 10.02.2022

Throwing Stones in Glass Houses – John 8:1-11

Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week’s message? Discuss with your group.

Our story takes place in the Temple courts, with a large crowd of people gathered around Jesus to hear Him teach. The Jewish feast of Tabernacles had just ended, so there were still plenty of people left over in Jerusalem. At some point while He was teaching, a group of religious men interrupted what was happening and dragged a woman through the crowd and cast her down at Jesus’ feet. They told Jesus that they had just caught this woman in the ‘act of adultery.’ How did they do that? We’re not told, but something fishy seems to have been going on. The rabbinic law stated that since adultery was a capital offense, any accusation had to be a literal eyewitness testimony. It wasn’t enough to say, ‘I saw the two of them walk into a hotel.’ So, how did these men ‘happen’ to catch her ‘in the act?’ The religious leaders had presented Jesus with what they believed was an open and shut case. She had been caught in the very act. They stood there with rocks in their hands, ready to carry out the sentence. Let’s get into our lesson...

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

1. What struck you from this week’s sermon?
2. What is your earliest memory of asking someone else for forgiveness, or having someone ask you for forgiveness?
3. How did it feel to be forgiven? How did it feel to forgive?
4. Has your perspective on forgiveness changed as you’ve gotten older? How so?

Digging Deeper in God’s Word: Life Lessons

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:1-6

1. Who were the Pharisees and scribes? Why were they bringing this woman before Jesus?

The scribes and Pharisees were among the recognized religious authorities of that day. Scribes were experts in biblical law. That included not only the Scriptures but also the rabbinical interpretations that comprised the oral traditions religious Jews sought to follow. The Pharisees were known for their dedication to observe all the biblical laws and oral traditions. These two groups, therefore, represented the pillars of the religious community and the guardians of established morality.

2. Have someone read Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22. What did the law say about the woman?
3. What punishment did the crowd want for the adulterous woman?
4. How might the woman have felt during this experience

Since Jesus taught about God’s will and ways, the religious leaders asked His opinion on the case of the adulterous woman. The scribes and Pharisees evidently had in mind Deuteronomy 22:22-24, which condemns to death both the woman and the man guilty of adultery. The woman was shamed by the law and could be punished by stoning.

1. Do you think the scribes and Pharisees were sincere about the need to punish the woman? Why or why not? Who else should they have presented for punishment?

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2. What was the goal of the Pharisees by bringing the adulterous woman to Jesus?

The scribes and Pharisees’ aim was to discredit Jesus and bring Him into conflict with the Roman authorities. In bringing the guilty woman before Jesus, the religious leaders were not acting from a love for God, for purity, nor for justice. They certainly had no love for the woman. To them, she was simply a weapon to use against Jesus. So on the one hand, if Jesus advocated stoning the woman, the trap perhaps was to accuse Him of advocating a death sentence in violation of Roman law. In that scenario, the scribes and Pharisees hoped the authorities would arrest and even execute Jesus. This woman was being used as a pawn by the religious leaders, yet Jesus would turn the table on them by asking a simple question and offering this woman grace.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ JOHN 8:6-9

1. How did Jesus answer the scribes and Pharisees?

Instead of falling into the trap of answering them, Jesus stooped down and used his finger to write or draw on the ground. What did He write or draw? There have certainly been many theories. Was He doodling? Was He listing the erring ways of the accusers? Was He copying the pattern of the Roman justices in writing the sentence and then orally stating the same? Was He acting out the implications of Jeremiah 17:13 concerning writing in the dust “those who turn away” from the Lord? Or did Jesus write Exodus 23:1 and 7 concerning joining in evil witnesses and avoiding false charges? Unfortunately we cannot know for certain.

2. How did Jesus’ direction to the crowd reveal the accusers’ problems?
3. Why do you think the older men left first?

Jesus finally said, “The one without sin among you should be the first to throw a stone at her.” When they heard this, they left one by one, starting with the older men. Jesus could have used the term “without sin” to mean any kind of sin, but in this context it seems more likely He meant the sin of adultery. This does not necessarily mean the accusers committed adultery in the flesh, for adultery is not only a sin of the flesh but also a sin of the heart (see Matt. 5:28). The main thing to recognize is that in stating “the one without sin among you should be the first to throw a stone at her,” Jesus was effectively introducing grace to the woman, freeing her from shame and condemnation.

HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 8:10-11

1. What do you think the woman was feeling when it was just her and Jesus?
2. What did Jesus say to her? How did Jesus’ words empower the woman?

Jesus said two intensely significant things to her. These two things are closely connected and both are vitally important: 1) “Neither do I condemn you.” God has pronounced a spiritual death penalty on all sins, and that penalty has not been revoked. Jesus was showing that God is more interested in converting sinners than in condemning them. 2) “Go, and from now on do not sin any more.” This command destroys any misunderstanding about Jesus’ attitude toward sin in general and the sin of adultery in particular. He neither excused the woman’s behavior nor gave her license to continue her sinful ways. Rather, He gave her an opportunity to make a new start. He invited her to repentance and faith. He empowered her to live with God and others free of shame.

Applying God’s Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

1. Do you often feel a sense of condemnation? Why do you think that many who know Jesus’ forgiveness still somehow feel condemnation?
2. The discipline of confession is important, both personally and as a group. How can we do better to

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incorporate confession into our community of faith? How would it benefit us as individuals?

3. Considering our call as believers entrusted with the gospel message, how should knowing that we are completely forgiven change the way we live each day?

PRAYER - Lead your group in prayer thanking God for His forgiveness. Thank God for restoring us through the work of Jesus. Pray that when you feel shame, you will look to Scripture and to Jesus to receive power. Pray for those at our church who are dealing with shame and loneliness. Pray that they would find peace and restoration in Christ. Finally, be on the lookout to encourage and befriend the people in your church who are dealing with shame and loneliness.

“There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to Him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a person who stirs up conflict in the community.” {Proverbs 6:16-19}.