

1. WHERE IS THE MAN?

Read John 8:3–5

The religious leaders bring a woman to Jesus and say she was caught in adultery.

Put yourself in the scene.

Jesus is teaching.

There are people everywhere.

Then suddenly these men drag this woman into the middle of everybody.

Her sin is now public.

Everyone is staring at her.

Everybody knows what she did.

But there is an obvious problem with this story.

ASK:

If she was caught committing adultery, who else should probably be standing there?

Hopefully somebody says:

“The man.”

Exactly.

ASK:

So where is he?

The Old Testament law held both people responsible.

Yet somehow these men caught her “in the act,” dragged her across town, brought her before Jesus...

and lost the guy.

That should immediately make us suspicious.

The woman really may have sinned.

Jesus never says she is innocent.

But these men are not simply trying to faithfully obey God.

They are using her.

DISCUSS:

What is the difference between wanting someone to repent and wanting someone to be embarrassed or punished?

Follow up with:

Have you ever seen someone's mistake become entertainment at school?

Someone does something stupid.

Someone gets caught.

A screenshot gets shared.

A rumor starts.

Everybody talks about it.

And eventually we stop seeing a person.

All we see is what they did.

That is exactly what happens to this woman.

She has become ammunition.

2. THIS IS ACTUALLY A TRAP

Read John 8:6a

“They were using this question as a trap...”

This tells us what is really going on.

They are not mainly interested in her.

They want Jesus.

They basically say:

“Moses says she deserves judgment. What do YOU say?”

They think Jesus has two choices.

If Jesus says:

“Let her go,”

they can accuse Him of ignoring Scripture.

But if Jesus says:

“Punish her,”

what happens to this Jesus who has been known for welcoming sinners and showing mercy?

They think they have Him trapped.

ASK:

If you were Jesus, what would you say?

Let them wrestle with it.

Then say:

Instead of immediately answering...

Jesus bends down.

3. WHAT DID JESUS WRITE?

Read John 8:6b

Jesus begins writing on the ground.

ASK:

What do you think He wrote?

Let students speculate.

Have some fun with it for a minute.

Then say:

Here is the answer:

We have absolutely no idea.

John doesn't tell us.

And if John doesn't tell us, we probably shouldn't pretend we know.

But there is an interesting Old Testament connection.

Read Jeremiah 17:9–10, 13

Notice these ideas:

- The human heart is deceptive.
- God searches the heart.
- Those who turn away from God are “written in the dust.”
- God is called the source of living water.

That is interesting because immediately before this story, in John 7, Jesus has just talked about **living water**.

And now He bends down and writes in the dust.

We cannot prove John is saying, “Jesus was acting out Jeremiah 17.”

But imagine being someone who knew Jeremiah by heart and watching this happen.

These men came asking:

“What should God do about HER sin?”

Jesus forces them to consider:

“What should God do about YOUR sin?”

ASK:

Why is it easier to talk about someone else's sin than our own?

Possible answers:

- It makes us feel better about ourselves.
- We don't have to deal with our own problems.
- Their sin seems worse.

- Everyone can see theirs but not ours.
- Then say:

Here is one of the biggest ideas in this story:

Be careful when you demand that someone else gets what they deserve—because eventually you have to ask what you deserve.

4. WHO GETS TO THROW THE FIRST STONE?

Read John 8:7–9

Jesus finally stands up and says:

“Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.”

Sometimes people use this verse to mean:

“Since nobody is perfect, nobody can ever tell anybody they are doing something wrong.”

But that cannot be what Jesus means.

Why?

Because Jesus is about to tell the woman that she needs to stop sinning.

The bigger issue is this:

Under the law, the witnesses were supposed to be the first ones to carry out the judgment.

So Jesus basically says:

“You are the witnesses?

You are demanding judgment?

Then before you throw that stone, make sure you are prepared to stand before God too.”

And suddenly...

everyone gets quiet.

ASK:

Why do you think they leave instead of arguing with Jesus?

Then notice the detail:

The older ones leave first.

ASK:

Why do you think John mentions that?

Maybe the longer you live, the more aware you become of how much grace you have needed.

One by one...

they drop their stones.

ACTIVITY — WHAT DOES A “STONE” LOOK LIKE TODAY?

Say:

We probably aren't carrying literal rocks around.

But we still throw stones.

ASK:

What are some modern-day “stones”?

If you have a whiteboard, write their answers down.

Possible examples:

- Gossip
- Screenshots
- Rumors
- Making fun of someone
- Bringing up something they did years ago
- Social media comments

- Excluding someone
- Telling everybody their business
- Secretly enjoying someone else getting in trouble
- Making someone's failure into a joke

Then ask:

Which of these is easiest for teenagers to participate in without even realizing it?

Let them talk.

Then say:

Jesus does not teach us to pretend sin doesn't matter.

But forgiven people should be very careful about how eagerly we pick up rocks.

5. JESUS SEES A PERSON

Read John 8:9–10

Eventually everybody leaves.

Now think about how this woman entered the story.

She was:

- Dragged into the crowd.
- Publicly embarrassed.
- Talked about.
- Accused.
- Used.

Nobody even talks **TO** her.

They talk **ABOUT** her.

Until Jesus.

Jesus finally looks at her and says:

“Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

ASK:

What is the difference between talking ABOUT someone and actually talking TO them?

This woman had basically become:

“The woman caught in adultery.”

That was her identity to everybody in that courtyard.

We do this all the time.

We label people by the worst thing we know about them.

“The kid who got suspended.”

“The girl who got pregnant.”

“The guy who got arrested.”

“The addict.”

“The liar.”

“The cheater.”

“The weird kid.”

“The person who messed everything up.”

Once we give somebody a label, we can stop seeing them as a person.

But Jesus refuses to allow this woman’s worst moment to become her permanent name.

ASK:

Why should Christians be especially careful about labeling people by their past?

6. “NEITHER DO I CONDEMN YOU”

Read John 8:10–11

This might be the most important moment in the story.

Jesus asks:

“Has no one condemned you?”

She says:

“No one, sir.”

And Jesus says:

“Neither do I condemn you.”

Now think about something.

Jesus had just said:

“Let the one who is without sin throw the first stone.”

Was there anybody there without sin?

Yes.

Jesus.

The only person qualified to throw the stone...

doesn't.

The only person in the courtyard who truly had the right to condemn her chooses mercy.

That is the Gospel.

Read Romans 8:1

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

Jesus does not save us because our sin does not matter.

Our sin matters.

Jesus saves us because He chose to carry our condemnation Himself.

ASK:

What is the difference between Jesus saying, “You didn’t do anything wrong,” and Jesus saying, “Neither do I condemn you”?

Let them answer.

This distinction matters.

Jesus is not pretending she is innocent.

He is giving mercy to someone who is guilty.

That is grace.

7. GRACE DOESN'T LEAVE YOU WHERE IT FOUND YOU

But Jesus isn't finished.

He says:

"Neither do I condemn you."

And then:

"Go now and leave your life of sin."

This is really important.

Jesus does not say:

"Neither do I condemn you, so just keep doing whatever you want."

He also does not say:

"You are a disgusting sinner. Fix yourself and maybe I will love you."

Jesus gives her both:

Grace and truth.

Mercy and holiness.

He essentially says:

"I will not condemn you.

But I love you too much to leave you here."

ASK:

Why is "I love you, therefore nothing you do matters" actually not very loving?

Then ask:

Why is “You messed up, so I’m done with you” not the way of Jesus either?

Jesus chooses something better.

BIG IDEA:

Grace is not God pretending you are fine. Grace is God meeting you exactly where you are and loving you too much to leave you there.

THREE WAYS TO LIVE THIS OUT

1. DROP THE STONE

Before you expose someone...

Before you share the screenshot...

Before you repeat the rumor...

Before you bring up their failure again...

Look at your own heart.

Ask yourself:

“Am I trying to help this person become more like Jesus—or do I just enjoy knowing they messed up?”

That doesn’t mean we ignore sin.

It means we confront sin with humility because we know we need grace too.

ASK:

What is a “stone” teenagers are especially tempted to carry?

2. STAND WITH THE PERSON IN THE MIDDLE

Everybody else saw a scandal.

Jesus saw a person.

There will be moments when somebody at school messes up and everyone turns on them.

You do not have to pretend what they did was okay.

But you can refuse to join the mob.

You can refuse to laugh.

You can refuse to share the screenshot.

You can refuse to spread the story.

You can actually talk to them.

You can ask if they are okay.

You can point them toward Jesus.

KEY QUESTION:

Where can I stand that looks most like Jesus?

Sometimes following Jesus means standing with the person everybody else has decided to talk about.

3. GET UP AND WALK INTO SOMETHING NEW

Maybe you are not the person holding the stone.

Maybe you feel like the person standing in the middle.

Maybe you have done something you regret.

Maybe everybody knows.

Maybe nobody knows.

Maybe you have started thinking:

“This is just who I am.”

Jesus says something different.

“Neither do I condemn you.”

But He also says:

“Go now and leave your life of sin.”

Your past does not have to become your future.

There can be repentance.

There can be healing.

There can be change.

There can be another chapter.

KEY LINE:

You do not have to stay here.

FINAL DISCUSSION

Use as many of these as time allows.

1. **Who do you identify with most in this story—the woman, the crowd, the accusers, or somebody else? Why?**
2. **Why do you think people sometimes enjoy seeing another person fail?**
3. **What are some ways Christians can confront sin without “throwing stones”?**
4. **What is the difference between grace and simply saying, “It doesn’t matter what you do”?**
5. **Why are both parts of Jesus’ statement important: “Neither do I condemn you” AND “Go and leave your life of sin”?**
6. **What would it look like this week for you to stand with “the person in the middle”?**
7. **Is there something in your own life where Jesus may be telling you, “You don’t have to stay here”?**

CLOSE

Say:

If you remember nothing else from today, remember these three things:

Drop the stone.

Before you become obsessed with everybody else's failure, let Jesus examine your heart.

Stand with the person in the middle.

Do not reduce people to the worst thing they have ever done.

And finally:

Get up and walk into something new.

Jesus' grace does not say your sin does not matter.

His grace says your sin does not have to have the final word.

The only sinless person in the courtyard could have condemned this woman.

Instead, He gave her mercy.

And then He invited her into a different life.

No condemnation.

No compromise.

A new life.