

Close Encounters With Jesus: Amazing Grace 9/27/26

John 8:1–11

Day 1 — Caught in the Middle

Read: John 8:1–6

There are moments when we'd give almost anything to disappear.

That's where the woman in John 8 finds herself. She isn't simply confronted with her sin; she is dragged into a public place and made to stand in front of a crowd. Her worst moment has become a spectacle.

The religious leaders aren't really interested in helping her. They're using her to trap Jesus. To them, she has become a problem, an example, even a weapon.

But Jesus sees a person.

That distinction matters.

We can be quick to define people by what they've done. *The addict. The liar. The person who walked away. The person whose marriage fell apart. The person who messed everything up.*

Sometimes we do the same thing to ourselves. We allow our worst moments to become our identity.

But when this woman has a **close encounter with Jesus**, she discovers something about Him: Jesus knows the truth about her without reducing her to it. Grace doesn't pretend sin doesn't matter. Grace simply says that your sin doesn't get the final word.

That's amazing grace.

Reflect

- Is there something from your past that you've allowed to become part of your identity?
- When someone fails, are you more likely to see their failure or the person behind it?
- What would change if you believed Jesus already knows the whole story and still invites you near?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You for seeing all of me and still meeting me with grace. Help me stop defining myself and others by our worst moments. Remind me that my identity is found in You. Amen.

Today's Step:

When shame reminds you of something you've done, answer it with this truth: **My failure is part of my story, but it is not my identity.**

Day 2 — Prayed Up

Read: John 8:1–5

"At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered

around him, and he sat down to teach them." — John 8:2

Before the confrontation, before the accusations, and before the difficult questions, Jesus had spent time with His Father.

John tells us that Jesus had gone to the Mount of Olives and then returned early the next morning to teach. Throughout the Gospels, we repeatedly see Jesus withdrawing to quiet places to pray.

That rhythm prepared Him for moments like this one.

Jesus walks into a situation filled with tension. Religious leaders are trying to trap Him. A woman's life hangs in the balance. Everyone is waiting for Him to react.

Yet Jesus isn't hurried.

He isn't defensive.

He isn't controlled by the emotions of the crowd.

There's something for us here.

We often wait until the difficult moment arrives before we pray. Jesus shows us another way: **prepare your heart before the pressure comes.**

We don't know what conversations, temptations, interruptions, or opportunities today will bring. But we can enter them already connected to God.

Prayer isn't just something we do when life falls apart. Prayer prepares us to live faithfully when life gets complicated.

Reflect

- What usually gets your attention first in the morning?
- How might prayer change the way you respond when someone frustrates or challenges you?
- What situation in your life right now requires wisdom rather than a quick reaction?

Prayer

Father, prepare my heart for whatever today brings. Give me wisdom before I speak, patience before I react, and grace toward the people I encounter. Help me stay close to You throughout my day. Amen.

Today's Step:

Before checking your phone or beginning your normal routine tomorrow, take **five quiet minutes with God.**

Day 3 — Surprised by Grace

Read: John 8:6–9; Romans 3:23

The crowd is waiting for Jesus to give an answer.

Instead, Jesus bends down.

He begins writing on the ground.

We aren't told what He wrote—and maybe that's intentional. What matters is what happens next.

"Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." — John 8:7

Suddenly, everyone holding a stone has to look at themselves.

One by one, they leave.

Jesus doesn't claim the woman is innocent. Instead, He reminds the crowd that they aren't innocent either.

Romans 3:23 puts all of us on level ground:

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

All.

Grace becomes amazing when we realize how desperately we need it.

It's easy to compare sins. It's easy to notice what's wrong with someone else. It's much harder to allow Jesus to expose what's happening inside us.

Before we pick up a stone, Jesus invites us to look in the mirror.

And when we do, something changes. We become less interested in condemning people and much more grateful for grace.

The Church should be filled with people who are surprised they've received this much grace—and therefore eager to give it away.

Reflect

- Whose failures are easiest for you to notice?
- Where are you tempted to compare yourself to someone else?
- How does remembering your own need for grace change the way you treat others?

Prayer

Jesus, forgive me for the times I'm quicker to see someone else's sin than my own.

Thank You for the grace You have shown me. Make me humble, compassionate, and generous with that same grace. Amen.

Today's Step:

Think of someone you've been frustrated with. Before thinking about what they need to change, pray: **"Jesus, show me where I need Your grace too."**

Day 4 — Put Down the Stone

Read: John 8:7–11

Eventually, everyone leaves.

The crowd disappears. The accusations stop. The stones hit the ground.

And Jesus asks:

"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

"No one, sir."

Then come some of the most beautiful words in the story:

"Then neither do I condemn you."

Think about who says those words.

Jesus is the only person standing there who actually *could* have thrown the stone. He is without sin.

Yet He chooses mercy.

If anyone had the right to condemn her, it was Jesus—and instead, He extended grace.

That should shape the way followers of Jesus treat people.

We live in a world that is remarkably good at throwing stones. Sometimes they aren't literal stones. They're gossip. Judgment. Social media comments. Holding

someone's past over them. Quietly deciding that someone is beyond hope.
Followers of Jesus are called to something different.
We can tell the truth without throwing stones.
We can hold convictions without losing compassion.
We can acknowledge sin while remembering that the person standing in front of us is someone Jesus loves.

Reflect

- What do "stones" look like in our culture today?
- Is there someone you've continued to define by something they did?
- How could you follow Jesus' example by extending both truth and grace?

Prayer

Jesus, teach me to treat people the way You do. Help me put down judgment, bitterness, and self-righteousness. Give me courage to speak truth and the humility to do it with grace. Amen.

Today's Step:

Look for one opportunity today to **extend grace instead of proving a point.**

Day 5 — Grace Gives You Another Chance

Read: John 8:10–11; Romans 6:1–2, 14

Jesus doesn't end the conversation with, "Neither do I condemn you."

There's one more sentence:

"Go now and leave your life of sin."

That's important.

Jesus doesn't condemn the woman, but He also doesn't tell her to return to the same life.

Grace forgives us where we are, but it loves us too much to leave us there.

Sometimes we misunderstand grace. We think grace means our choices don't matter.

Paul confronted the same idea in Romans 6:

"Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means!"

Grace isn't permission to stay trapped.

Grace is the power to walk free.

Imagine this woman leaving Jesus that day. She arrived surrounded by accusers, exposed by her past, and expecting condemnation.

She walked away with a future.

That's what Jesus does.

Maybe you've failed again. Maybe there's a habit you're struggling to break. Maybe you've wondered whether God has finally run out of patience with you.

Look again at Jesus.

There is grace.

And because there is grace, there can also be change.

You can get back up.

You can take another step.

You can begin again.

Reflect

- Where have you confused receiving grace with permission to stay the same?
- What might Jesus be asking you to leave behind?
- What would taking one faithful step forward look like today?

Prayer

Jesus, thank You that my failures do not have to be the end of my story. Thank You for forgiveness and for another chance. Give me the strength to leave behind what keeps pulling me away from You and to walk in the new life You offer. Amen.

Today's Step:

Identify **one thing to leave and one step to take**. Write them down, pray over them, and take the step today.

This Week

The woman in John 8 walked into the temple carrying shame and walked away carrying grace.

That's what happens when we encounter Jesus.

Grace sees us.

Grace surprises us.

Grace changes how we see others.

Grace puts down the stones.

And grace gives us another chance.

The invitation this week isn't simply to be thankful for grace.

It's to **receive it, live in it, and give it away.**