



Believe

JOHN

MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Community Group Material:

Bible Reading: John 7:53-8:11

[[⁵³ Then each one went to his house. ¹ But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. ² At dawn he went to the temple again, and all the people were coming to him. He sat down and began to teach them. ³ Then the scribes and the Pharisees brought a woman caught in adultery, making her stand in the center. ⁴ “Teacher,” they said to him, “this woman was caught in the act of committing adultery. ⁵ In the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?” ⁶ They asked this to trap him, in order that they might have evidence to accuse him. Jesus stooped down and started writing on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they persisted in questioning him, he stood up and said to them, “The one without sin among you should be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ Then he stooped down again and continued writing on the ground. ⁹ When they heard this, they left one by one, starting with the older men. Only he was left, with the woman in the center. ¹⁰ When Jesus stood up, he said to her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹ “No one, Lord,” she answered. “Neither do I condemn you,” said Jesus. “Go, and from now on do not sin anymore.”]] (John 7:53-8:11 CSB)

SUMMARY:

The “woman caught in adultery” is a renowned Gospel account, portraying Jesus’ extraordinary forgiveness. This narrative is both unique and controversial; experts judge it wasn’t originally written by John but added later by an interpolator. Nevertheless, it’s recognized as an ancient and authentic episode showcasing Jesus’ profound compassion and literary skills.

The Pharisees present the accused woman to test Jesus' adherence to Moses' Law. In response, Jesus stoops and writes in the dirt twice, declaring, "Let the sinless one cast the first stone." Struck by conscience, the accusers depart, and Jesus pronounces, "neither do I condemn you..."

An intriguing parallel emerges between Jesus' writing 'with his finger in the dirt,' and the Ten Commandments,

'inscribed with God's finger.' The point is not *what* Jesus wrote, but *that* he wrote. His act of writing signifies Jesus shares the divine identity of the OT Law's author; the allusion establishes his authority to interpret and even amend it. Applying the "law of Christ," Jesus extends "no condemnation," not only to the accused woman, but to all his believers. Like her, we are forgiven, & start anew, charged to live differently – "Go & sin no more."

QUESTIONS:

1. Most scholars agree that this episode was not John's original composition, but a later addition to John's Gospel. Some 'hard line' textual critics argue it ought to be eliminated from our Bibles. Do you agree or disagree? What would we miss if it were eliminated? (Discuss)
2. A few commentators argue that we've misjudged the "scribes & Pharisees" here; that they were simply consulting with the "young Rabbi Jesus," to avoid applying the penalty of stoning to this woman. Does the text support this "sympathetic" view of the "scribes & Pharisees"? Why or why not? (Discuss)
3. What was the dilemma ('trap') which Jesus faced in responding to this case?
4. What gave Jesus the right to override &/or redefine Moses' Law (10 commandments) in this case?
5. The accusers focussed on the woman's sin of adultery; how did Jesus' statement (8:7) expand their focus to include the accusers' own sins?
6. Why is it the case in this episode that "the point is not what Jesus wrote, but that he wrote"?
7. Twice the text says Jesus "*wrote on the ground (with his finger)*" (8:6, 8). How does this symbolic action help us understand Jesus' position/authority related to God's OT Law, Moses, and this case?
8. As Christian believers today are we under/subject to God's OT Law or the "law of Christ"? (Discuss)
9. Jesus told the woman: "I don't condemn you...Go...from now on don't sin anymore." When we believe/receive Jesus does he do the same for us? Is there anything in addition? If so, what?