

***Answering Jesus: Do You Hear Jesus saying to you, "I do not condemn you . . . sin no more?"***  
***John 7:53-8:11***

Jesus really is an amazing person. In the gospels, we see Him encounter sinful and broken people and His heart towards them is one of grace. His message isn't "get your life cleaned up and then come to me." No, He simply invites them (and us) to experience His free, undeserved grace! But Jesus isn't soft on sin. He died because of sin! And He calls each of us to a life of discipleship in which we put away sin. But the foundation of this life starts with His amazing grace. May this account from the gospel of John help us glimpse a picture of Jesus' heart for us that helps us walk in this grace as we seek to follow Jesus as His disciples.

**Opening Discussion:** What is one way that you were aware of Jesus' grace this week?

**Read John 7:53-8:11**

**Note:** Most translations show this passage in a bracket with a note in the margins that say something to the effect, "Is not found in most of the old manuscripts." See attached commentary at the end of the study guide for comments on this.

1. Where was Jesus and what was He doing?
2. Why did the religious leaders bring this woman to Jesus?
3. What is the point of Jesus' answer to the religious leaders (v. 7)?
4. Ultimately, how does Jesus deal with the woman's sin? Does he excuse her sin?
5. Suppose you were standing on the fringes of the crowd watching and hearing all that takes place. What do you walk away thinking about Jesus?

Steve said:

Each of us is “the woman caught in adultery.” No sin goes unnoticed by God. “. . . all things are open and laid bare before the eyes [of God]” (Hebrews 4:13; see also Psalm 90:8). Each of us needs to hear Jesus say, “I do not condemn you,” **AND** “sin no more.” At different times and in different situations, we might need to hear one of those statements more than the other; but like the woman in John 8, we need to hear both.

6. Read Romans 8:1-2. Have you really heard Jesus say to you, “I do not condemn you”? Explain.
7. At this time in your life do most need to hear “I do not condemn you” or “sin no more”? Why?

Steve said:

***Our obedience must be built on the foundation of grace.*** Jesus pronounced that the woman was not condemned before He told her “sin no more.” If you haven’t experienced the grace of not being condemned for your sin, there is no way you can be free from the bondage of sin. It is the kindness of God that leads us to repentance. It is the love of Christ that controls us. . . If you trust in Jesus alone to take away your sin and to give you eternal life, you are in Christ. And if you are “in Christ,” there is now no condemnation.” There’s a world of difference between thinking, “Because I am forgiven by Jesus Christ, I am pursuing a life of obedience,” and “I’m pretty sure God is mad at me, so I’m going to try to get on His good side through obedience.”

8. What do you think it means to say that our “obedience must be built on the foundation of grace”? How is this different than trying to obey to get on God’s good side?
9. How does the way Jesus treated this woman help you face some of the sins you are struggling with?
10. What is your main take away from this passage?

**Notes on John 7:53-8:11 from *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary*,  
Vol. 13: John and 1, 2, and 3 John**

This passage is as close to a conclusive text-critical case as exists in the NT. Almost certainly this story was not originally part of John but was added by later scribes.

It is missing from nearly all the early mss (e.g., P66 P75 ⋈ A<sup>vid</sup> B C<sup>vid</sup> L N T W 037 038 044 0141 0211 33). As for the mss A and C, though they both have lacunae in this portion of John, careful measurements show that it is unlikely that there was enough space in the original codices of either of these mss to contain the story (so Metzger 1994:187). No Greek Father commented on the passage before the twelfth century. It is also missing from many of the oldest mss in the versions (e.g., Old Latin, Syriac, Coptic). The only early Greek ms to include it is D, and it is notoriously expansive. Furthermore, the story is placed in several places in the Gospels by various later scribes—after Luke 21:38 or after John 7:36, 7:44, or 21:25. Finally, the language of the story is closer to the synoptic Gospels, esp. Luke (e.g., having “the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees” in 8:3, a phrase not found in John). This evidence shows that John never included this story in his Gospel; it was added later. Nonetheless, it is likely that this is a true story, an authentic piece of tradition from the apostles. Eusebius (*History* 39.16) mentions a similar story by Papias, and this story is found in the third century *Didascalia Apostolorum* (ch 7 [§2.24]). The story itself is like similar stories of attempts to trap Jesus, and his actions are in keeping with his responses elsewhere.

### **Commentary**

As the note on 7:53–8:11 points out, this story is not part of the canonical Gospel—that is, it was not written by John. Nevertheless, it is most likely a true story about Jesus. Thus, it is true but not canonical—so, how do we handle it in a teaching or preaching situation? I believe the best way is to rely on other biblical material on handling sexual sin in the church (e.g., 1 Cor 6:12–20; 1 Thess 4:1–8) and use this as an exemplary story to demonstrate how Jesus dealt with such sinners. Though it is not canonical, it is excellent illustrative material on an important issue. Let us briefly consider the story.

Grant Osborne, Philip W. Comfort, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary, Vol 13: John and 1, 2, and 3 John* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2007), 123–124.