

BRMC Small Group Study: John 7:53-8:11

Leaders Guide

Please note that the suggestions below are not model answers but to help guide your study. Feel free to adapt the questions for your group.

Leader's Notes:

Context:

In the previous study, we saw the people starting to consider Jesus' divinity. He was also offering people the living water which is himself. This is all happening within the context of the various festivals that reflect the Old Testament stories of Israel. Examples include Jesus providing bread during the Passover, reflecting Moses calling down manna from heaven. However, here, the text seems to take a slight detour from this narrative to provide a short occurrence on the woman caught in adultery.

Introduction:

It is likely that your Bible will explain that this passage does not appear in the earliest manuscripts. Scholars have posited that this passage was added in at a later date. One evidence for this is that it does not flow with the rest of the narrative from chapter 7 to chapter 8.

However, this passage is included in most modern translations of the bible and we believe that it is worth studying. We will focus on the morals and lessons learnt from this passage about Jesus.

Lesson Objectives:

- To learn from the way Jesus treats sinners.
- To see Jesus' identity as righteous judge and merciful saviour.

Observation

1. What is the setting of this passage and who are the people in it?
 - *Early in the morning/at dawn.*
 - *Teaching in the temple.*
 - *Jesus.*
 - *The people.*
 - *The scribes and the Pharisees.*
 - *The woman caught in adultery.*
2. How did these people interact with each other?
 - *Jesus was teaching the crowds gathered around him.*
 - *The scribes and Pharisees brought the woman in and tested him.*
 - *Jesus responds with "if anyone of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her"*
 - *The people leave and Jesus tells the woman that he does not condemn her and that she should leave her life of sin.*

Interpretation

3. Was it significant that Jesus wrote on the ground? Why?
 - *The text does not say why or what Jesus wrote on the ground. Some have speculated that he wrote what he said. Or that he was trying to buy time to think before responding.*

- *We should not speculate on what is not mentioned in the Bible. We can assume that what he wrote did not affect the outcome of the events in this passage as verse 9 tells us that the people went away only “when they heard” Jesus’ response.*
- *Jesus chose to write on the ground instead of engaging the Pharisees.*

4. How was the trap by the scribes and Pharisees laid?

- *If Jesus had agreed to stoning the woman, he would have broken Roman law which does not necessitate the death penalty for this offence. However, if he had said no to the stoning, he would have been breaking Jewish law which necessitates the death penalty.*
- *He could have then been accused of being a heretic for agreeing to break the law.*
- *This would be further explained in question 5 below.*

5. Was the woman the only guilty person?

- *The woman was clearly guilty as she had committed adultery with a man and was seen in the presence of eyewitnesses. She had either broken her own or another person’s marriage covenant. She was guilty of sin.*
- *In Old Testament law, an individual cannot be condemned for adultery. Both parties must be sentenced together (Leviticus 20:10, Deuteronomy 22:22-24). Here, the male counterpart is clearly missing.*
- *The Pharisees were also guilty as they had broken the law in not bringing the man as well as the woman in their haste to trap Jesus. They could not let the opportunity go.*
- *The Pharisees had also exposed the woman to public humiliation by making her “stand before the group”. They were manipulating a person made in the image of God for the sake of their own selfish agenda: to trap Jesus.*
- *Even today, we tend to overlook our own sin when we attempt to hold others accountable to the Law.*

6. Who is the only innocent person in this story? What does this reveal about Jesus?

- *Jesus was the only person who was innocent.*
- *He lived a sinless life, and by his command “if anyone of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her”, he was the only one with the right to throw a stone at her.*
- *Yet Jesus did not throw any stone.*
- *Jesus, as the one sinless person, has the right to be the righteous judge. While he could have laid down righteous judgement on the woman’s sin and stoned her to death himself, God is acting in a new way in history. He refuses to throw the stone and instead brings redemption through Jesus Christ. Jesus as the righteous judge, refuses to condemn her sin and instead brings forgiveness.*

Application

7. What did Jesus mean when he said to “sin no more” and how does this apply to you?

- *This sentence could both be interpreted as a command and also as a statement. As a command, Jesus is saying that we should do our best to not sin any longer. However, as a statement, Jesus is also saying that we are no longer trapped by sin and we live in freedom and righteousness through him.*
- *All of us are guilty of sin. How has your life changed since Jesus entered it? Note that we are still sinful, yet Jesus does not condemn us but has made us righteous.*

8. If you were caught red handed in sin, how would you like a fellow Christian to respond to you?