

# SUMMER OF SIN: ENTRAPMENT

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## John 7:53–8:11

<sup>7:53</sup>Then each of them went home,  
<sup>8:1</sup>and Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. <sup>2</sup>Early in the morning he came again to the temple. After all the people gathered around him, he sat down and began to teach them. <sup>3</sup>Then the scribes and Pharisees brought in a woman who had been caught in adultery. And, after they made her stand in the middle of them, <sup>4</sup>they said to him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of committing adultery. <sup>5</sup>Now, Moses commanded us in the law to stone one such as this. Therefore, what do you say?" <sup>6</sup>They said this to test him, so that they might have some reason to accuse him. Then Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger on the ground. <sup>7</sup>When they kept

on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let the sinless one among you be the first to throw a stone at her." <sup>8</sup>And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. <sup>9</sup>After they heard this, they made their way out, one by one, beginning with the elders. And Jesus was left alone with the woman standing near him. <sup>10</sup>Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Miss, where are they? Is anyone left to condemn you?" <sup>11</sup>She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go, and from now on, sin no more."

## REFLECT & DISCUSS

1. Read the passage slowly. Then take a deep breath and read it again. What word, phrase, or image stands out to you?
2. In this passage, there are three main characters: Jesus, the woman, and the religious leaders.
  - a. What stands out to you about the religious leaders? What feelings do their actions produce in you as you reflect on the story?
  - b. What stands out to you about the woman? What feelings do her

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circumstances produce in you as you reflect on the story?

- c. What stands out to you about Jesus? What does he do in this story that impacts you as you reflect on this story?
3. Many English bible versions have a heading that titles this passage as “The Woman Caught in Adultery.” However, this framing accepts the accusations of the religious leaders in the text as being truthful; do you think we as interpreters should take their word for it? What clues do you find within the passage that suggest we should or should not accept their accusation?
4. How is this story a story about entrapment? And, what kinds of entrapment do we find in our world today that this passage reminds you of?
5. In this story, Jesus protects a woman who is being marginalized, accused, and is trapped. In what contexts today can we show the same kinds of compassion to others who are being judged, excluded, or mistreated?
6. In this story, the religious leaders are also trapped by their own choices to judge this woman.

How does Jesus offer them a way out of their own trap? In what contexts today do we still judge, exclude, or mistreat people, and what does Jesus call us to do in these situations?

7. If being a Christian is following Jesus, what choices that Jesus makes in this passage do you find inspiring, and how does it call you to live differently?

## EXPLANATORY NOTE

You may have noticed brackets [like this, or some other note] around this passage in your English Bible. Those brackets are there to indicate that most scholars do not believe that this passage is original to John’s Gospel. This story does not appear in Greek manuscripts before 400CE. However, scholars also note that “the account has all the earmarks of historical veracity. It is obviously a piece of oral tradition which circulated in certain parts of the Western church and which was subsequently incorporated into various manuscripts at various places” (Metzger, 188). “In its oral form the story may have been in circulation beginning in the early second century.” (Comfort, 286). In other words, while it may not be original to John’s gospel, scholars think it may be a real story of Jesus. One that was so good, people found a place to incorporate it into John (and sometimes Luke 21, haha).

Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*; Comfort, *New Testament Text and Translation Commentary*.