

SEEING JESUS IN JOHN

WEEK SIXTEEN: THE MERCY OF JESUS

READING

3 As he (Jesus) was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd. 4 “Teacher,” they said to Jesus, “this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?” 6 They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. 7 They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, “All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!” 8 Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust. 9 When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. 10 Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?” 11 “No, Lord,” she said. And Jesus said, “Neither do I. Go and sin no more.” John 8 (NLT)

TEACHING

(You can explain adultery to children as “taking something important that doesn’t belong to you”)

This was probably the worst moment of this woman’s life. She made a mistake and was caught by people who wanted to embarrass her and use her for their selfish agenda and personal amusement. They didn’t care about how this woman felt and they also didn’t really care about what Jesus thought. They were trying to trap Jesus by putting him in a hard spot. But Jesus was wiser than they could’ve possibly known. And with one statement, he put the Pharisees in an even harder spot: “Let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone.” They were blinded to the level of sinfulness of their hearts, but they couldn’t claim that they had NEVER sinned. They were trapped.

Once the accusers left, Jesus turned to the woman. She hadn’t just made one mistake, but probably a lifetime of mistakes. He asked her two questions: “Where are your accusers? Didn’t even one of them condemn you?” When she said “No, Lord” she was making a statement of faith and surrender. She was testifying to the mercy of Jesus and she was willing to call him Lord! Jesus then told her two things: He didn’t condemn her and she should sin no more. The order of those two statements is so important. First, we experience God’s love and mercy, then—and only then—we can joyfully hear and receive his commands to sin no more. If we think our good behavior earns God’s love then even our best efforts will be selfish. But once we realize God freely gives his love, we are glad to obey him from the heart.

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RESPONSE

OPENING QUESTION(S):

- When was the last time you had a bad day? What happened?

TODDLERS/PRE-K:

- In this story, who was having the worst day of her life?
- In this story, who showed mercy to the woman?

CHILDREN:

- In this story, how was Jesus' response to the woman different than the Pharisees?
- What two questions did Jesus ask the woman?
- At the end of the story, what two statements did Jesus say to the woman?

TEENAGERS:

- What do you notice about how Jesus responded to the Pharisees?
- What do you notice about how Jesus responded to the woman?
- Why is the order of Jesus' final two statements so important?

ADULTS:

- How has the mercy of Jesus found you in the worst moments of your life?
- Why is the order of Jesus' final two statements so important?
- How do you regularly remind yourself and your family of both of those truths?

PRAYER

God, Thank you for your mercy. Mercy is not getting what I deserve. I deserve to be ashamed and embarrassed and punished for a lifetime of mistakes. But you find me in the worst moments of my life and you don't condemn me. Instead, you give me mercy and grace. Help me to believe that you did not come to this world to condemn us in our sins, but to save us from our sins. Help me to be so thankful for your mercy that I can be happy when you call and command me to obey you in all things. In Jesus' name, Amen.

NEXT LEVEL (ADDITIONAL OPTIONAL TEACHING)

This famous story is not found in the earliest manuscripts of the gospel of John so some translations don't include it. The ESV Study Bible notes are helpful: "It seems best to view the story as something that probably happened during Jesus' ministry but that was not originally part of what John wrote in his Gospel. Therefore it should not be considered as part of Scripture and should not be used as the basis for building any point of doctrine unless confirmed in Scripture."