

**PLEASE DON'T READ THESE NOTES UNTIL YOU HAVE COMPLETED YOUR LESSON.
HEARING GOD FOR YOURSELF IS WAY BETTER THAN MY COMMENTS!**

questions

Read the *Introduction* to this lesson and **John 8:1-12**.

1. What elements of this story convinces you that this incident is "authentic Jesus"?

Answers will vary because different parts of the story will convince different people. Have several share their reasons.

This story is very typical of other stories about Jesus found in the other Gospels. It is a "conflict" story in which Jesus is placed on the horns of a dilemma (by the religious leaders) just like he was in Matthew 22:16 when he was asked whether or not it was right to pay taxes to Caesar. It seems that there is no answer except the two options given, both of which would bring harm to Jesus and his ministry. But, amazingly, Jesus comes up with an answer that is totally unexpected that diffuses the entire situation. His answer shows his wisdom and compassion. Telling the woman that he does not condemn her is in keeping with his statement that he came to save the world, not condemn it (John 3:17). Yet, Jesus does not treat the woman's sin lightly. Just as he did with the invalid that he healed by the pool in John 5, he tells the woman to stop sinning. "Go and leave your life of sin" is an example of the fresh start Jesus gives all those who repent of their sinful habits. He does not condemn us, but rather empowers us to leave sin behind and make a new beginning.

♥ Can you see anything in **John 8:12-18** that might explain why scribes chose to insert this story about Jesus at this place in the Gospel of John?

In John 8:15-16 and Jesus says that he does not judge anyone and if he did, it would be a correct judgment. The scribes probably thought this was a good place to insert this story because it is such a good example of Jesus' correct judgment.

♥ How do you feel when someone exposes a sin or failure in your life or when you are caught in a wrongful act? How do you usually react to the situation?

2. The religious leaders refer to the Law of Moses (8:5) as their basis of wanting to stone this woman.

Read **Leviticus 20:10** and **Deuteronomy 22:22**. What is missing in their accusations against this woman that reveals the Pharisees hypocrisy?

Obviously, it takes two people to commit adultery and both were to be put to death according to the Law of Moses. When the Pharisees drag in the woman caught in the act of adultery, absent the man, it shows that they let the man go (hypocrisy) and probably even used him to catch the woman who they then could use to trap Jesus. The whole situation reeked of a "set-up."

♥ What does the Pharisees' treatment of this woman in **8:3-4** reveal about their beliefs and values? Can you think of another course of action they could have taken?

Their treatment of this woman shows their double standard and their low estimate of women. They were more interested in trying to trap Jesus than following the Law of Moses or show genuine concern over the woman. The accusation and judgment of guilt should have been done privately and even if they wanted to consult Jesus, they did not have to make her stand before the group and heap public shame on her. They also were not interested in a trial of any kind. They were looking for a public lynching.

♥ Are you quick to "throw stones" at others when you discover they have done something wrong? Why or why not? Is your standard the same for everyone? Why or why not?

3. In what ways was this situation a "trap" for Jesus? What accusations were the religious leaders hoping to make against Jesus in this "no-win" situation (8:6)?

If Jesus said they should stone the woman, he would lose his reputation from being the friend of sinners and showing compassion for the weak and lowly. Jesus would have also violated Roman law, because Roman law did not allow the Jewish courts to carry out capital punishment. If Jesus said they should not stone her, he was breaking the Law of Moses and therefore disobeying God.

♥ **John 6:6** is the only record we have of Jesus writing. We are not told what he wrote, but we are told that he wrote "with his finger." For the religious leaders who knew the Scriptures and the Law of Moses well, what might Jesus have been inferring (**Exodus 31:18**)? Since the 10 commandments were written by God's finger on tablets of stone, Jesus writing with his finger could easily carry the image that he was God or had God's authority or wisdom.

4. How did Jesus' answer to the religious leaders in 8:7 skillfully "spring the trap" that had been set for him?

Jesus did not tell them to not stone the woman, thus he upheld the Law. Nor did he defend the woman or say she was not guilty. Instead, his answer to them takes the focus off the woman and puts it on the accusers. His saying, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her," forces them to examine themselves and perhaps identify with the woman. Suddenly what was a legal issue is now a personal, moral matter. A group of proud, righteous men now find themselves on the same group as the woman they were about to stone.

They made a public spectacle out of the woman and her situation. If they choose to stone the woman after what Jesus said, they will be making a public statement of their own self-righteousness. No one was willing to do that. Jesus not only sprung their trap, but he set one of his own and they were all caught in it. If they cast a stone, they would be saying they were sinless. By not casting the stone, they were admitting they were sinners.

♥ In what areas of your own life do you tend to be self-righteous?

♥ What is the difference between confronting a person with their sin and condemning a person for their sin? Should we do either? Why or why not?

Confronting a person with their sin is done out of concern and compassion for the person because their sin has the potential of destroying them and others. We confront for the purpose of healing and restoration, always keeping in mind that we too are sinners (Gal. 6:1-3; Matt. 18:15).

Condemning a person for their sin is an attack on their worth as a person. Condemning is shaming and the purpose is punishment, not restoration. Another purpose of condemning is to elevate the accuser and demean and degrade the offender. Condemning is done out of self-righteousness. Romans 8:1 says that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

♥ What affect would your coming to a true awareness of your own sins and failures have on your relationships with others? When we recognize and truly become aware of our own sin and how it offends God and how much he has forgiven us of, we will be much more tolerant of the sins of others. We cannot forgive and love others until we truly accept, receive and experience God's love and forgiveness to us.

5. Jesus never said the woman was not guilty or that she should not be punished. Why did her accusers "go away, one at a time, the older ones first" (8:9)? What were some things they were admitting by leaving the scene?

They were admitting that they were judging the woman and not her sin. They were admitting they used the woman to get at Jesus. They were admitting to their wrong motives and lack of compassion. They were admitting to their own sin. They were admitting that they had no right to condemn the woman.

- ♥ What is the difference between judging a person and judging their sin? Why is only God capable of judging a person (1 Samuel 16:7)? We can assess a person's behavior and judge whether it is right or wrong, based on Biblical truth. But we, as humans, can never know a person's heart or judge their motives. Only God knows the heart.
 - ♥ Which do you find more difficult: to forgive or to ask for forgiveness? Why?
6. Read **John 8:10-11**. How does Jesus' response to the woman reflect what we have already learned about him in **John 1:17** and **John 3:16-18**?

Jesus is full of grace AND truth. Jesus always speaks the truth about our sin and never glosses it over. But he also shows grace and forgiveness if we repent. He does not want to punish or destroy us because of our sin. Instead, he desires to heal and restore us. Jesus' treatment of the woman reflects this attitude. By forgiving her, yet telling her to leave her life of sin he was demonstrating his love for her as well as his desire to save her, not condemn her.

- ♥ How does Jesus judge the woman's sin and at the same time show mercy? He never says she wasn't guilty, nor does he say her sin doesn't matter. His mercy is reflected in his forgiveness and his judgment is reflected in his telling her to stop sinning.
 - ♥ Do you relate to people and their sin like Jesus did or like the religious leaders did? Is there anything you need to ask God to change in you?
 - ♥ What can you learn from Jesus about helping a friend who is caught in a failure or sin?
7. What two different types of sinners do you see in the *Pharisees* and in the *woman*? Why does Jesus treat the woman caught in adultery gently while having stronger words for the religious leaders?

Both the Pharisees and the woman are sinners. The woman, however, admits to her sin and the Pharisees are self-righteous. The Pharisees are proud, the woman is humble. God is always willing to extend forgiveness to us, but only if we humble ourselves and repent (willingness to turn away from or sinful ways). Jesus knows our true heart condition and will treat us accordingly. He is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit (Ps. 34:18). Because of their pride and self-righteousness, Jesus had some very strong words for the religious leaders in Matthew 23.

- ♥ What do you learn about forgiveness from Jesus' actions and words? In what situation do you need to apply Jesus' example and teaching on forgiveness?
8. How do the words of Jesus in **Matthew 7:1-5** relate to this story? What personal application can you make?

Too often our we judge others out of our pride, hypocrisy and self-righteousness. When we do this, God will judge us the same way. We cannot separate how we treat others from our relationship with God. Because the religious leaders were hard on the woman, Jesus was hard on them.

Below are these verses in contemporary language from *The Message Bible*.

Matthew 7:1 "Don't pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults—unless, of course, you want the same treatment. 2 That critical spirit has a way of boomeranging. 3 It's easy to see a smudge on your neighbor's face and be oblivious to the ugly sneer on your own. 4 Do you have the nerve to say, 'Let me wash your face for you,' when your own face is distorted by contempt? 5 It's this whole traveling road-show mentality all over again, playing a holier-than-thou part instead of just living your part. Wipe that ugly sneer off your own face, and you might be fit to offer a washcloth to your neighbor.

- ♥ What do you usually do when you "blow it"? a) crawl into a hole? b) try to be extra good? c) confess it to God and move on? d) confess it to another person? e) shrug it off?

- ♥ Jesus accepts you "as is." What effect does this fact have on your behavior? Do you find that it encourages change or complacency? How so?
- ♥ How does the way Jesus treated this woman help you face the sins you struggle with? What does it mean to you that Jesus does not condemn you but invites you to abandon your sin?

John 8:12-58 is a continuation of the dialogue Jesus was having with the religious leaders and the crowd at the Festival of Tabernacles and is meant to follow **John 7:52**. (It might be helpful to re-read the Introduction to Lesson 7.) Jesus continues to use this dialogue to reveal his true identity and mission. He does this by using the images of the Festival, such as water and light, and Old Testament titles, such as I AM, to make statements about himself and the reason he was sent by the Father into the world.

9. Fill in the chart below to discover the claims that Jesus makes about himself.

SCRIPTURE	WRITE A PHRASE THAT SUMMARIZES WHO JESUS SAYS HE IS
John 8:12	Light of the world; light of life
John 8:23	From above and not of this world
John 8:25-30	Sent from Father God to give the world a message; does nothing on his own and speaks what the Father has taught him; always does what pleases God the Father
John 8:31-36	The One who sets us free from the bondage of sin
John 8:54-58	The One who existed before Abraham; I AM

10. Jesus gives a conditional promise in **8:12**. What does he promise and what is the stipulation?
We will never walk in darkness and we will have the light of life IF WE FOLLOW JESUS

11. How do you know if you are following Jesus? What differences would you see in the lives of two people, one who is following Jesus and the other who is not?

Answers will vary, but following Jesus begins with obedience to his written commands which can be summed up in the two greatest commands: Love God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and love your neighbor as yourself. However, everything we need to know and do is not in scripture. This is why following Jesus is so important. He will lead us if we follow. You cannot follow someone unless you can see them or hear them. Following Jesus comes out of a personal, intimate relationship with him where we not only talk to Jesus in prayer, but we also hear him as we listen. Listening and hearing Jesus is something that must be learned and it takes practice to become good at it.

♥ How has following Jesus brought light into your life?

Light ceremonies were an important part of the *Festival of Tabernacles*, just as were water ceremonies (see Introduction to Lesson 7). Jesus' statement that he was the **Light of the world** was made against the backdrop of torches that lit up the city as well as giant lights that were lit in the courts of the temple. Sixteen golden bowls (reached by ladders) were filled with oil. When they were lit at night, all Jerusalem was illuminated. In a world that did not have public lighting after dark, this light shining from Jerusalem's yellow limestone walls must have been spectacular. On the last day of the Festival, under these giant bowls of light, Jesus stood and declared that he was not only the true light of Jerusalem, but of the whole world!

- ♥ What visual images come to mind when you think of Jesus being the *Light of the world*?
- ♥ What is your most vivid memory of darkness? What feelings do you associate with darkness?
- ♥ What is the importance of light to physical life? To spiritual life?

12. Describe what it would be like to live your life *as if you were walking in darkness*. Where would you have difficulty? What things would you not be sure of? How would it feel?

Have several share parts of their answers.

How does Jesus bring light into this darkness? What difference does he make?

Answers will vary – but one thing Jesus promises everyone who has invited him into their life is He will never leave us or forsake us. We are NEVER alone again after we make a commitment to Jesus. We are also told in Romans 8 that nothing in all of creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of Christ.

13. Jesus is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament law and prophecies. What claims was Jesus making about himself when he said, "I am the light of the world?"

Exodus 13:21-22 - Jesus is the light that gives us guidance through life

Psalm 27:1 - Jesus is our light and salvation; we don't have to be afraid of the "dark"

Isaiah 42:6-7, 16 - Jesus turns our darkness into light; he opens the eyes of the spiritually blind

Psalm 119:105 - His word (Jesus is the Word of God) is a light and lamp to our walking through life

response

John 20:31 - But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. Share with your group what *words, events* or *dialogue* in John 8 you find most convincing in supporting John's dual purpose for writing this gospel?

Encounter with Jesus

We all have failures and sins that have been our undoing time and time again. Do you truly believe that Jesus does not condemn and shame you because of your failures, no matter how many times they happen? Envision the story of the woman caught in adultery and put yourself in her place. Let the story play out in your mind as you experience the sights and sounds of the scene. See Jesus looking into your eyes saying, "Neither do I condemn you . . ." What else do you see Jesus saying and doing? What is your response?

Extra Scripture for Lesson 8

New International Version

Leviticus 20:10 “If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.

Deuteronomy 22:22 If a man is found sleeping with another man’s wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel.

Exodus 31:18 When the LORD finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.

1Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

Matthew 7:1 “Do not judge, or you too will be judged. **2** For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

Matthew 7:3 “Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? **4** How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? **5** You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.

Exodus 13:21 By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to guide them on their way and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so that they could travel by day or night. **22** Neither the pillar of cloud by day nor the pillar of fire by night left its place in front of the people.

Psalms 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation— whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life— of whom shall I be afraid?

Isaiah 42:6 “I, the LORD, have called you in righteousness; I will take hold of your hand. I will keep you and will make you to be a covenant for the people and a light for the Gentiles, **7** to open eyes that are blind, to free captives from prison and to release from the dungeon those who sit in darkness.

Isaiah 42:16 I will lead the blind by ways they have not known, along unfamiliar paths I will guide them; I will turn the darkness into light before them and make the rough places smooth. These are the things I will do; I will not forsake them.

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

New Living Translation

Leviticus 20:10 “If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife, both the man and the woman must be put to death.

Deuteronomy 22:22 “If a man is discovered committing adultery, both he and the other man’s wife must be killed. In this way, the evil will be cleansed from Israel.

Exodus 31:18 Then as the LORD finished speaking with Moses on Mount Sinai, he gave him the two stone tablets inscribed with the terms of the covenant, written by the finger of God.

1Samuel 16:7 But the LORD said to Samuel, “Don’t judge by his appearance or height, for I have rejected him. The LORD doesn’t make decisions the way you do! People judge by outward appearance, but the LORD looks at a person’s thoughts and intentions.”

Matthew 7:1 “Stop judging others, and you will not be judged. **2** For others will treat you as you treat them. Whatever measure you use in judging others, it will be used to measure how you are judged. **3** And why worry about a speck in your friend’s eye when you have a log in your own? **4** How can you think of saying, ‘Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye,’ when you can’t see past the log in your own eye? **5** Hypocrite! First get rid of the log from your own eye; then perhaps you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend’s eye.

Exodus 13:21 The LORD guided them by a pillar of cloud during the day and a pillar of fire at night. That way they could travel whether it was day or night. **22** And the LORD did not remove the pillar of cloud or pillar of fire from their sight.

Psalms 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation— so why should I be afraid? The LORD protects me from danger— so why should I tremble?

Isaiah 42:6 “I, the LORD, have called you to demonstrate my righteousness. I will guard and support you, for I have given you to my people as the personal confirmation of my covenant with them. And you will be a light to guide all nations to me. **7** You will open the eyes of the blind and free the captives from prison. You will release those who sit in dark dungeons.

Isaiah 42:16 I will lead blind Israel down a new path, guiding them along an unfamiliar way. I will make the darkness bright before them and smooth out the road ahead of them. Yes, I will indeed do these things; I will not forsake them.

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path.