

# THE WOMAN CAUGHT IN ADULTERY



**BIBLE STUDY GUIDE SERIES**



Christ to the World Ministries

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**CHRIST TO THE WORLD MINISTRIES**



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**Christ to the World Ministries** is a non profit ministry dedicated to sharing the gospel of Christ with the world through radio dramas and printed and oral studies based on Scripture. The printed lessons can be studied by one person or by a group.

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*Dear Friend,*

*I am glad that you are interested in studying the Bible. It is God's Word to us and in it we find the way of salvation and guidance for daily living. The main theme of the Bible is God's love for us and how He expressed that love by Jesus Christ dying on the cross for our sins. Jesus arose from the dead and today He will save every person who puts his or her faith and trust in Him.*

*This study guide will help you gain a better understanding of the Bible. Open your heart to what God has for you through the study. I have prayed that your study will be life changing.*

*May God bless you richly,*

*Larry Alston*  
*Christ to the World Ministries*



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## INTRODUCTION

**W**elcome to a study about Jesus dealing with a woman caught in the act of adultery by the Jewish authorities. This Bible study will help you understand the tender compassion of Jesus. You will see his love in action as he lifted up a fallen woman and forgave her sin.

Jesus does not condone sin, but he loves the sinner. The good news of the gospel is that sin can be forgiven, cleansed and forgotten by God. We should learn not to judge others but to forgive just like Jesus did.

You can write in this study guide. Don't keep it clean and unmarked! When the guide asks you to respond, don't simply think of your response. Take time to write it down. Doing so helps internalize and reinforce your learning. Write from your heart. Only you will see what you write.

As writer, I will work along with you as you complete your study. I will share with you my own responses to most of the questions and activities. This does not mean that my responses are any more correct than yours; it simply means that you will have the benefit of a fellow traveler walking beside you as you move through the study.

Keep your Bible before you as you complete the study. When asked to read a passage of scripture, take time to read it.

Ready? Then let's get started.

**Begin your study with prayer. Make the following prayer your very own.**

*Dear God, please open your Word to me as I study. Speak to my heart. Help me obey your will for my life. Help me do what you want me to do. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.*

First, let's read the Scripture lesson. It is found only in the Gospel of John. This Scripture passage is not found in the earliest and best Greek manuscripts of the New Testament. When it does show up in later manuscripts, it is placed at different places. Sometimes it follows John 21:24, and sometimes it follows Luke 21:38. The passage came to rest as a part of John 7 and 8.

## THE SCRIPTURE

We can be confident that the verses tell of an actual event in the life of Jesus. Through the centuries this story has become a treasured part of the Gospel, told again and again to show the tender compassion and forgiveness of Christ.

### **John 7:53; 8:1-11**

*53 Then each went to his own home. 1 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 2 At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. 3 The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group 4 and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" 6 They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him.*

*But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. 7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." 8 Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.*

*9 At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. 10 Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"*

*11 "No one, sir," she said.*

*"Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."*

## THE SETTING

If this event occurred following John 7, it took place during the Feast of Tabernacles, a joyous occasion when the people celebrated the gathering of the harvest. Josephus, the first-century Jewish writer, wrote that as many as a million and a half people came to Jerusalem during these feasts. With so many people crowded together amid much merry-making, it is not surprising that immoral acts occurred.

Jesus taught in the Temple during the celebration, and large crowds gathered to hear him. The Scripture is sad and touching as it describes the ending of the day. “Then each went to his own home. But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives” (John 7:53; 8:1). Everyone went home. Lamps were lit, families gathered around their table, and the evening meal was served. Lamps were extinguished. Then the people went to bed. Yes, everyone went home, that is, everyone except Jesus. He had no home where he could go. On another occasion he said, “Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head” (Matt. 8:20). Jesus went out to the Mount of Olives to spend the night. He spent the night there on other occasions. (See Luke 21:37.)

What an opportunity the people of Jerusalem missed! Nicodemus could have spent hours talking with Jesus about the Old Testament. A Jewish family could have hosted Jesus that night. A Hebrew home would have been immeasurably blessed. The children would always remember the night Jesus stayed with them.

**Why do you think no one invited Jesus home with him? Check the answer you think best.**

- Entertaining guests in the home was not the custom of that time.
- No one thought to do so.
- The people did not like Jesus.
- Jesus wanted to be alone.
- The people were afraid of making the religious authorities angry.

We don't know why no one invited Jesus home with him that day. Perhaps no one thought to do so. But today we can make Jesus an honored guest in our home.

**Describe some ways we can invite Jesus into our home today.**

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We can make Jesus an honored guest in our home by praying at mealtime, by reading the Bible, by conducting a family prayer time, and by telling friends and neighbors about him when they visit us. We can invite him into our home by giving him first place in our lives.

Early the next morning Jesus returned to the Temple and taught the people again. The Jewish leaders did not like Jesus and wanted an opportunity to trap him. And they happened upon a ready-made case. They had discovered a woman in the act of sexual intercourse with a man who was not her husband and arrested her. They interrupted Jesus' teaching and brought the disheveled and trembling woman right into the middle of the crowd.

Jesus stopped teaching. Everyone whispered and stared. The crowd turned their eyes on the woman.



## THE WOMAN

Let's meet the woman in the story. We know almost nothing about her. We don't know her name. We don't know her age. We don't know if she had children or not. We can infer that she was married because of the word *adultery*. The Bible commonly uses this word to refer to an act of unfaithfulness when one of the marriage partners engages in sexual relations with a person other than his or her spouse. One of the Ten Commandments given by God on Mt. Sinai is "*You shall not commit adultery*" (Exodus 20:14). This commandment can be taken to mean that all manner of sexual immorality is forbidden. God gave the commandment for our protection. Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, extended the meaning of adultery to impure thoughts regarding sex. (See Matt. 5:28.)

**Think about the following statements. Check the one statement you think best.**

- The woman sinned against no one; what she did was a private matter.
- The woman sinned against the religious leaders.
- The woman sinned against her husband.
- The woman sinned against the person with whom she committed adultery.
- The woman sinned against herself, her husband, the person with whom she committed adultery, and she sinned against God.

The Bible speaks openly about sexuality. God created us male and female. Sexuality is one of the most important things in our lives. Sex is a wonderful gift from God. It is the most intimate expression of love between husband and wife. But sex is reserved for marriage. Sex outside marriage is a serious sin. It involves betrayal and destroys relationships and brings hurt. The woman sinned against herself, her husband, the person with whom she committed adultery, and she sinned against God.

The woman in our story was arrested for adultery (v. 4). But wait. Maybe someone just spread rumors about her. We know how people love to gossip. No. The scripture clearly states that she was "caught" in the act of adultery (a paraphrased version even says she was "half naked"). And what about the man? It takes two people to commit adultery. The leaders brought no charges against him. Did he escape, or did the religious leaders hold a double standard? Did the leaders entrap the woman?

**Place a check by the sin for which the woman was guilty.**

- |                                   |                                   |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> stealing | <input type="checkbox"/> lying    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> adultery | <input type="checkbox"/> idolatry |

The woman was unfaithful. She committed adultery.



What do you think the teachers and Pharisees were trying to accomplish by bringing the woman to Jesus?

## THE TEACHERS AND THE PHARISEES

Check the one answer you think is best.

- 1. They wanted to uphold the Old Testament Law.
- 2. They wanted to seek the woman's forgiveness.
- 3. They wanted to seek the woman's death.
- 4. They wanted to discredit Jesus and make him look bad.
- 5. They wanted to impress the crowd concerning their own righteousness.

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought the woman before Jesus and pressed charges. As strict observers of the Jewish law, they didn't like Jesus because he preached love, forgiveness and mercy as the true spirit of the law. They felt threatened. They had already tried to make Jesus look bad in public and had failed. Now they had another opportunity. Clearly, they didn't care about the woman. They did not see her as a person.

They didn't care that she had a name, family, feelings. They only regarded her as a "thing" they could use to trap Jesus. Verse 6 shows clearly that the Pharisees wanted to ensnare Jesus. They brought the woman into the middle of the crowd where Jesus taught. They embarrassed the frightened woman and planned to use her to embarrass and discredit Jesus. They demanded: "*In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say*" (v. 5)?



Based on the picture above, check the words that you think describe the woman's attitude as she stood before the crowd.

- angry                       humiliated
- hostile                         embarrassed
- frightened                   arrogant

This was most likely the very worst day of the woman's entire life. I think she was humiliated, embarrassed and frightened as she stood there.

The religious leaders set up a very clever trap. Jesus had a reputation for preaching forgiveness. If Jesus said to spare her life, the Pharisees would call Jesus morally soft on sin and disrespectful of the Jewish law. He would be, in effect, telling the people to disregard the Law and live as they pleased.

If Jesus said "Yes, kill her" he would not only contradict his teachings on forgiveness, but the Pharisees would turn him in to the Roman officials. Only the Roman governor had authority to impose the death penalty. (Remember that at Jesus' trial the Jewish priests had to bring Jesus before Pilate to get permission to crucify him.)

Also, the Pharisees wanted to kill her by "stoning" (v. 5), a really gruesome death. Everyone gathers round and hurls stones at the offender. No one lasted long in "stoning."

**What punishment did the teachers and Pharisees want for the woman? (circle one):**  
public humiliation  
exile from the community  
death by stoning  
life imprisonment

Yes, Jesus faced a tense situation. How did he handle it? He didn't give a long speech on family relations and the Ten Commandments.

## JESUS AND THE RELIGIOUS LEADERS

He didn't argue with the Pharisees about the fine points of the law. Actually the religious authorities technically were in error. Moses had called for death as the punishment for this sin but he had not specified stoning as the means of execution; furthermore the Old Testament calls for the death of both the man and the woman in an adulterous situation. (See Lev. 20:10.) Stoning was the prescribed manner of execution in the complex situation involving a betrothed woman who committed adultery. Both the betrothed woman and the man were to be stoned. (See Deut. 22:13-27.)

Tension mounted as Jesus did a surprising thing.

**Read John 8:6 and describe what Jesus did.**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Jesus ignored the teachers and Pharisees. Perhaps he was indignant and shocked. He stooped down and wrote in the dust. The unfinished Temple courtyard had plenty of dirt and sand.

Yes, Jesus could read and write. Yet, strangely enough, this is the only place mentioned in the Bible where Jesus wrote something. The greatest man who ever lived didn't publish even one book. Yet he has had more books written about him than anyone in history.

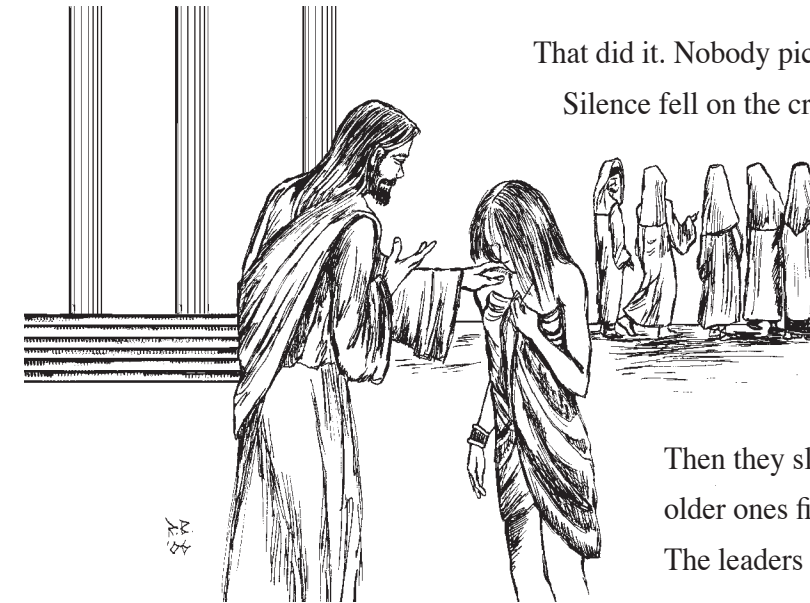


What did Jesus write? Of course, we don't know, but scholars have speculated. Some think he may have written a list of sins that would make these self-righteous Pharisees and teachers stop and think. Surely they would find one of their sins in the list! Also, if he wrote in Hebrew, which does not use vowels, anyone looking on might read more than one meaning into the words. He might have wanted to show the crowd that the law might have a number of possible meanings.

The Pharisees kept after him, demanding an answer. So he stood up straight and said, "*If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her*" (v. 7). Then he knelt down and started writing again.

**So who threw the first stone? Check your answer.**

- \_\_\_\_\_ a Pharisee
- \_\_\_\_\_ someone in the back of the crowd
- \_\_\_\_\_ a teacher of the law
- \_\_\_\_\_ the woman's husband
- \_\_\_\_\_ no one, they all left



That did it. Nobody picked up the first stone.

Silence fell on the crowd. The Jewish leaders got nervous. His words stabbed their conscience. They shuffled their feet.

Then they slinked away—the older ones first. Jesus looked up. The leaders were gone.

## JESUS AND THE WOMAN

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Read John 8:10. How did Jesus address the woman and what did he say to her?

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Jesus' use of the word "woman" in addressing the adulteress did not reflect harshness and scorn. The word could be used as a term of respect and even endearment. Jesus used the term early in his ministry when speaking to his mother at the wedding in Cana of Galilee (John 2:4). He also used it when he spoke to his mother from the cross (John 19:26). Rather than rebuking her, it was as though he called the woman "lady." He treated her with kindness and respect.

When Jesus asked, "*Has no one condemned you?*" perhaps the woman raised her head and looked into his eyes for the first time. Instead of seeing anger and hatred, she saw eyes that reflected deep love and tender compassion. The woman spoke for the first and only time in our story. She answered, "No one, sir," or in some versions, "*No man, Lord.*" We get an insight into what the woman learned from this awful experience. She respected Jesus. She called him "Sir," or "Lord." She didn't try to explain away her circumstances. She made no excuses for her sin. She saw herself clearly. She had messed up. Others condemned her. Jesus forgave her.

Jesus did not treat sin lightly. He in no way excused the woman's sin by telling her to go on as though nothing happened. When Jesus later went to the cross he paid the penalty for the woman's sins. He not only paid for her sins but also the sins of those who accused her. Jesus died on the cross for the sins of every person. That includes you and me.

How Jesus dealt with the woman illustrates John 3:17: "*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*"

**Based on the verse above, why did Jesus come into the world?**

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Jesus did not come into the world to push people down and condemn them. He came to save us. Jesus told Zacchaeus, "*For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost*" (Luke 19:10). On another occasion, Jesus told the Pharisees and teachers of the law, "*I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*" (Luke 5:32). Paul wrote, "*Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worse*" (1 Tim. 1:15).

The woman accepted Jesus' forgiveness. That's all God wants us to do. He wants us to understand we are a sinner and repent. That's what salvation means. No doubt, that's what the woman did.

The story ends abruptly. Jesus told her: "*Go now and leave your life of sin*" (v. 11). Start over. Go home and sort your life out. That's what Jesus tells us today. We may have done wrong things, maybe even as bad as the woman in the story. We may have hurt our families. But we can put our faith in Jesus and right those wrongs.

**Read each of the following statements. Think about them in light of this study. Write "True" or "False" beside each statement.**

- 1. Jesus forgave the woman on the basis of her not sinning in the future.
- 2. The woman earned Jesus' forgiveness by a commitment not to keep on sinning.

Forgiveness is the free gift of God. It is made available because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Both statements above are false. Forgiveness is not based upon our behavior in the future, or in the past, for that matter. We do not earn Jesus' forgiveness by a commitment not to sin in the future. Paul says that we receive forgiveness of sins because of "*the riches of God's grace*" (Eph. 1:7). Forgiveness is a gift of God. Paul wrote, "*For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast*" (Eph. 2:8-9).

The woman could go and live a new life because of Christ's forgiveness.

**Read 2 Corinthians 5:17. Write the results of receiving Christ's forgiveness and being "in Christ".** \_\_\_\_\_

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A person receiving forgiveness is a new person. Old things have been replaced by new things. Yes, we can start over. There is a "land of beginning again".

The woman in our story found it.



**Look again at the pictures in this lesson. Write beside each drawing a sentence to describe what was happening in the story.**

## APPLICATION

The teachers of the law and Pharisees judged the woman, yet their own lives were sinful. They saw clearly the sins in others, but were blind to the sins in themselves. We should not be quick to judge others. We have all sinned. Romans 3:23 says, *“For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”* The woman’s sin was adultery, a serious sin. But we all have our own kinds of sins. Matthew 7:1 says, *“Do not judge, or you too will be judged.”* One man prayed, *“Teach me, O Christ, to number my own sins before counting the sins of others.”*

**Why do you think it is wrong for a person to judge someone else?**

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We are commanded not to judge others. God is the judge. Judgment is in his hands. Jesus said, *“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? How can you say to your brother, ‘Brother, let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when you yourself fail to see the plank in your own eye”* (Luke 6:41-42). We are not qualified to judge others.

The Pharisees wanted to kill the woman. No one in the crowd stepped forward to help her.

**Have you ever faced a hopeless situation and no one wanted to help you? Describe how you felt.**

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Jesus cared about the woman. Reflect on your own life.

**Describe a time when you knew that Jesus cared for you and got involved in your life.**

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Jesus forgave the woman.

**Has Jesus forgiven you of your sins? Check your answer.**

- Yes
- No
- I don’t know

The woman called Jesus “Lord,” or “Sir.”

**What do you think she meant by that title?**

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All of us must stand before God and be judged some day.

**How will you feel at that time? Check your answer.**

- I’m a bad person. I would be scared.
- I try to be good so I guess I’m ok.
- Jesus has forgiven my sins and that’s all that matters.
- I don’t know.

**Summarize in a sentence or two what God has taught you in your study.**

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You can lead your family or a group of friends and neighbors or perhaps a church group in this study of “The Woman Caught in Adultery.” Doing so will strengthen your own life and God will use you to bless others.

## GUIDE FOR GROUP STUDY

The following suggestions will help you lead a small group study.

Each person in a group has contributions to make. Each person should take an active part in the discussion. No one should dominate the time together.

**Begin the study with prayer.**

**Read aloud the story of the “Woman Caught in Adultery” from John 7:54; 8:1-11.**

**Tell the story in your own words. Use the drawings as visual aids. Take your time and show the drawings to the group as you tell the story. Answer any questions group members may ask.**

**Use with the group the questions and activities under “Application.” Lead each group member to respond.**

**The following statements will involve group members in discussion. We call them “Agree or Disagree” statements. Read each statement. Ask persons who agree with the statement to raise their hand. Then ask persons who disagree with the statement to raise their hand. Ask, Why do you agree or disagree with the statement? Then allow time for discussion.**

1. Women sin more easily than men.
2. The woman caught in sin in our story deserved to be stoned.
3. The Pharisees were good people because they tried to uphold the law.
4. Everybody has sinned.
5. We should be slow to judge and quick to forgive.
6. No matter how big our sin, God can forgive us and help us start a new life.

**Lead the group in memorizing the last part of John 8:11: “Go now and leave your life of sin.” Ask volunteers to explain the verse in their own words.**

**Read the section “Responding to God” to the group. Pray the prayer for yourself and help each person pray it for himself or herself.**

## **RESPONDING TO GOD**

her, but Jesus forgave her.

Now that you have studied God’s Word, he wants you to respond. Reflect on the story. The woman had committed a grave sin. Others condemned

**The Bible teaches that you are a sinner.** *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). “There is no one righteous, not even one” (Romans 3:23).*

**But God loves you and sent his Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for your sins. God will forgive you.** *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8).*

You receive Christ as your Savior by turning from your sin and placing your faith and trust in him. *“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out” (Acts 3:19). “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Romans 10:13).*

### **Pray this prayer:**

*“Dear God, I know that I’m a sinner. I believe Jesus died for my sins and rose from the dead and lives today. I now turn from my sins. I place my faith and trust in Jesus alone to be my Savior and to forgive me. I receive Jesus into my life as my Savior and Lord. From this day forward, I will follow Jesus. Thank you, Lord Jesus, for loving me and for coming into my life. In your name I pray. Amen.”*

### **Welcome into God’s family!**

Share with others that you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord. Ask for baptism by immersion in a local church as a public expression of your faith. If there is no church near you, start a church by gathering a group of persons in your home and worship together on a regular basis. Read your Bible and pray each day. Tell others what Christ has done for you and what he can do for them.