

What We Can Learn From the Woman Caught in Adultery

This story opens with the scribes and Pharisees leveling a test at Jesus' feet. Jesus sat in the women's court of the temple, teaching the people.

Seeking to entrap Jesus, the scribes and Pharisees burst into the women's court and threw a married (or betrothed) woman before Him. They "caught" her in the act of adultery and seized her. Consider the specific test they were putting forth: "Teacher, this woman has been caught in the act of adultery. Now the Law of Moses commanded us to stone such women. So what do you say?"

And now we press the question that is so rarely asked whenever this story is read.

Who is this woman?

The answer may surprise you.

She's you. And she's us.

We have all been "caught" in our sins. By the same token James said that if you break one commandment, you've broken them all (James 2:10). That places all of us, men and women alike, on the same moral level. We have all sinned. If every Christian would have eyes to see this truth, we would humbly eliminate all self-righteousness from our hearts.

In short, we are all made of clay; we all have the propensity to sin. With one devastating statement Jesus demonstrated that the Law wasn't wrong, but if everyone saw the Law for what it was, we would understand that we are *all* guilty. Including the self-anointed, puritanical, moral guardians known as the scribes and Pharisees ... and those who follow in their

footsteps.

It's interesting that John 8 opens with a group of men wanting to stone a woman, and it ends with a group of men wanting to stone Jesus. When people's hypocrisy is exposed, the typical instinct is to kill the person who did the exposing. And that's exactly what Jesus did in this scene. Self-righteous men exposed an adulterous woman. A merciful prophet exposed the hypocrisy of religious leaders. It's hypocritical for sinners to want to harm other sinners because of sin. According to Jesus, only the guiltless could rightfully carry out such a righteous sentence of justice.

Unfortunately, this same judgmental attitude lives in the hearts of many self-righteous Christians today. These are those who clearly see the evil in others while being blind to the evil residing in their own hearts. In the mind of God, righteousness and justice are grounded in grace. Whenever grace is removed, we are left with the heartless hypocrisy of Pharisaism. In this story, Jesus Christ didn't overturn the Law. Instead, He re-established righteousness on the basis of grace.

He essentially said to the woman, "Don't sin like this again." Not because she might be stoned. But because grace had rescued her—and she now possessed a new identity as a beautifully loved child of God. Jesus is the Prophet who is greater than Moses. While the Law demanded execution, Jesus re-established righteousness on the basis of grace.

Don't misunderstand. Sin is heinous. Whether it takes the form of adultery, or slander, or abusive words in a fit of rage, or jealousy, or gossip, or lying (pick your sin), God doesn't ignore it because sin harms the people He created. Yet a person who brings correction to those who hurt others ought to do it with no hint of self-righteousness in their hearts, knowing full well that they are equally fallen and capable of much worse (Gal. 6:1-5).

If a person lovingly confronts another human being using a Christlike attitude, they will experience more hurt by bringing the correction than the person they correct. Why? Because they know how clay-footed they themselves are. And because they are humble, they realize just how precarious they themselves are in living a holy life.

Grace ushers in forgiveness, but it also empowers us to walk in a new way. Holiness, then, is built on the experience of grace, not on the fear of the Law. He's in the business of rescuing and releasing us, while at the same time calling our sin for what it is: self-centeredness.

As mere mortals, none of us has the capacity to correctly judge the human heart. If you have received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you are set blessedly free from condemnation. Not only can you not be condemned, you can't even be indicted. Why? Because you are in Christ, and He's unindictable.

Because God has placed you in Christ, making you holy and blameless in His sight, Jesus has called you to a brand-new life. A life no longer marred by sin, but baptized by grace—just like the woman caught in the act of adultery. Thus He says to you ... and to us ... *Go and sin no more. I have written a new identity and a new future for you in the dust and dirt of this life.*

*Excerpted from The Day I Met Jesus: The Revealing Diaries of Five Women from the Gospels by **Mary DeMuth and Frank Viola**. Baker Books, 2015, .*

You can buy The Day I Met Jesus at a 50% discount this week by clicking [here](#).