

August 29, 2021 – Small Group – Leader’s Guide

Read John 8:1-11

1. This contested portion of the gospel depicts the hypocrisy of the religious leaders who sought to trap Jesus by abusing a woman caught in adultery. How and in what ways do we ourselves and the Church fall into religious hypocrisy today?

We can take on a holier-than-thou mentality and see ourselves better than we ought, in comparison to others' depravity and moral lapsing. We can wag the finger at others on social media or even inwardly and silently in our own hearts against others when we ourselves are in collusion with sin and are directly involved in sin. We can perpetuate institutional vices and systemic evils in our communities while turning a blind eye to our own personal evils, excuse ourselves from repentance when we blame others for committing greater sins, and wash our hands from the injustices that others are facing.

2. The woman caught in adultery was a victim of religious abuse by the leaders who were supposed to uphold and protect her. Who in our society and in our church communities are often victimized by religious oppression or inequity?

For example: single parents, BIPOC folks, single people, divorced people, LGBTQ2S+, children/youth, the homeless, those suffering with mental illness/addictions, women who are stigmatized sexually, etc.

3. Jesus invited the crowd to stone the woman provided that they are not party to the unjust sentencing of the woman. In other words, everyone in the crowd could not in good conscience execute the woman. Jesus affirmed the need for judgement but only in the right and just approach. How can we today extend and embody true and right judgement in a world that is filled with evil, injustice, and cruelty?

We must strive and pursue a life of moral excellence, purity, and justice. It girds up our own personal platform to stand, not so that we can then pass judgement on others and look down on others, but because we have been first commanded by God to live as such, and secondly, to bear witness to the life we exemplify by God's power that points to the grace and forgiveness we've received from Jesus Christ. If we are to live exemplary lives, it is only by the Spirit's work in us, and not of our own doing. And so, there is no boasting. Without boasting, there is no room for hypocrisy and there is no room for prejudicial judgement. If we are free from boasting, hypocrisy, and prejudice, we can impart wisdom and light for true and just judgement over and against the evils of our world -- to speak truth to power, to call evil evil, to not celebrate evil, to uphold virtue and justice, and ultimately to extend mercy unto all in the Name of Jesus.

4. Jesus extended His mercy and forgiveness to the woman, even as she was charged guilty. How can we receive the same mercy of Jesus for ourselves and extend the same mercy to one another and to the world around us?

We apprehend Jesus' forgiveness personally by faith. We must first receive His mercy.

If we do not receive mercy, we cannot give it ourselves. The first step is to affirm and acknowledge our own depravity and need for reconciliation to God, for our sins to be forgiven by the cross of Jesus, and to accept His mercy and forgiveness for the transformation and repentance of our lives. Living into this repentant transformation, we become agents of mercy in our world. We then invite others to receive the same mercy, reconciliation, and forgiveness that we ourselves have received.