**Live in Community**

 Small Group Study

**Volume Overview**

**Recognize Sin**

Anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! ([2 Corinthians 5:17](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Co5.17))

*The Bible has a lot to say about sin and forgiveness. It acknowledges the deep brokenness of this world and our individual life. It is only by understanding the depth of human sin that we can understand the remarkable work of God’s forgiveness. Because of His forgiveness, we escape the eternal consequence of our sin and can rightly respond to the call to live a holy life. We learn to receive forgiveness, put off sin, and show forgiveness to those who have sinned against us. We learn to pursue holiness in the midst of the world’s brokenness.*

**Session Overview**

**Accept Forgiveness**

**Biblical Encounter:** A Woman Caught in Sin Receives Mercy ([John 8:1–11](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn8.1-11))

**Outcome:** Recognize God’s undeserved mercy as you pursue and encourage others’ sinlessness.

*In this session, we’ll see a tense situation involving a woman caught in the act of adultery, her accusers, and Jesus. The charges were serious, and this woman’s life was in danger. Jesus’ authority was being tested. In such a charged moment, we might have frozen or bent under the pressure, but Jesus’ response is worth a closer look. His love and mercy were on display in an amazing way! This is encouraging for us because we need His love and mercy too. But Jesus went beyond giving mercy. He also extended to the woman an invitation to live a new life—a life free of the sins that controlled and degraded her.*

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| First time leading *Live* for Adults? Check out the [Facilitator Guide](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf). |

To access session content and videos from a computer, visit: [BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

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| **QUESTION**Share about a time when you were shown undeserved mercy by someone. |

We’ve all had moments when we weren’t at our best. We’ve all had heated conversations when we spoke without thinking or raised our voice in anger. This is just one example of when we might need mercy from someone. It’s a sinking feeling to know we’ve hurt another person. Saying, “I’m sorry” is a great first step in making things right. When you’re the one who has been wronged, it’s also important to accept the other person’s apology, so that you don’t live in the past and can begin to rebuild trust with that person. Granting them forgiveness is the next vital step.

In today’s Bible story, Jesus’ response to a woman caught in adultery after He confronted her accusers gives us a glimpse of our merciful God. But we also see that we have a part to play. We must choose to accept His forgiveness and move away from our sin.

**Watch**

As we watch this video, think about your answer to these questions: Is it easy for you to accept Jesus’ forgiveness? Why or why not?



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| **QUESTION**Is it easy for you to accept Jesus’ forgiveness? Why or why not? |

**Consider What the Bible Says**

The Book of John was most likely written by Jesus’ disciple and close friend, John. He tells us that Jesus had been spending a lot of time teaching in the temple in Jerusalem, with many people gathering to hear Him speak. After spending the night on the Mount of Olives, Jesus returned the next day to teach. The scribes and Pharisees (religious leaders) knew He would be there, and they wanted to trap Him and ruin His reputation. Maybe they also wanted to see if He would fully follow the Mosaic Law in the way they thought He ought to.

God gave the Mosaic Law to Moses to teach the Israelites how to live holy lives. The origins go back to the time of the Ten Commandments, but many other rules are listed throughout the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Old Testament. The religious leaders made it their goal not only to follow every one of the laws, but to enforce them as well.

**The Adulterous Woman Was Brought to Jesus**

Read [John 8:1–3](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn8.1-3).

The religious leaders decided to interrupt Jesus’ teaching to bring a woman caught in adultery to Him. In [Deuteronomy 22:22–25](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Dt22.22-25), the Law stated that if a man and woman were found in the act of adultery, they should both be sentenced to death. However, when the religious leaders brought the woman before Jesus, they brought her alone. No man was brought with her.

Bringing her alone may not have been the wisest way to trap Jesus because the Law stated that both guilty parties needed to be punished. Maybe the religious leaders’ desperation to trap Jesus led to a hasty strategy. Regardless, they seemed to make this woman a pawn in their scheme rather than considering her as a person.

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think the religious leaders only brought the woman caught in adultery and not the man? |

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| **QUESTION**Have you ever been in a situation where someone wanted to catch you doing something wrong? How did you react? |

**The Religious Leaders Tested Jesus**

Read [John 8:4–6](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn8.4-6).

The religious leaders thought they had Jesus trapped. If He showed the woman mercy, it would prove that He didn’t follow the Law. But if He allowed them to stone her, He would be breaking the Roman law. Roman law didn’t permit Jews to impose the death penalty. Doing that also meant that the crowds might see Jesus as unmerciful. The religious leaders had Him right where they wanted Him, or so they thought.

But Jesus delayed His response. He was thoughtful and wasn’t in a hurry. He wasn’t worried about all the emotions and urgency of the situation. Instead, He bent down and wrote in the dust with His finger. What was He doing? Imaginations have run wild with the answer to this question. But Scripture simply doesn’t tell us what He wrote (or drew).

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| **QUESTION**Do you think the religious leaders plotted ahead to test Jesus or just used a spontaneous opportunity to put Him in a difficult situation? Why? |

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| **QUESTION**What might the woman have been thinking and feeling as she watched Jesus and waited for His response? |

**Jesus Responded to the Religious Leaders**

Read [John 8:7–9](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn8.7-9).

As the religious leaders pushed Jesus for an answer, He finally stood and said that anyone who had never sinned could throw stones at her. These men thought about it, and then began to slip away. They were forced to look at their own heart instead of judging someone else’s actions. So they left one by one. Their own sinfulness was exposed by Jesus. But notice that Jesus silenced the woman’s accusers without excusing her sin.

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| **QUESTION**Compare Jesus’ demeanor with that of the religious leaders during this exchange. What do you notice? |

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| **QUESTION**What question(s) do you think you would have asked the woman about her reaction to her accusers leaving? |

**Jesus Showed Mercy**

Read [John 8:10–11](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn8.10-11).

With the religious leaders gone, it was only Jesus and the woman in front of the crowd. There was no one left to judge and punish her. And the only sinless One who had the right to punish her chose not to. Instead, Jesus released her. He didn’t excuse her sin, but He showed her mercy and commanded her to stop sinning. Instead of convicting her, He invited the woman to live a transformed life. Jesus’ mercy wasn’t simply meant to spare her life, but to give her an opportunity to pursue a new, better one.

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| **QUESTION**If you had been this woman, what would you have done or said to Jesus after your accusers left? |

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| **QUESTION**How do you think Jesus’ mercy in this situation changed the woman’s life? |

**Did You Know?**

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| *The punishment for adultery in the Old Testament Law is spelled out in two instances:*[*Leviticus 20:10*](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Le20.10)*and*[*Deuteronomy 22:22*](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Dt22.22)*. The religious leaders who brought the woman before Jesus in a desire to trap Him may have been right that the penalty for her actions should have been death. But the Law required the punishment of both the woman and the man caught in the sinful act, not just the woman. In addition to this, the oral laws of the religious leaders (known as the Mishnah) required a public trial that was supposed to prove beyond doubt that those caught in adultery were truly guilty and worthy of the death sentence. This means that the religious leaders in this passage were neither correctly following the biblical Law nor their own oral laws.* |

**Reflect**

**Recognize God’s undeserved mercy as you pursue and encourage others’ sinlessness.**

This situation must have impacted everyone with Jesus that day. The religious leaders went from almost proudly condemning a woman to death and trying to trap Jesus to walking away aware of their own sinfulness. The woman walked away with her life, but she was also commanded to leave her sin behind. The crowd watched how Jesus wisely handled a tense situation with both truth and mercy. No doubt they left reflecting on their own level of purity, too.

This story can impact us as believers today as well. God knows that in this world we will struggle with our sin nature, so He made it known through His Word that His mercy is always available to us. But He also loves us too much to allow us to continue in sinful patterns. He knows what’s best for us and wants to lead us away from sin and toward a closer relationship with Him. Accepting His forgiveness and mercy is a great start, but we must also actively pursue a sinless life and encourage others to do the same.

**Listen to God**

Let’s pause and listen to what God might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Be silent for a few moments and reflect on the following questions. Respond to the one that most resonates with what God is saying to you now. Then complete the others during Day 1 of your devotion time this week.

**Personal Reflection Questions**

*Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.*

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| **QUESTION**We can relate to both the religious leaders in this story (those who judged others) as well as the adulterous woman (the one who sinned). How can believers work toward balancing truth and mercy in life? |

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| **QUESTION**When is it difficult for you to recognize and accept God’s mercy and forgiveness for yourself? |

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| **QUESTION**What are some practical ways you can pursue sinlessness in your life? |

**Activate**

God’s mercy is available to each one of us, no matter what we have done in the past. Sometimes it’s difficult to accept, but [Psalm 145:8](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps145.8) states, “The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love.” What a beautiful and humbling truth! God’s love and mercy, if we accept it, can be the motivation we need to live a life that is pleasing to Him.

**Challenge**

This week, take some time to thank God for His mercy in your life. Write down some of the many ways you have received His forgiveness. Then express your gratitude to God. Also ask God to show you any areas of sin in your life that you need to confess to Him and leave behind. If God shows you a sin pattern you need to get rid of, find a trustworthy friend who can hold you accountable and pray with you for God to help you break that pattern.

**Prayer Requests**

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| Note any requests from the group and pray together. Also remember to pray for them during the week. |

God is merciful and compassionate, but He also wants us to live in a way that pleases and honors Him. It’s important that we listen to God through His Word both in community and individually so we can know how to live this way. Personal devotions have been provided as an extension of this discussion.

**Live on Your Own**

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| *Before you begin each devotion, pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.* |

**Day 1: A Woman Caught in Sin Receives Mercy**

Read [John 8:1–11](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn8.1-11).

Look back over Live in Community and complete your responses to the Personal Reflection Questions. Plan how to complete the Activate component if you haven’t already done so. If time permits, reread the Scripture too.

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| **QUESTION**In what areas of your life is God speaking to you about accepting His forgiveness and pursuing holiness? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 2: Free from Sin’s Power**

Read [Romans 8:1–14](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro8.1-14).

When we become believers and accept Christ’s forgiveness, we walk in freedom from sin’s power. We will still sin at times, but we don’t have to be controlled by it. We have God’s Spirit in us, the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead. Paul encouraged us here to allow the Holy Spirit to guide us instead of the sin nature that leads to death. The Holy Spirit gives us the power to walk in freedom instead of condemnation. That’s great news!

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| **QUESTION**How does this truth about being free from sin’s power change the way you think about God’s view of you? |

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| **QUESTION**What are some practical things you can do in your life to allow the Holy Spirit to lead you? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 3: Pursue Purity**

Read [1 Timothy 6:11–14](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.1Ti6.11-14).

In this passage, Paul gave his final instructions to his spiritual son, Timothy. He encouraged Timothy to flee evil things and instead pursue righteousness, which means right living. This includes chasing after faith, love, perseverance, gentleness, and a godly life. In the same way, we should live to honor God and pursue purity in every way until Jesus returns. God’s mercy and forgiveness are available when we mess up, but as Jesus told the woman caught in adultery to go and sin no more, we must do the same by pursuing purity and right living.

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| **QUESTION**What are some intentional things you can do this week to get away from evil? |

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| **QUESTION**How can you set up patterns and habits to live a godly life and pursue purity? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 4: Avoid Hypocrisy**

Read [Romans 2:1–11](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro2.1-11).

In this passage, Paul addressed the “religious” people, similar to those Jesus was dealing with in [John 8](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn8). It’s an unfortunate human tendency to apply the rules to others’ actions, but to think we are somehow above the rules or at least better in comparison to others. Maybe it’s because we know our own intentions and motivations, but we assume the worst in others’ actions. It’s easy to be judgmental, but when we do the same things as those we are condemning, we’re being hypocritical and self-righteous. If we can stay aware of our constant need for God’s mercy in our own life and keep pursuing Him, it will help us avoid judging others with a different standard.

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| **QUESTION**What similarities do you see between how the religious leaders judged the woman caught in adultery and the characteristics of the religious people Paul was addressing in this passage? |

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| **QUESTION**What types of sin do you see in others that makes you think you’re doing better than they are? How can you seek God’s help to avoid this hypocrisy of judging others? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 5: Mutual Accountability with Others**

Read [Galatians 6:1–5](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ga6.1-5).

The Book of Galatians is another book where Paul addressed those who seemed to emphasize the rules instead of focusing on the heart. Paul instructed believers that in order to live according to God’s Spirit, they needed to help and encourage each other. If we see another believer who is struggling in sin, we should gently and humbly (with the right attitude and motivation) point that believer toward Jesus and right living. Remember Paul cautioned that it’s tempting to fall into the same sin as those we’re trying to help if we are not careful.

It’s important to contrast this with the hypocritical judgment the [Romans 2:1–11](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro2.1-11) passage talks about. Gentle and humble correction with the right attitudes of love and mercy can help fellow believers rather than condemning them and making them feel judged. It also helps us to check our own actions and motives when we hold others accountable, so we hold ourself to the same standard.

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| **QUESTION**How does this type of correction of a fellow believer compare with how the religious leaders treated the woman caught in adultery? |

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| **QUESTION**How can you check your heart to make sure you are helping others and not judging them when they are not on the right path? |