

Following Jesus in the Gospel of John

Week of February 21, 2010. John 8:1-11; Woman caught in adultery.

Opening: Have snack and drinks available for people to socialize as they arrive. Also prepare a signup sheet for volunteers to bring the snack over the next five weeks.

Introductions: If this is a new group or if the group has new people in it, then go around the circle and have everyone share their name and a couple of things about themselves.

Interactive: *Laws and Loopholes.* Divide into two groups. Give the groups 3 minutes to write an air tight law and its punishment. Have the groups exchange their laws. Give the groups 3 minutes to find a loophole which lessens or nullifies the law and its consequence. Give the groups several minutes to argue their cases.

Connection: In this week's Bible passage the religious leaders tried to trap Jesus by a dilemma that existed between Jewish and Roman law. Whichever law Jesus chose to enforce would cause him to break the other law. Leviticus 20:10 and Deuteronomy 22:22 dictates the death penalty in various cases of adultery. However, in Roman law adultery was not a capital offence.

Opening prayer: Ask someone to pray. Consider the benefit to a new group or to new people of allowing a few minutes to refresh their snack and mingling to become more acquainted.

Guidelines: Review existing group guidelines as a reminder to the group and for the benefit of any new people. If the group does not have guidelines, then discuss and develop a set together. Refer to the suggested guideline handout for ideas about what topics to include.

Scripture passage: Have someone(s) read John 8:1-11.

Sermon Highlights: Have someone read for the benefit of those that missed Sunday.

"If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die". Deuteronomy 22:22. We see that the law prescribes a harsh penalty to both parties. In the Mosaic covenant especially as it is outlined in the book of Leviticus, the people of God must keep up their side of the covenant. Basically – The obedient will be blessed and the disobedient will be cursed. It is based on such verses as these that the Pharisees and teachers of the law present the adulterous woman before Jesus.

If we are honest, we find ourselves in this passage of John in two places. First, feeling like the Pharisees, eager to accuse and filled with anger and disgust at the blatant sin of others. And we find ourselves in the adulterous woman. None of us are exempt from sin. None of us are beyond temptation. Our fellowship together is marked by this unity; we are all weak and sinful. We are a unique community hanging together by God's Grace, sustained by Jesus Christ.

Jesus frees the woman from the condemnation of others, helping her know that she is not alone in sin. But Jesus also frees her from the condemnation she expects from God. Leviticus 26:40-45 completes the picture of the covenant by including the confession of and repentance from sin as grounds for God to remember and fulfill His promises. The covenant announced through Moses has as its backdrop God's forgiveness. The harsh requirements of the law are balanced with the generous grace of God. And so it is in our passage.

Jesus finds a way to offer forgiveness, freedom from condemnation, and at the same time uphold the law, the covenant. God's grace will empower the young woman in her future obedience. *"And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it."* Corinthians 10:13. For those suffering under the weight of sin, Jesus offers another way.

Group Discussion: Below are several suggested topics for discussion. The intent is not for you to cover them all; but to select, revise and add to as desired to fit your group and to cover a 20 to 40 minute discussion. This first week the discussion time will most likely be shorter than other weeks because you want to allow people time to get to know each other.

Using these questions? The first question in each is a lead off question giving people a chance to consider and respond to a big idea. The subsequent questions are follow up questions and address specific ideas or possibilities of the big idea, giving something more tangible to respond to.

1. What is your initial response to this passage? What idea or event prompts a response in your thoughts or emotions?
2. What do you think motivated the religious leaders to confront Jesus in this way? How was Jesus' ministry affecting them? What benefit would they have achieved from the successful outcome of this testing? What issues tempt us to act like them towards others?
3. In what alternative ways could Jesus have responded to the leaders? To the woman? What effect would they have? Eg. What if Jesus would have said, "Go away, you are bothering me"? Or said to the woman, "What were you thinking you _____ woman"?
4. What do you imagine the woman was experiencing? What emotions would she have? What could she imagine would happen to her? What would she be hoping for from Jesus?
5. In what ways was Jesus' response to the woman different than the religious leaders? Have people look up and read the following verses and then discuss Jesus' "Kingdom Thinking". Matthew 5:21-22, 27-28, 31-34, and 38-39. Mark 2:23-28. Luke 19:1-10. John 7:24.
6. Have someone read Hebrews 10:24-25. What are tangible ways we can stimulate and encourage each other? How do we help each other move more towards God and others; and stay away from isolation and compromise? How do we help restore someone who has slipped into a habit of sin?

Lent Reflections:

- What reminder or discovery of God's saving grace have you experienced in this passage?
- Guidance: Where is God at work in your life now; and what surrender, trust, or action is He asking you to trust Him with.

Closing Prayer: Continue the conversation you have had with each other with God. Praise Him and make requests based upon the things already shared in the discussion time. Ask someone to open and another person to close when the group seems done praying.

Then ask if there is anything we need to know about so we can be prayer with you this week?

Social Time: Time permitting, allow everyone to linger and visit for another 10 or 15 minutes.

Guidelines and Resources

Common Guidelines for a Healthy Group

- Purpose – We will meet on a regular basis to share in a common interest or need for friendship and spiritual growth.
- Group Attendance – We will give priority to group meetings and will call ahead if late or absent.
- Preparation – We will come prepared for whatever discussion or activity the group has planned for the meeting.
- Safe Place – We will be intentional about creating a safe environment so group members can be heard and feel loved.
- Participation – We are all encouraged to share openly and honestly; we will not advise without invitation, condemn anyone, or dominate a discussion or activity.
- Confidentiality – We will not repeat outside of the meeting anything of a personal nature that is shared in the meeting.
- Teamwork – We will share the responsibilities of our group, develop our God-given gifts, and encourage emerging leaders from within our group.
- The Right Fit - People are free to visit several groups and find the group that is the right fit for them.

Message Series Scripture Passages

Feb 14 - John 4 - Jesus and the Samaritan woman

Feb 21 - John 8 - Woman caught in adultery. Week 1, Doug

Feb 28 - John 9 - Man born blind receives sight. Week 2, Nancy

March 7 - John 11 – Lazarus. Week 3, Josh

March 14 - John 13 - Jesus washes the disciple's feet. Week 4, Doug

March 21 - John 18:1-11 – Judas. Week 5, Nancy

March 28 - Palm Sunday - John 18 - Jesus and Pilate. Week 6, Josh

April 4 - Easter - John 20:1-10 - Peter and John race to the tomb

Contact information for discussion guide writers.

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The Season of Lent

The death and resurrection of Jesus Christ are at the heart of the Christian gospel, and Good Friday and Easter are two of the most significant celebrations of the Christian year. Lent is a season of preparation and repentance during which we anticipate Good Friday and Easter. Just as we carefully prepare for big events in our personal lives, such as a wedding or commencement, Lent invites us to make our hearts ready for remembering Jesus' passion and celebrating Jesus' resurrection.

The practice of a forty-day preparation period began in the Christian church during the third and fourth centuries. The number *forty* carries biblical significance based on the forty years Israel spent in the wilderness and Jesus' forty-day fast in the wilderness. The forty days of Lent begin on Ash Wednesday and continue through holy week, not counting Sundays (which are reserved for celebratory worship). In practice, many congregations choose to focus Sunday worship on



the themes of repentance and renewal.

As a period of preparation, Lent has historically included the instruction of persons for baptism and profession of faith on Easter Sunday; the calling back of those who have become estranged from the church; and efforts by all Christians to deepen their piety, devotion, and readiness to mark the death and resurrection of their Savior. As such, the primary focus of the season is to explore and deepen a "baptismal spirituality" that centers on our union with Christ rather than to function only as an extended meditation on Christ's suffering and death.