

Lesson: "Should I Really Be Preaching This?"
Passage: John 7:53-8:11

Background

What does it mean to know God and mature in Christ? One significant way to measure our spiritual growth is in our ability to put others' needs before our own. I have often thought of this being a tipping point, a place where one ceases to say, "I hope church/group/this meeting is good today, and I can take something useful away," and begins thinking, "I wonder who needs me today; whom can I show love or bring a blessing to in this situation?"

In this passage in John, the Pharisees encounter a woman, and all they see is a useful tool, someone they can use to accuse and abuse Jesus with. But Jesus has a totally different view of what to do with the woman. He chooses to show her love and acceptance, to lift her up in dignity and call her to a better way. How do we look at the people around us – like the Jewish leaders, or like Jesus?

IceBreaker

What criteria do you use to choose a new friend? What qualities in someone's life eliminates them from your potential friendship pool?

Read & Discuss

<Read John 7:53-8:11>

- What kind of relationship did the Pharisees and teachers want to have with Jesus? What were their motives in bringing this woman to Jesus?
- How did they view the woman they were bringing to Jesus? Were they looking for an opportunity to bless her or bring her back closer to God? If she was "caught in the act," where was the man who was with her?
- How did the Jewish religious leaders' focus on the Law and following rules to please God affect the way they saw people in the world around them? How did they see themselves?

- What kinds of things do you imagine Jesus was writing on the ground? (Some say he was writing a list of the sins of those who were accusing the woman, or writing the names of their mistresses.)
- What was the impact of Jesus words to these leader? Why did it affect them the way that it did? Why did they all leave, beginning with the oldest among them?
- Name some ways you think Jesus saw this woman and what she was doing in her life in a different way than her accusers. What did he want for her?

Apply

- Considering that Jesus was "God in the flesh," what do you learn about God and his desires to judge, condemn, and punish people for their sins? How does this change your view of God?
- Think about how you view people God brings into your life? What is your deepest desire for them, regardless of the lifestyle they are currently living?
- One of the major steps of maturing in Christ is when we stop asking, "What can I get from this person in my life?" and begin asking, "What can I give to this person in my life?" (cf. Philippians 2:3-5) Consider how marriage, parenthood, friendship, and small group encounters look when people come to them with each of these attitudes.
- How are you doing personally in your efforts to love others and put their needs ahead of your own? Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5.
- Who is someone you encounter on a regular basis who needs to be shown love and is in no position to do anything for you? How might you show them love in a practical way this week?

Pray

- Pray to have the eyes of Christ as you move through your week, and for your opportunities to show love to others.
- Pray for your group to be a place where people don't just receive love, but a place that thinks about how to go out and show love to others outside the body.