

The Gospel of John

Believe and Live!

Lesson 9

John 8:1–59

An Adulteress Faces the Light

At a glance ~ **Read John 8:1–59.**

Think about it: How horribly humiliating would it be if the entire world had Internet access to the thoughts in our minds and the intents in our hearts twenty-four/seven? Would that awareness alone be motive enough to change our behavior? (Please share your thoughts below.)

In this chapter, Jesus will manifest that He is the revealer of the thoughts and intents of every human heart. Let that truth sink in today as you begin to navigate your way through your study.

John's narrative of chapter 8 actually picks up in the last verse of the previous chapter following the Feast of Tabernacles: "*And everyone went to his own house*" (7:53). "*But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives*" (8:1). The stated fact of verse 1 makes it evident that Jesus was a homeless man. Susceptible to nature's elements and alone, He often retreated at the end of the day to the open slopes of the Mount of Olives. There are many passages in Scripture that confirm He often spent the night there. (The poignancy of this picture does not go unnoticed.) On one occasion to a would-be follower, Jesus made this statement: "*Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head*" (Matthew 8:20).

Early in the morning, Jesus returned to the temple and sat down to resume teaching all those who came to hear Him.

1. Who interrupted Him and what issue did they address?
 - a. What, according to the text, was their motive?

The scribes and Pharisees that approached Jesus no doubt thought they had a solid case: a woman caught in adultery was condemned to die by the Law of Moses. If Jesus were to let her go, they would be able to catch Him in their trap! But they underestimated His wisdom in dealing with the situation.

2. How did Jesus respond? v. 6

Wouldn't you love to know what Jesus wrote with His finger in the dust that day? Was it the names of the accusers or perhaps their own sins? Scholars have been debating that question for centuries.

3. Jesus stood up and spoke the words that pierced every heart that heard them. What did He say? v. 7

Stooping down again, He continued writing with His finger in the dust. Jesus did not immediately let the woman go; in fact, He upheld the Law of Moses.

4. Asking for any sinless person in the crowd to step forward and cast the first stone, what did those who heard His words begin doing? Why? v. 9

The oldest in the crowd left first—those with the longest record of sins. One by one, they slipped from the scene.

5. Once her accusers were gone, Jesus turned to speak His first words to the woman; what were they? vv. 10–11

In focus ~ (Key words) **adultery**

Look up the word using the resources you have on hand (Bible translations, dictionary, concordance) and write a definition.

adultery: _____

Jesus didn't overlook or dismiss the woman's sin—He dealt with it by forgiving her and telling her not to repeat it for a very good reason: adultery involves the worst lies and betrayal, destroying family relationships and leaving lifetime scars in its wake. In the eyes of the Mosaic Law, this sin was worthy of death. But the way Jesus dealt with this woman is an illustration of the way He deals with all sinners—He forgives! The law demands justice but grace allows mercy. Jesus could read her heart just as He reads every heart, extending mercy and forgiveness to every one that repents.

- Personal: If His Word is convicting *your* heart today, confess your sin and accept His forgiveness.

Take a closer look ~ John 8:12

(Memorize and meditate on the memory verse each time you open your lesson.)

“Then Jesus spoke to them again, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.’”

Who first brought you to the light of Christ? Have you thanked God for that individual and their testimony about Him?

Piercing the Darkness

Outlook ~ Read John 8:12–30.

We now come to a section of text involving a dramatic dialogue between Jesus and the religious leaders who are seeking to destroy Him. Jesus is addressing men who say they know God—who study and teach God’s Word—yet whose hearts are far from Him. We don’t have to look very far today to see similar examples in our world.

Following the stunning illustration of the adulteress woman forgiven and set free, Jesus turns toward the people and makes a startling declaration in verse 12: *“I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life.”* The quiet gentle words with which He addressed the woman are in sharp contrast to words that are now stern, blunt, and to the point in an effort to reveal the truth.

1. How did the Pharisees immediately challenge Jesus? v. 13

The challenge is there: the Pharisees will not believe Jesus based on His word alone, but notice the indisputable answer that Jesus presents to His opponents in verses 14–18.

2. What three points does Jesus make to refute their challenge?
 - a. v. 14
 - b. vv. 15–16
 - c. vv. 17–18

The Pharisees were not convinced and continued to oppose Jesus, saying, “*Where is Your Father? Jesus answered, ‘You know neither Me nor My Father. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also.’ These words Jesus spoke in the treasury, as He taught in the temple; and no one laid hands on Him, for His hour had not yet come*” (vv. 19–20). Why didn’t they just go ahead and arrest Him since they didn’t believe Him? Their hard hearts kept them from understanding His words, but the Father’s hand was on Him and no one could touch Him because His time had not yet come.

As the dialogue between Jesus and the Pharisees continues, He reveals what stands between Him and the opposition: their pride.

3. As Jesus predicts His own death, what is the tone of the Pharisees’ response? vv. 21–27

- a. What did they think He was going to do?
- b. What does Jesus tell them will happen to them if they do not believe in Him?

He speaks sharp words but words that are loving as well. He does not tell them what they want to hear but rather what they need to hear. He came to bring the light of truth and set them free!

4. When does Jesus say they will really come to know who He is? vv. 28–29

- a. Who does He tell them He came to represent?
- b. What is the final outcome of this searing conversation? v. 30

Selah ~

Have you ever heard a hard word from Jesus? Sometimes we will not respond to the gentle, soft tug of the Holy Spirit—His love and grace reaching out to us. On occasion we need to have the megaphone of reality shouting out to us through our pain and suffering in order for God to reach us and get our attention! If you are there right now, pause and ask Him to clearly speak to you through His loving Word.

The Truth Sets You Free!

Outlook ~ Read John 8:31–59.

What is your definition of *freedom*—what does it mean to you personally? God's definition means to be set free from sin to become all that you were ever meant to be! It means to find fulfillment and satisfaction in life and to develop to your full potential. In the remaining verses of chapter 8, Jesus delivers powerful words of freedom to all who will listen.

1. In verses 31–32, to those who believed in Him, Jesus lays out the condition for discipleship and the way to freedom.
 - a. What is the condition?

 - b. What is the promise He offers?

The condition: IF you *abide in His Word* means to cling to His teaching; to remain steadfast in it. Applying His Word—testing it—in everyday life till you come to an experiential knowledge that what He says is true. The evidence is there for all who want to know. The very focus of John's gospel message is on the evidence that backs up the claims of Christ: *“Truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may **believe** that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have **life** in His name”* (John 20:30–31).

2. The response of the people reveals their false sense of security; what is it? v. 33
 - a. According to Jesus, when you give yourself over to sin, what is the result?
vv. 34–35

 - b. Conversely, if you give yourself to Jesus, what is the result? v. 36

When you give yourself over to sin, you are under its control and you become its slave. The devastating affects of sin can spread slowly over time, but eventually a destructive pattern becomes evident and dangerous habits form that are hard to break. Jesus is making that point that a slave has no permanent place in the family; only a son belongs in it forever. The Jews who thought they were free because they were Abraham's descendants were not really sons—they were slaves. His point is those who do not cling to His Word and who choose a life of slavery instead will forfeit the place and privilege of belonging to the family.

Next, Jesus gets down to the truth about people and where they place their trust and the response gets ugly!

3. When Jesus begins to question the fatherhood of these Jews, what is their attitude? vv. 37–47
 - a. Jesus makes a distinction between His Father and theirs that infuriates them; but if they were truly Abraham’s children, how would they behave?
 - b. What reveals they are not who they say they are?
 - c. Who does Jesus say their real father is?

“He who is of God hears God’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God” (v. 47). In simple language: what you do reveals to whom you belong. Jesus has left no stone unturned; everything is now out in the open and the spiritual battle for men’s souls is very evident. Jesus has come to reveal the Father and to unveil the true nature of men to themselves. What each individual does with that truth determines their ultimate destiny.

At this point there is nowhere to go: the choice is to fall on their knees and worship Jesus or pick up the stones to try to kill Him. In verses 48–59, we see them make their choice.

4. Read through the passage carefully and sum up the following . . .
 - a. The heart attitude of the people –
 - b. The promise Jesus makes to His followers –
 - c. The startling personal claim of Jesus – v. 58

When Jesus uses the statement “I AM” (here and in v. 28), He is using the Old Testament name describing the nature and character of God (Exodus 3:14; Isaiah 45:18). In describing Himself this way, He is making a claim to deity. We can’t help but notice the increasing intensity of the conversation as Jesus presses this reality home to their hearts. The tension is evident: *“And they took up stones to throw at Him but Jesus hid Himself and went out . . .”* (v. 59).

Selah ~

The choice facing each person that day in the temple courts is the same choice you will face: fall down and worship Him or pick up those stones! There is no other choice—to be undecided is to decide against Him. Whether it’s through gentle words or the megaphone of difficult circumstances, Jesus offers you the way to freedom and fulfillment . . . you must make the choice and respond. But realize that if you call Him Savior, you must also accept Him as Lord over your life—all of it: your plans, ambitions, desires, and goals. Close your study with a time of prayer and note what He ministers to your heart today.

More like Jesus ~

Are *you* becoming more like Jesus? Absolutely! Every time you open the Word and spend time getting to know Him more intimately, you partake in the life-long process of drawing near—going deeper—bearing fruit—becoming more like Him. As you close your lesson today, determine to put into practice what you’ve learned by noting it below.

- Recite your memory verse _____

- Reflect on a lesson you received _____

- Respond with prayer and praise to God _____

Notes