

John Chapter 8

Jesus is sitting with people who are eager to learn from him when the scribes and Pharisees bring a woman to him. She is alone, but she has been caught having sex with a man who is not her husband. The scribes and Pharisees are attempting to force Jesus to make a decision about whether she should be stoned.

Why do they do this? It's because of what they expect him to say. Based on the things Jesus has said and done up to this point, they are hoping he will tell them not to stone her, because, then they could charge him with blatantly opposing the Law of Moses.

This means Jesus has already made a name for himself as being someone who cares about people. Jesus has already demonstrated that he would rather choose to forgive a person than to punish them for their sins. This is not the way of the Pharisees.

The Pharisees are obsessed with eliminating sin to such an extent that they have become ungraceful. So ungraceful, in fact, that they consider a person worthy of death for saying someone should not be punished for sinning. They bring this woman to Jesus because they want him to pardon her. Then, they can take him to the authorities and accuse him of speaking against the Law of Moses and have him put to death.

We are lucky that something like this would never happen today, right? Christians would never condemn other Christians for their willingness to look beyond the sins of another and show compassion. Sadly, that is a false statement. Condemnation of a Christian for having compassion or loving someone despite their actions happens all the time.

After this exchange, Jesus goes on to explain who he is. And he clarifies for his audience who they are, in light of who he is.

This section is often used by Christians as a place to start when we interact with those outside of the church. They are the ones we think of when we hear "children of the devil" and people who don't know God. We take a hard-line approach, and make it clear to unbelievers that they are not children of God. Then, we add "yet..." to the end of that sentence and think it turns what we're saying into an invitation.

Look again at who Jesus is talking to. He is talking to Jews. Religious Jews who claim the title based on their lineage. These are the people who think they speak for God. Jesus is not talking to people who are unfamiliar with God. These aren't people who don't understand that God wants them to be holy.

This is who Jesus speaks the most harshly to during his entire time on earth. His most condemning words are always saved for the Pharisees and the religious Jews. Look throughout the gospels, and you will not see Jesus speaking harshly to those who do not claim to be religious. Ever.

These religious people try to argue that they are God's people, but Jesus repeatedly points out how they are not. As the conversation gets more heated, they resort to name calling and false accusations. Again, the religious people, those who claim to follow God, are calling God's own Son names and mocking him.

Be careful that you are not so committed to your theology that you close your mind to hearing Jesus speak to you. Do not become so full of yourself that there is no space for the Holy Spirit to guide you. It can be easy to become overconfident in our ability to know truth and have flawless theology.

Does Jesus get all the glory in your theology? Do the values you hold strongly match the way Jesus interacted with the world? Would he call you a child of the devil? Or do you love those he loves and rebuke only those he would rebuke?