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~ **Caught in the Act of Sin** ~

You can learn much more about this story by doing these three things:

1. Read John 7:40-8:11.
2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.
3. Answer the reflective questions.

1. Read the text of the story.

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New Living Translation (NLT) *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation

John 7:40-8:11 NASB	John 7:40-8:11 NLT
<p><i>Some of the people therefore, when they heard these words, were saying, "This certainly is the Prophet." 41 Others were saying, "This is the Christ." Still others were saying, "Surely the Christ is not going to come from Galilee, is He? 42 Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?" 43 So a division occurred in the crowd because of Him. 44 Some of them wanted to seize Him, but no one laid hands on Him.</i></p> <p>45 The officers then came to the chief priests and Pharisees, and they said to them, "Why did you not bring Him?" 46 The officers answered, "Never has a man spoken the way this man speaks." 47 The Pharisees then answered them, "You have not also been led astray, have you? 48 No one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him, has he? 49 But this crowd which does not know the Law is accursed." 50 Nicodemus (he who came to Him before, being one of them) *said to them, 51 "Our Law does not judge a man unless it first hears from him and knows what he is doing, does it?" 52 They answered him, "You are not also from Galilee, are you? Search, and see that no prophet arises out of Galilee." 53 [Everyone went to his home.</p> <p>8 But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. 2 Early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people were coming to Him; and He sat down and <i>began</i> to teach them. 3 The scribes and the Pharisees *brought a woman caught in adultery, and having set her in the center of <i>the court</i>, 4 they *said to Him, "Teacher, this woman has been caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now in the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women; what then do You say?" 6 They were saying this, testing Him, so that they might have grounds for accusing Him. But Jesus stooped down and with His finger wrote on the ground. 7 But when they persisted in asking Him, He straightened up, and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him <i>be the first</i> to throw a stone at her." 8 Again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. 9 When they heard it, they <i>began</i> to go out one by one, beginning with the older ones, and He was left alone, and the woman, where she was, in the center of <i>the court</i>. 10 Straightening up, Jesus said to her, "Woman,</p>	<p>40 When the crowds heard him say this, some of them declared, "Surely this man is the Prophet we've been expecting." 41 Others said, "He is the Messiah." Still others said, "But he can't be! Will the Messiah come from Galilee? 42 For the Scriptures clearly state that the Messiah will be born of the royal line of David, in Bethlehem, the village where King David was born." 43 So the crowd was divided about him. 44 Some even wanted him arrested, but no one laid a hand on him.</p> <p>45 When the Temple guards returned without having arrested Jesus, the leading priests and Pharisees demanded, "Why didn't you bring him in?"</p> <p>46 "We have never heard anyone speak like this!" the guards responded.</p> <p>47 "Have you been led astray, too?" the Pharisees mocked. 48 "Is there a single one of us rulers or Pharisees who believes in him? 49 This foolish crowd follows him, but they are ignorant of the law. God's curse is on them!"</p> <p>50 Then Nicodemus, the leader who had met with Jesus earlier, spoke up. 51 "Is it legal to convict a man before he is given a hearing?" he asked.</p> <p>52 They replied, "Are you from Galilee, too? Search the Scriptures and see for yourself—no prophet ever comes from Galilee!"</p> <p>53 Then the meeting broke up, and everybody went home.</p> <p>8 Jesus returned to the Mount of Olives, 2 but early the next morning he was back again at the Temple. A crowd soon gathered, and he sat down and taught them. 3 As he was speaking, the teachers of religious law and the Pharisees brought a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. They put her in front of the crowd.</p> <p>4 "Teacher," they said to Jesus, "this woman was caught in the act of adultery. 5 The law of Moses says to stone her. What do you say?"</p> <p>6 They were trying to trap him into saying something they could use against him, but Jesus stooped down and wrote</p>

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<p>where are they? Did no one condemn you?" ¹¹ She said, "No one, Lord." And Jesus said, "I do not condemn you, either. Go. From now on sin no more."]</p>	<p>in the dust with his finger. ⁷ They kept demanding an answer, so he stood up again and said, "All right, but let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!" ⁸ Then he stooped down again and wrote in the dust.</p> <p>⁹ When the accusers heard this, they slipped away one by one, beginning with the oldest, until only Jesus was left in the middle of the crowd with the woman. ¹⁰ Then Jesus stood up again and said to the woman, "Where are your accusers? Didn't even one of them condemn you?"</p> <p>¹¹ "No, Lord," she said.</p> <p>And Jesus said, "Neither do I. Go and sin no more."</p>
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2. Discover key cultural and historical insights.

- The Mount of Olives is a mile-long ridge of limestone hills to the east of Jerusalem and was still within the jurisdiction of the city of Jerusalem.
- In ancient times, the coming of each new moon was announced by signals from the mount.
- Jesus could have erected a small booth on the mount for the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles or he could have lodged with someone in Bethany or Bethphage in the Mount of Olives area.
- The committing of adultery was forbidden in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:14) and was punishable by death (Leviticus 20:10).
- Roman law did not allow the Jews to execute anyone without the governor's permission. If he advocates her stoning, without talking first to the governor, then he is undermining the Roman authority and could be accused of insurrection. If he does not advocate stoning her, then he could be viewed as undermining the Mosaic law.

These insights were gleaned from The Words and Works of Jesus Christ – Dwight Pentecost, Wycliffe's Historical Geography of Bible Lands – Pfeiffer and Vos, and the NIV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible.

3. Answer these reflective questions.

In the beginning of the story, Nicodemus defended Jesus against the religious leaders. Read Nicodemus' first encounter with Jesus in John 3 and explain how that conversation would have affected him in a positive way to defend Jesus?

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The religious leaders said that the woman was caught in the very act. Do you think this implies that they plotted to catch her in this act to bring her to Jesus? Why do you think they did not bring the man?

Twice it says that Jesus was writing on the ground. Why do you think he did this? What do you think he was writing?

The story tells us that the men left, from the oldest to the youngest. Why do you think it was in this order?

Jesus did not condemn the woman but he also told her to go and sin no more. What is the relationship between forgiveness and living a holy life? Should one lead to the other?
