



**Sermon Series: My Encounter with Jesus**

**To be used with Session 3: Jesus Gave Me Grace and Forgiveness**

**Sermon Title Possibilities: Giving Grace**

**Scripture: John 8:2-11**

**Connection with Unit Theme:** To complement the Bible study “My Encounter with Jesus” this sermon will challenge believers to be sensitive to the approach we use to challenge others about sin. Jesus extends grace and love to reach the heart, and we should do the same.

**Introduction:** So far, we have investigated two strategies used by Jesus in public places: a well (i.e., an ancient gas station; John 4:7-42) and a pool (i.e., an ancient park, John 5:2-18). In one case, Jesus dealt with a woman’s improper views of ethnicity, sexuality, and worship. In another case, Jesus helped a disabled man to move away from his superstitious beliefs so that he could adequately understand that life, in this world and the next, comes from God alone (5:21-29). In this passage, Jesus’s conversation occurs at the temple, which can be easily associated with a modern-day church gathering. Here Jesus engaged with a group of trained theologians (i.e., the scribes and the Pharisees, 8:3) who sought to test His theological ability. From their point of view, Jesus was not from one of their religious schools. He should not have been able to engage with them at such a level. Jesus should not have been literate enough to debate them because they did not train Him. However, Jesus demonstrated that all proper knowledge and training comes from God, the Father (7:15-19). Understanding this is key to comprehending the strategy used in this passage.

### **1. Only Jesus Can Forgive Sin - John 8:2-7a**

- As mentioned before, because Jesus knows all men (2:24-25), He is not caught off guard by their test. We can pass such tests as well if we mimic Jesus’s actions. When they tested Jesus, He did not respond to them. Instead, He began writing on the ground. We could speculate forever about what Jesus wrote, but the content of His writing has not been revealed to us. More important is the wordplay between the word used for writing (*graphō* in Greek) in this passage and the statement that Jesus taught like one who was “learned” in 7:15 (*gramma* in Greek. This word is a noun form of the verb *graphō* and this same phrase is translated as “knew his letters” in the KJV). Instead of responding to

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the accusations of the scribes and Pharisees, it is possible to associate Jesus's writing with Him simply continuing His teaching.

- The reason for this can be found in the fact that the accusers brought only the woman who had committed adultery and not the man. When they claimed that the law commanded them to stone such women (8:5), we should ask, "Which law?" Every law in the Pentateuch dealing with adultery requires the man involved to be present (Lev. 20:20; Deut. 22:13-27). Thus, Jesus does not engage because the accusers sought to judge this woman without a fair trial, just as they wanted to do with Him (7:51). More so, God's law is not a manipulation tool to be used for the sake of punishing sinners. Instead, its purpose is to demonstrate that we all sin and are in need of a savior because only God can forgive sins (Gal. 3:19-26).

## **2. Admit You Have Sinned - John 8:7b-9**

- When Jesus finally decided to respond, He focused on the accusers. As stated in Deuteronomy 17:2-7, the people who bore direct witness to the crime should be the first to throw the stones. Jesus calls them out by stating that they should go ahead and throw their stones if they were sinless (8:7b). We know that they were not. They either sinned by ignoring that the law required the man who committed adultery to be present, or they were themselves involved (i.e., they helped to set the woman up; one or more of them could have also been involved in the adulterous act).
- From here, each of them walks away seemingly because they are convicted of their sinfulness. As stated in Deuteronomy 19:15-21, if any case had a hint of false testimony, it was required to be taken before the judges and priests at the temple (see also Deut. 17:8-13). This law also required that the same punishment be placed upon the accuser if he or she was found to be a false witness. Perhaps this is why the accusers leave in the order of oldest to youngest. Those older had already witnessed enough cases where a false witness had suffered because of their false accusations. Either way, Jesus continued to demonstrate that the law should not be used for humans to hold power over others. Instead, it is a means by which we should each seek to live humbly before God (Mic. 6:8).

## **3. Jesus Offers Grace - John 8:10-11**

- Jesus concluded His teaching by talking directly to the woman. Up until now, Jesus had been teaching (8:2-3), writing (8:6,8), and dealing with her accusers (8:7). Once Jesus was alone with the woman, He stood up (i.e., finished his teaching) and spoke to her. Jesus saved her life by sticking to the proper use of the law. However, Jesus did not choose to ignore her wrongdoing. She had committed adultery and should still be stoned because of her actions. However, Jesus offered her grace just like He did to the disabled man in 5:14. While their sins caused both of them to end up in dreadful

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circumstances, they were now given grace. This is characteristic of Jesus's ministry. Jesus came to give life and to demonstrate how true life finds continuity with God's law (1:16-17).

- Later disciples of Jesus found this same truth to be freeing. As Paul writes in Romans 8:1, those who trust in Christ have "no condemnation." Paul makes this statement while he is also demonstrating how the law is binding for everyone who is living (Rom. 7:1). When we die to ourselves so that we can live according to the Spirit, we fulfill the requirements of the law because of Christ (Rom. 8:2-4). This does not mean that the law should no longer influence our thoughts or lifestyle. Instead, this means that when we read the law, we are no longer focused on the flesh (i.e., our own gain), but on the Spirit (i.e., how we can live in peace with God and others, see Romans 8:6).

**Conclusion:** In our society, where the Internet makes every offense unforgettable, we need guidance on maneuvering. Like Jesus, we are being tested, whether we realize it or not. A recent article by Andrea Williams demonstrates how churches that stand for biblical values are the only ones growing in the United Kingdom. In contrast, churches offering "a lukewarm version of the gospel and a reflection of secular culture" are in steady decline.<sup>1</sup> This should encourage us as we defend the doctrinal positions outlined in the Baptist Faith and Message.

As a more controversial case study, we can also analyze the situation presented in Baptist News Global by Rodney Kennedy. He describes how a Christian teacher at a charter school interrupted some Muslim students who were praying. The teacher stated that the students were performing "magic" and that she "believed in Jesus." From Kennedy's perspective, this teacher was "rude, bad-mannered, thoughtless, and cruel." Perhaps we might agree that the teacher could have been more tactful—like Jesus was in this passage. However, Kennedy's solution seems just as extreme. He argues that the teacher could have prayed with the students.<sup>2</sup> Praying with others to a false god does not appear to match Jesus's approach either. Each of us will have to make our own conclusions about this particular situation. Still, what we can learn from this encounter is that we need to reflect deeply on biblical strategies for engaging with our ever-changing culture.

### Author Bio

*Dr. Ron Lindo, Jr. graduated from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary with a PhD in Old Testament. He currently serves as the Chief Academic Officer for Jackson Theological Seminary in Little Rock, Arkansas, while teaching High School Math and Bible at Baptist Preparatory School. He is also one of the life group leaders for his home church, the Church at Rock Creek. He and his wife, Maya, have been blessed with four wonderful children.*

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1. "The Census Is Not All Bad News for Christians," *The Critic*. Downloaded January 23, 2023 from <https://thecritic.co.uk/the-census-is-not-all-bad-news-for-christians/>
2. "Jesus and Muslim Students at Prayer," *Baptist News Global*. Downloaded January 23, 2023 from <https://baptistnews.com/article/jesus-and-muslim-students-at-prayer/>

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