

## **THE BIG IDEA: Being wholly forgiven by God leads to a holy fear of God**

### The Take-Off

The idea for this new series came to me as I thought about a question that God asked Moses in Exodus 4:2.

“What is in your hand?”

It dawned on me that most of us have been holding stones in our hands for most of 2020, and I want to take the next 4 weeks and offer you some ideas about what we can do with what’s in our hands.

We’ll be in **John 8:1-11 (NLT)** and while you find it, let me take a minute to explain something you’ll see when you do.

Depending on your translation, you may see brackets around this section or you may find the entire section in a footnote with a note that it wasn’t included in the earliest manuscripts

That doesn’t mean the Bible you’re reading is unreliable

This is a story that was passed down through oral tradition and referred to by many 3rd century writers.

It was later included in a 6th century manuscript of John’s Gospel and was added to the Latin translation and later versions because it was judged to be a true story and consistent with Jesus’ nature.

Also, as John Piper points out, there is no truth in this story that would not still be in the Bible if this story wasn’t.

Now, let’s walk through one of the craziest sections of Scripture in the whole Bible.

### **1. The most natural thing to do with a stone is throw it**

- a. In our passage, Jesus is teaching and then notice what happened in verse 3: a woman had been “caught in the act”
- b. Can we all agree that an actual transgression had taken place? She was caught “in the act” - yikes!
- c. I could talk all day long about how terrible it feels when we’ve been caught in the act of something, but I’d rather highlight what feels natural when we’re the ones who have caught someone else in the act.
- d. Punishment.
- e. Maybe it’s a guy thing, but it seems like **the most natural thing to do with a stone is throw it**
- f. Maybe that’s why we need to be careful what we pick up
- g. We’re getting ready to read a story that seemed headed toward a stoning, and yet one person changed that
- h. Spoiler alert: it was Jesus
- i. Important question: what made Jesus different?
- j. Why was he the one who didn’t want to throw a stone - the one with a different perspective?
- k. Verse 1 is a clue - when everyone else had gone home the night before, Jesus went to the Mount of Olives
- l. He went up - he went to be with the Father, gain a heavenly perspective
- m. We’ll never do supernatural things if all of our time is spent hanging around natural things
- n. I’m not saying become a monk or a nun - but I am saying time with God will change how we spend time with men and how we treat men

### **2. When we throw stones we negate the cross**

- a. Let me show you what happens if we choose to throw the stones that we hold in our hands
- b. We put ourselves in the place of the judge, jury, and executioner
- c. The problem is that we will never judge fairly or perfectly
- d. We’re “loophole” judges - we always find a way to make sure we’re the ones on higher moral ground
- e. That’s what the leaders did in our story. They only brought the woman even though the law required the woman AND the man. (Lev. 20:10 and Deut. 22:22)
- f. Jesus knew that God’s punishment for sin would be placed on him at the cross
- g. John 8:10 “Do none condemn you?” Romans 8:34 “Who is the one who condemns?”
- h. **When we throw stones we negate the cross.**

### **3. Forgiveness sounds like stones hitting the dirt**

- a. What does it mean to read this story on this side of the cross? It means that we’ve seen forgiveness!
- b. Eph. 4:32 / we are to forgive in the same way we’ve been forgiven
- c. We don’t know for sure, but I bet this woman never stoned anyone after this
- d. Sometimes we want to make a point more than we want to make a difference
- e. The Pharisees tried to make a point and it would have ended her life

- f. Jesus made a difference and it changed her life
- g. There is no doubt about it: **forgiveness sounds like stones hitting the dirt**

## The Landing

So what can we do with the stones in our hands?

We can drop them. We can have the heart of the Father and extend life to those who have been caught in the act and deserve death

The only question left to ask is, “Why do we still throw stones more than we drop them?”

It’s because we don’t want people to get away with sin.

Sometimes we want to teach others a lesson so that they won’t trample God’s grace.

Can I set you free? God doesn’t need you to defend his ways, and he’s chosen forgiveness as an instrument that leads us to holiness.

**Psalm 130:3-4 (NLT) / Being wholly forgiven by God leads to a holy fear of God**

Let’s pray