



LEADER GUIDE – September 15

PRIMARY PASSAGE

John 8:2-20 ² At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. ³ The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group ⁴ and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery.” ⁵ In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” ⁶ They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. ⁷ When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, “Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” ⁸ Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. ⁹ At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. ¹⁰ Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?” ¹¹ “No one, sir,” she said. “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.” ¹² When Jesus spoke again to the people, he said, “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” ¹³ The Pharisees challenged him, “Here you are, appearing as your own witness; your testimony is not valid.” ¹⁴ Jesus answered, “Even if I testify on my own behalf, my testimony is valid, for I know where I came from and where I am going. But you have no idea where I come from or where I am going. ¹⁵ You judge by human standards; I pass judgment on no one. ¹⁶ But if I do judge, my decisions are true, because I am not alone. I stand with the Father, who sent me. ¹⁷ In your own Law it is written that the testimony of two witnesses is true. ¹⁸ I am one who testifies for myself; my other witness is the Father, who sent me.” ¹⁹ Then they asked him, “Where is your father?” “You do not know me or my Father,” Jesus replied. “If you knew me, you would know my Father also.” ²⁰ He spoke these words while teaching in the temple courts near the place where the offerings were put. Yet no one seized him, because his hour had not yet come.

GROUP DISCUSSION

1) What is going on? Describe what is happening in the passage leading up to Jesus’ “I AM” statement.

This statement happens in the middle of the Feast of the Tabernacles, which was by far the most popular of the Jewish festivals. It was a huge party with feasts, dancing, large crowds, booths, etc. Jesus leveraged this festival as an event to teach to large crowds about the faithfulness of God. It was during this time that many people begin to plot against Jesus – both trying to trap and kill Him.

One instance of the religious crowd trying to trap Jesus is found in John 8:2-11 – the account of the adulterous

woman. Now, it does need to be understood there are questions concerning this text. Was it in the original manuscript John wrote? If not, is it accurate? If it did happen, was it during the Feast of Tabernacles or somewhere else? Many of the early Greek manuscripts we currently have do not include these passages, but that does not mean that John did not write them or that they are inaccurate. Jesus' interaction with the Pharisees and the adulterous woman in this story is very consistent with His interaction with others in similar settings across the rest of the Gospels. Also, the calendar of the Feast of Tabernacles and the commonality of promiscuity that surrounded the festival also makes it very likely that this interaction not only happened, but also that it happened according to the timeline laid out in our modern Bibles. Nonetheless, even if this interaction happened outside of this timeline, it gives us a great illustration of what it means for Jesus to be the Light of the World.

In this interaction, Jesus revealed that only the One without sin can judge, and that He came not to condemn but to free from darkness. Notice how He didn't call the adulterous lady to stop sinning and then He would not condemn her; Jesus first accepted her and then called her to leave her life of sin. This is a great illustration of our Group Life mission statement – Belong -> Believe -> Become.

2) What does Jesus claim? (Verse 12) What does this metaphor say about who Jesus is?

Jesus claims to be the Light of the World. In this statement, Jesus is revealing that not only does He chase out darkness but He also gives life. (See also Genesis 1 and John 1 to see this illustrated more fully.) Light also gives us something to follow/illuminates our path – this is seen with the exodus of Egypt by the Hebrew people in Exodus 13:21. Light also reveals areas of imperfections and things that need to be addressed.

3) What does this mean for us?

No matter what we've done in the past, no matter how dark it was/is, Jesus accepts us and offers us freedom from it. We are not our past, we are not who others say we are, we are not who we say we are – we are who Jesus says we are -> loved, forgiven, accepted. We can escape the grasp of darkness in our life through the Light of the World if we will allow Him to become the Light of *OUR* World. We have been empowered to not only walk in The Light, but also to shine this Light for the world to see.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

Jesus' statement, "I am the Light of the World," tells us that Jesus can/will chase out the darkness in us and give us life. The life we long to find in the things of the world and from others can only be found in Him. Take a moment in think about what that means for you personally in your life.

- **What areas of darkness in your life do you need to let The Light illuminate and chase out?**
- **How can you begin to live this week as one who is accepted by Jesus no matter your past and truly begin to live in His light?**
- **How can you begin to shine the Light of Jesus in your everyday life? Who in your life would benefit from you doing this?**