

## Week 3

# Sex and Gender from a Gospel Perspective - What Does the Gospel Proclaim Amidst Our Individual and Collective Brokenness?

At Hope we often talk about **matter** and **manner** - this is where we're looking for unity, not uniformity of thought during these small group discussions. We should expect a range of thoughts on various topics, because our personality, experience, friends & family, upbringing, etc. all come into play as we shape our thoughts. Let's remember we all need Jesus and his grace is sufficient to cover each of us and our struggles, past or present.

How can we have a conversation that can honor God, the bible and each other?  
Can we challenge ourselves to use this time to learn, listen and grow together?

**?** In baking, have you ever not had the correct measuring cups or ingredients so you improvised with what you had available? Or maybe you were repairing something and needed a particular tool but it wasn't in your toolbox? Share a time when you made a substitution. What was the outcome?

**Leader's Note: Icebreaker connection to study: Amidst our brokenness within sexuality, we often try to work with what we have. We need to consider the better way that Christ offers.**

**This week we will look at the Law, grace and a variety of counterfeits that woo us away from looking to Christ.**

**\*\*trigger warning\*\* It would be worthwhile to put out to your group that pretty much the rest of the study comes with a trigger warning. These are DEEPLY sensitive and personal matters. It impacts the people in our small groups, whether directly because of their own struggles or because of someone in their lives or because of something that was done to them. Please take utmost care of your people. And if YOU need help, do not hesitate to rely on your small group coach for counsel and care and shouldering some of the weightiness of this series.**

Read aloud: We recognize these are highly sensitive and personal matters. We care deeply about you and want to recognize that your direct struggle or personal experiences impact you. If you need help or want more personal discussions, please reach out. We can connect you to resources Hope has to offer.

**Leviticus 20:10**

<sup>10</sup> “If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife—with the wife of his neighbor—both the adulterer and the adulteress are to be put to death.

**Deuteronomy 22:22**

<sup>22</sup> If a man is found sleeping with another man’s wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel.

**John 7:53-8:11**

Then they all went home, <sup>8</sup> but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

<sup>2</sup> At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. <sup>3</sup> The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group <sup>4</sup> and said to Jesus, “Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. <sup>5</sup> In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?” <sup>6</sup> 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. <sup>7</sup> 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.” <sup>8</sup> Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

<sup>9</sup> 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. <sup>10</sup> Jesus straightened up and asked her, “Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?”

<sup>11</sup> “No one, sir,” she said.

“Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

**?** Describe the scene from the John passage. Try to observe as many details as possible. What was the cause of this interaction? What would it mean for those witnessing the event that she was "caught in the act of adultery"? What person is noticeably absent? According to the text, what was the intent of teachers of the law and Pharisees? Why does this question about stoning her set up a trap for Jesus? How does he get out of the trap that was set?

*Possible answers: Jesus enters the temple courts to teach. Don't miss this point. He will bring forth a remarkable teaching for us.*

*Concerning the cause/woman/absent man: The fact she was "caught in adultery" means she's likely disheveled (at least) or largely naked (at her most vulnerable). The guy she was committing adultery with is not present. This is not just a setup of Jesus but also of her. He bears responsibility for his actions. We do not know her culpability as far as this act goes. Was she seduced and bore some responsibility in her response (despite the setup)? Was she sexually violated against her will? This is all speculation (so please do not state with certainty what the bible has not). You must answer the people in your small group, "We just don't know." Even the last line about leaving her sin could refer to this act or it could be applied more generally to her life/lifestyle. We just don't know. So let's be careful. But I believe we don't need to know to grasp the point of the passage---that we all have sexual brokenness (as evidenced by no stones being*

thrown).

*Concerning the intent/trap: Does the Law command stoning? Yes. So the trap is if Jesus doesn't stone her, he will be shown to be a Law-breaker. So Jesus gets out of the trap by demonstrating that every person in attendance, even the teachers of the law and Pharisees are guilty of breaking the Law. We all break the Law. We all deserve to be stoned.*

**?** How does Jesus figuratively clothe the woman (similar to God in Genesis 3:21) amidst her sin and shame?

*Possible answers: With the Law requiring stoning, and Jesus being free from sin, he would have been within the rights of the Law to stone her...but he did not! Jesus is teaching here! He is Lord, not the Law. He showers her with grace, where the Law condemns. He clothes her with compassion and grace rather than judgment and condemnation.*

## Counterfeits

### John 3:17

<sup>17</sup> For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

### Romans 2:1

You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

**?** Often caught in self-righteous thoughts & patterns, what other options could the teachers of the law and Pharisees have chosen (consider stoning at one extreme - or humbly confessing & seeking forgiveness at the other extreme) when presenting the woman before Jesus?

*Possible answers: Comparison with her. "At least we're not her." (Misguided belief that men are better than women) "At least we don't do what she does." (View her sin as worse than their own) Believe their educational background is more important than their holiness. Believe that because they're leaders that they're immune from sin. Seek to condemn Jesus (which was an alternative that they employed countless times in the Gospel accounts).*

**?** Probably feeling many things (maybe unsure, misguided, hopeless, alone, etc.), what other options to explain the situation could the woman have chosen?

*Possible answers: She could have been defensive: "I was set up!", "My life is difficult."*

*She could have focused on the reality of her situation: perhaps single or divorced or widowed; no job; woman in a patriarchal society; abused in childhood; promiscuous past, etc.*

*She could have tried to talk her way out of it: "I'll try better." "I won't do this again. I promise." "It's not that bad" etc.*

**?** What are some of the things, other than Christ, we are prone to turn to when "caught in the very act of adultery [sin]"?

*Possible answers: All of those above and more. Sometimes it's excuses. Other times it's blaming others. Still other times we minimize the sin. And still others we claim anything and everything to get out from under the shame and embarrassment associated with our sin. All these serve a purpose (in the same way a tool, measuring cup, or ingredient can try to be a type of replacement). But NONE of these offers what Christ offers.*

### Real Life Scenario

**The woman caught in adultery is your sister. She's broken. She's ashamed. She's being asked at every turn about this event with the teachers of the law, Pharisees, and Jesus. She doesn't know what to do.**

**How would you counsel her in the gospel? How would you help her to see/receive/believe the Good News of his grace and forgiveness? How would you protect her from turning to all of the counterfeit alternatives (that we're all tempted to turn to)? What would you say to her?**

### For Discussion and Accountability

**?** Which of the counterfeit excuses resonate most with you? How have you overcome them in the past?

**?** Which substitutes (to confession & forgiveness) do you repeatedly find yourself turning to? What is one step we can take with you this week to turn toward confession & forgiveness?

**At Hope, we don't believe in a form of "just name it and be set free"...rather Scripture says that Jesus stands ready to save and heal and bind up and forgive, so why wouldn't we take him up on this invitation? When a person does so, we can be a form of Christ to that person by reiterating the grace that Christ has.**

**Share words like: "You're truly forgiven. Know that. Believe that." "You're not what happened to you. Christ has made you new." "Release every drop of shame because Jesus has taken it upon himself, all of it!"**

### Additional Resources

- *Rid of My Disgrace: Hope and Healing for Victims of Sexual Assault* by Justin and Lindsey Holcomb
- *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers* by Dane Ortlund