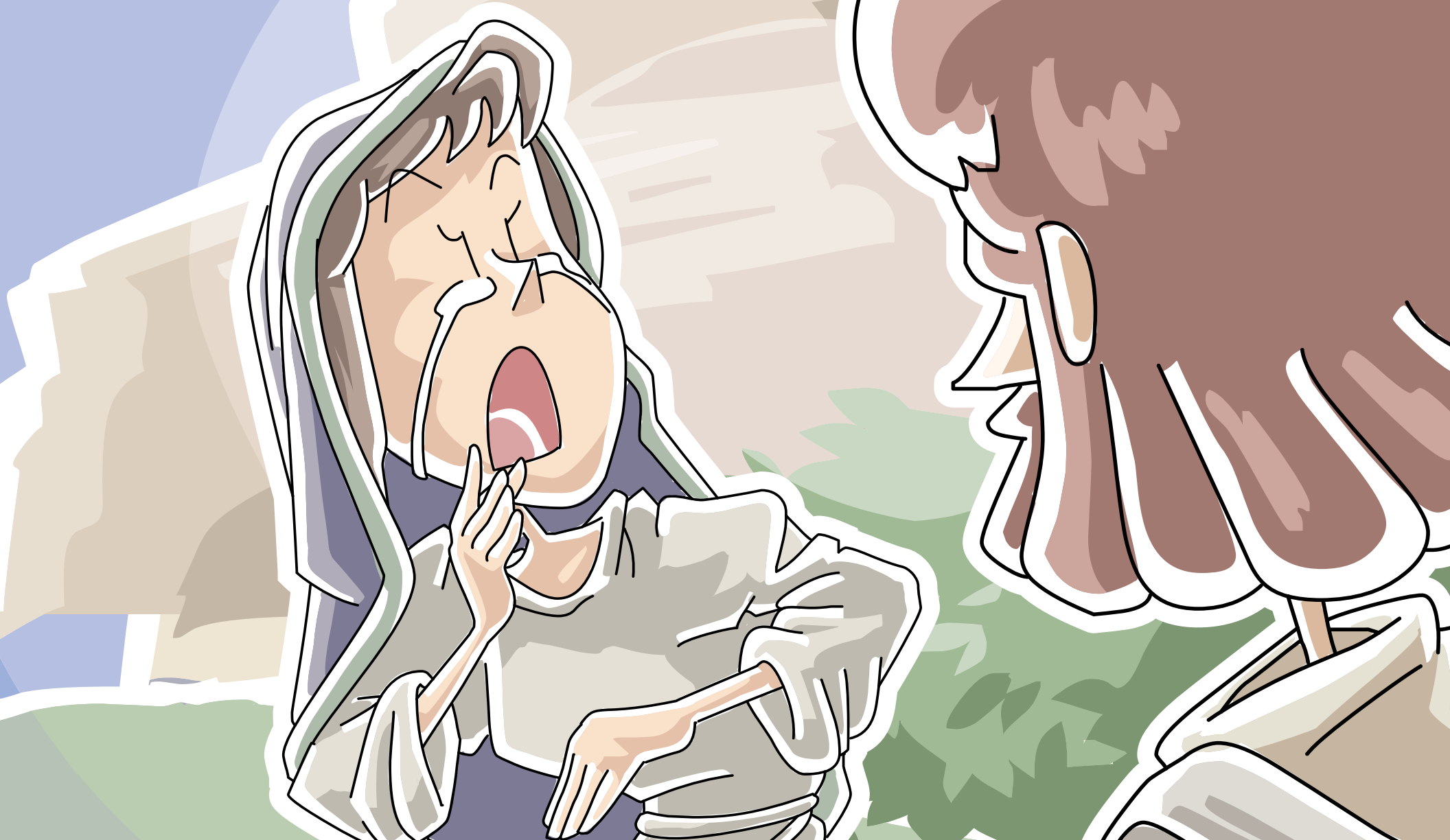


The woman caught  
breaking the law



## Colour me!



## John 8:1-11

But Jesus walked out to the Mount of Olives. Then early the next morning he went to the temple. The people came to him, and he sat down and started teaching them. The Pharisees and the teachers of the Law of Moses brought in a woman who had been caught in bed with a man who wasn't her husband. They made her stand in the middle of the crowd. Then they said, "Teacher, this woman was caught sleeping with a man who isn't her husband. The Law of Moses teaches that a woman like this should be stoned to death! What do you say?"

They asked Jesus this question, because they wanted to test him and bring some charge against him. But Jesus simply bent over and started writing on the ground with his finger. They kept on asking Jesus about the woman. Finally, he stood up and said, "If any of you have never sinned, then go ahead and throw the first stone at her!" Once again he bent over and began writing on the ground. The people left one by one, beginning with the oldest. Finally, Jesus and the woman were there alone. Jesus stood up and asked her, "Where is everyone? Isn't there anyone left to accuse you?" "No sir," the woman answered. Then Jesus told her, "I am not going to accuse you either. You may go now, but don't sin any more."

## Commentary

On his journey south to Jerusalem, Jesus spent time around the city, walking on the Mount of Olives or teaching in the temple. His life was not yet in danger, but the religious leaders were eager to discredit him. One subject that they knew he had often talked about was the Law of Moses, with its strict rules on behaviour, particularly about marriage. Surely, anyone who broke one of the commandments deserved to die. Would Jesus agree or go soft on what God had said, making feeble allowances for people's weakness? The crowds, they reasoned, wouldn't follow someone who went against God's Law and appeared weak on criminal matters.

The leaders need a test case, and so they drag a woman to him who has gone off with another man, breaking her marriage vows. They try to goad Jesus into condemning her, but he says nothing at first; he simply doodles in the sand with his finger. The answer he then gives is brilliant. He invites them to condemn her and kill her... but only if they can honestly say that their lives are completely clean. Of course, no one is perfect, just as the woman isn't. Only God is perfectly good, with the right to judge others. They all recoil and step away and Jesus and the woman are left alone. She receives not his anger but his forgiveness, and walks free to start again.

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## Questions

- ▶ What do you think Jesus doodled in the sand?
- ▶ Why were the Pharisees and teachers of the Law so against Jesus?
- ▶ How do you deal with situations when tempers flare and angry words are exchanged?
- ▶ Why do you think the oldest accusers left first?
- ▶ What do you think the woman did next?



## Visual aid

God is not in the business of rubbing things in, but rubbing things out. Pour some sand into a shallow tray and have some fun drawing pictures and writing words with a stick and then rubbing them away again.



## Activity idea

Remind yourselves as a family of the ten commandments. The teachers of the Law wanted to catch Jesus out, to prove that he was not a trustworthy teacher. Play a game of 'Simon says', trying to catch each other out with the wrong actions. The way to survive the game is to pay careful attention.



## Prayer idea

Use the sand tray from the visual aid suggestion. Think about the things that you have done wrong lately. For each of these, write a word or draw a picture in the sand. Pause, and then, using Jesus' words to the woman in the story (see the 'Key verse'), rub away what you have written or drawn.

## Key verse

Jesus told her, "I am not going to accuse you... You may go now, but don't sin any more" (John 8:11).

## Old Testament story link

Jeremiah 31:31-34: Jeremiah looks forward to the day when God will write his laws on people's hearts, and he will forgive all their sins.



Colour me!

