

Short All Age Worship Service

(ShortAAW016)

Encountering Jesus (4) Woman caught in adultery

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Encountering Jesus

(4) Woman caught in adultery

Service Aim:

To teach that Jesus doesn't condemn us when we sin but calls us to repentance. To challenge people to follow Jesus' example and "lay down their stones" of condemnation. The service is around 30-40mins long.

Biblical Reference(s):

John 7:53 – 8:11, Romans 8:1

Outline of Service:

Welcome:	Introduce the theme
Opening Prayer:	Matthew 18:20 and prayer
Opening songs:	<u>A couple of songs to draw people into worship</u> (See Appendix 1)
Warm up:	"I'm better than them" drama.
Link:	Condemning others is an attitude we are all tempted to have.
Bible Reading:	John 8:2-11 dramatized
Talk 1:	How did Jesus handle the sinful woman? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus didn't condemn her but called her to repentance • Jesus doesn't condemn us but calls us to repentance.
Confession:	Imagination Prayer
Song:	<u>Song worshipping Jesus – who forgives / accepts us</u> (See Appendix 1)
Link:	It can be easy to be destructive in our relationships (with a "tower")
Puppets:	"Put down your stones"
Talk 2:	How did Jesus handle the Pharisees? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus didn't condemn them but challenged them. • Jesus doesn't condemn us but challenges us.
Response:	Lay down your "stones" (with paper stones)
Song:	<u>Song about Jesus filling our hearts with love</u> (See Appendix 1)
Prayers:	Praying that love will define our relationships.
Lord's Prayer:	
Summary:	A sinful woman had her life changed by Jesus. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jesus didn't condemn her, but accepted her and called her to repentance • Jesus also didn't condemn the Pharisees but challenged them. • Jesus wants us to be like Him and not condemn other people.
Final song:	<u>Final song</u> (See Appendix 1)
Blessing:	Numbers 6:24-26

Notes for the service:

General notes and instructions for the service are in black font.

Prayers or responses said by the congregation together are in bold purple font.

The full script of a talk or other activity is in purple font.

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Welcome:

Welcome everyone to the service. Explain that the theme of the service is “The encounter a sinful woman had with Jesus, in the temple courts in Jerusalem.”

Opening Prayer:

You may choose to open the service with:

- an informal prayer
- a prayer from a book like “New Patterns for Worship”¹ that the congregation can say together,
- or the following verse and prayer:

Jesus said, *“For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them”*
(Matthew 18:20)

As you promise to be with us Lord Jesus,
Make us aware of Your presence today.

**Help us Lord to worship you,
To listen to your Word,
And to pray in faith,
That we might grow in our love for you and for one another.
Amen.**

Opening Songs:

A couple of songs to draw people into worship as per Appendix 1

Warm up:

The “warm up” is a simple drama called “I’m better than them” with two people reading newspapers and making condemning comments. You can find the drama in Appendix 2. Ensure that both dramatists can be clearly heard with appropriate microphones etc. You may like to introduce the drama by saying something like:

Watch this short drama and see if you recognise yourself in any part of it.

Link:

It is so easy to condemn others when we see them doing or saying something wrong isn’t it?

- If you have ever read the tabloid newspapers, you will find that on most pages they are condemning someone.
- Have you ever found yourself joining in with them?

¹ Church House Publishing – ISBN 9780715123263
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Have you ever looked at someone else at school, at work or even at church and condemned them in your heart?

Condemning others is an attitude we are all tempted to have;

- seeing ourselves as better than other people and looking down on them.

Our eyes can be wide open to other people's faults, whereas they can be shut to our own faults.

One day a woman who had done something very wrong was brought to Jesus by people who had forgotten that they did wrong things too.

- Let's see what Jesus said and did.

Bible Reading:

The Bible reading is John 7:53-8:11 and can be dramatized. (See Appendix 3 for the Good News Version of the Bible dramatized.) Alternatively, it could be read by a child, young person or adult. While the reading is read, you could project pictures of it onto a screen². Another way to present the story is by showing a video of John 7:53-8:11³

Talk1:

If you have used the drama from Appendix 3, you need the "sinful" woman for this talk. If you haven't used the drama, ask a woman from the congregation to come and help you in the talk. You need two pieces of A4 card with a piece of cord through them (so that they can hang around the woman's neck) on which are written the words: **Ashamed** and **Afraid**. You need one piece of A3 card with a piece of cord through it on which is written in much larger font, the word **Accepted**.

Imagine for a moment what the woman felt like, in the story we have just seen acted.

- Caught in the act of doing something wrong, she is made to stand in front of Jesus.
- I wonder how she felt. PAUSE

I think that she probably felt **ashamed** of what she had done especially as her sin was now known by all the people around her.

- There was no hiding from what she had done. (*Hang ashamed card around woman's neck*)

She was probably also **afraid** of what was going to happen next because people were calling for her to be stoned.

- Her life was literally in Jesus' hands. (*Hang afraid card around woman's neck*)

I wonder how you would feel if you were caught in the act of doing something wrong.

- Perhaps you have been caught out telling a lie,
- or hurting a younger brother or sister,
- or skiving off work when you were fit and well.

² You can find free pictures to project of Bible stories by going to www.freebibleimages.org and putting "A woman accused of adultery" into the search bar.

³ You can find the video at www.youtube.com by putting "Gospel of John chapter 8 scribbling in the sand" into the search bar.

You may well feel **ashamed** of what you have done because now someone else knows about it.

- You may also feel **afraid** of what is going to happen next, and what punishment you will receive.

What the woman in our story probably didn't expect was Jesus' **acceptance** of her.

- The first thing Jesus said was: *"Where are they? Is there no one left to condemn you?"*

When she said, *"No one sir"*, Jesus adds, *"Well then, I do not condemn you either."*

- What incredible love Jesus showed this woman.
- Although He had every reason to condemn her, Jesus didn't. (*Hang accepted card around woman's neck*)

Can you imagine how the woman felt after Jesus said that?

- Jesus had literally rescued her from being stoned to death for her sin.
- I imagine that huge gratitude must have filled her heart.

Now although Jesus didn't condemn the woman, He didn't pretend that what she had done was ok.

- Instead, He said to her: *"Go, but do not sin again."*
- He didn't say, *"Off you go then, what you have done doesn't matter,"* or *"Go, and try not to get caught again,"* but
- *"Go, and stop sinning"*

Sin mattered to Jesus.

- But, unlike the Pharisees and the teachers of the law who condemned people who sinned, Jesus had compassion for people and didn't condemn them.
- Instead, He called them to repentance – to change their behaviour.

Jesus is the same today.

- Although we may feel **ashamed** of the wrong things we have done,
- and **afraid** of what God thinks of us,
- the good news is that Jesus **accepts us** and loves us and doesn't condemn us.
- He does however call us to repentance – to change our behaviour.

Jesus says to each one of us when we have sinned *"I do not condemn you, but do not sin again."*

Confession:

You may like to use a Holy Spirit lead Confession as below. Alternatively, you could use a Confession prayer at this point.

Let's take a moment of quiet now as we allow the Holy Spirit to search our hearts and bring to light anything that we need to confess to God today.

- You may find it helpful to shut your eyes. PAUSE

Imagine now that you are standing in front of Jesus.....

- You may feel ashamed of what you have done or said.

In the quietness of your heart ask Jesus to forgive you. PAUSE

Now hear Jesus say to you: *“I do not condemn you, but do not sin again.”*

- What do you want to say to Jesus? PAUSE

Thank you, Lord Jesus, that you do not condemn us when we have sinned.

Thank you that if we turn to you and confess what we have done, you forgive us.

Thank you for the fresh start that you have given us today.

Help us to turn away from our sin to walk with you once again. Amen.

Let's worship Jesus in song again.

Song:

Songs worshipping Jesus - The One who forgives and accepts us as per Appendix 1.

Link:

You need to have built a tower out of something, for example Duplo, Lego, bricks etc. Place this tower somewhere very visible.

Look at this tower that I made earlier.....

- Would anyone like to come and knock it down? *(Receive volunteer and allow them to knock it down, then send volunteer back to their seat.)*

That tower took me quite a while to build, yet N (name of volunteer) managed to destroy it in seconds.

You know this tower can illustrate something about our relationships with each other.

- It takes time to build up relationship with each other, doesn't it?
- To build with bricks of love and kindness and acceptance.

However, with a single word of condemnation, we can be very destructive and quickly destroy our relationships, especially when someone else does something wrong.....

- It is easier for us to be destructive than to be building up of other people.
- That is something that Grandad is challenging James with.

Puppets:

The puppet script is called, "Put down your stones" and can be found in Appendix 4. This script works with a boy puppet "James"⁴ and an older man puppet "Grandad." The aim of the puppet script is to help people look at their own lives before they condemn others.

Talk 2:

Grandad challenged James to stop condemning Billy, reminding James that he did wrong things too.

- Grandad was teaching James the "Jesus way" of treating other people.

So how did Jesus treat the Pharisees, the ones whose hearts were so filled with self-righteous hatred that they wanted to use the law to see the woman in the Bible story destroyed?

⁴ You can purchase both a boy and a Grandad puppet from www.onewayuk.com
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Jesus **didn't condemn** these men either.

- Instead, Jesus **challenged** them.
- He challenged them to take a good hard look at themselves first before they picked up a stone and condemned a woman to death.

You know, you and I aren't very different from the Pharisees, are we?

- We can be very forgetful of our own sin.
- We can be very forgetful that Jesus has forgiven us for the wrong things we have done.
- We can be quick to condemn others when they mess up.

Jesus wants us to accept other people as He accepts us.

- That doesn't mean that we ignore wrong things when we see them.
- What it does mean is that we don't condemn other people.
- Instead, we love them and in that spirit of love and kindness, we gently challenge them to turn away from things that are harmful.

Response:

Each person needs to have either a stone or a picture of a stone (See Appendix 5). These could be handed out at this point in the service or given to people on their way into church. You could say something like:

Would you like to pick up your stone?

As you hold your stone, imagine that written on it are all the condemning thoughts you might have of other people.

- You may have been hurt by someone and so whenever that person does something wrong, you pick up your stone of condemnation to throw at them.
- You may be jealous of someone and find yourself wanting to throw condemning stones at them.
- Let's ask the Holy Spirit who it is that we are might be tempted to throw stones at.

Holy Spirit please come and speak to each one of us. Show us who we are tempted to condemn. PAUSE

Listen to what Jesus said to the Pharisee: *"Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone"*

Now hear Jesus say to you: *"Are you without sin?"*

Where you are now, you can choose to lay down your stone under your chair.

- This is a symbolic way of saying that you are choosing not to condemn others when they sin.
- You will leave that to the perfect Judge of all.
- So let us lay down our stones.

Lord Jesus thank you for your great love for us – that you accept us and don't condemn us, even when we mess up. Help us show the same love to other people. Amen.

Let's stand and worship again.

Song:

Song about Jesus filling our hearts with His love as per Appendix 1.

Prayers:

The prayers could be focused around praying that love will define our relationships. One way of doing this would be praying through 1Corinthians 13:4-5, using 2 people; one person to read the Bible verse and the other to pray around it.

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|----------------|--|
| Intercessor 1: | Love is patient. |
| Intercessor 2: | Lord help us to be patient with one another, and not be irritable and bad tempered when someone annoys us. |
| Intercessor 1: | Love is kind. |
| Intercessor 2: | Lord help us be kind to each other. Open our eyes to see each other's needs and show us what we can do to help. |
| Intercessor 1: | Love does not envy. |
| Intercessor 2: | Lord help us not to boast about what we have or what we have achieved. May we never look down on others but look to encourage instead. |
| Intercessor 1: | Love is not proud. |
| Intercessor 2: | Lord help us remember that we can do nothing without You. Everything we have has been given by you. So, grow in us true humility. |
| Intercessor 1: | Love does not dishonour others. |
| Intercessor 2: | Lord help us use our words to build up other people and never to put them down. |
| Intercessor 1: | Love is not self-seeking. |
| Intercessor 2: | Lord take our eyes off ourselves that we might be a blessing to other people. |
| Intercessor 1: | Love is not easily angered. |
| Intercessor 2: | Lord grow in us self-control so that we don't fly off the handle quickly. |
| Intercessor 1: | Love keeps no record of wrongs. |
| Intercessor 2: | Lord, as you have wiped the slate clean for each one of us help us not keep any record of wrongs but be quick to forgive others when they hurt us. |
| Intercessor 1: | Grow in us love Lord Jesus that you will be glorified in all of our relationships. Amen. |

Lord's Prayer:

End by saying the Lord's Prayer together.

Summary:

You could summarize the teaching points of the service as follows:

One day, a woman who had done something wrong had her life changed by Jesus.

- Jesus **didn't condemn** her, but accepted her and called her to repentance
- Jesus also **didn't condemn** the Pharisees but challenged them.
- Jesus wants us to be like Him and not condemn other people.

Final Song:

Final song as per Appendix 1.

Blessing:

Pray a simple prayer to end the service, something like the blessing prayer from Numbers 6:24-26 ie:

The LORD bless you and keep you;

The LORD make his face shine on you and be gracious to you;

The LORD turn his face toward you and give you peace. **Amen.**

[Notices: If your church gives out verbal notices my suggestion is that you do that just before the final song. That way the flow of worship is unbroken]

Appendix 1 - Ideas for Songs and Hymns:

i) Opening songs. Ideas include:

- Bless the Lord O my soul (Jonas Myrin & Matt Redman © 2011 Thankyou Music)
- Come set your rule and reign (Rend Collective © 2011 Thankyou Music)
- Everyone needs compassion (Reuben Morgan & Ben Fielding © 2006 Hillsong Publishing)
- In the name of the Father (Paul Baloche & Brenton Brown © 2007 Integrity's Hosanna! Music)

ii) Song worshipping Jesus – the One who accepts us. Ideas include:

- Before the throne of God above (Charitie L. Bancroft)
- Boldly I approach your throne (Gareth Gilkeson & Chris Llewellyn © 2014 Thankyou Music)
- For God so loved the world (John Hardwick © 1993 Daybreak Music Ltd)
- Higher than the mountains that I face (Brian Johnson, Christa Black Gifford & Jeremy Riddle © 2010 Bethel Music Publishing)
- I'm accepted (Rob Hayward © 1985 Thankyou Music)
- Who O Lord could save themselves (Matt Redman & Jonas Myrin © 2009 Thankyou Music)

iii) Song about Jesus filling our hearts with love. Ideas include:

- A little bit of love (Graham Kendrick © 2020 Make Way Music)
- Fill me up Lord (Nigel Hemming © 2001 Vineyard Songs (UK/Eire))
- Holy Spirit, living breath of God (Keith Getty & Stuart Townend © 2005 Thankyou Music)
- I want more of you, Jesus more of you (Chris Jackson © 2009 Powerpack)

iv) Final song. Ideas include:

- Amazing grace (my chains have gone) (John Newton, John P.Rees, Edwin O. Excell Arr. & add. Chorus: Chris Tomlin & Louie Giglio © 2006 worshiptogether.com songs)
- In Christ alone (Stuart Townend & Keith Getty © 2001 Thankyou Music)
- O the deep deep love of Jesus (Samuel T Francis)
- The Lord bless you (Chris Brown, Cody Carnes, Kari Jobe, Steven Furtick © 2020 Worship Together Music)

Appendix 2 – Drama – “I’m better than them”

Cast: Reader 1 (R1), Reader 2 (R2)

Props: Two chairs facing the congregation for R1 and R2 to sit on.
On the chairs are laid two different newspapers for R1 and R2 to read.
Inside the newspapers the scripts can be affixed.

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(Enter R1 and R2, who pick up the newspapers and sit down. They open up their newspapers)

R1: Listen to this.....*young man lied on his CV and conned his way into becoming a history teacher. On investigation by the school, it was discovered that he had no qualifications at all.*

R2: How disgraceful. Fancy lying to get a job. I would never do that.

R1: Nor would I. That young man deserves to be punished for lying like that.

R2: Quite right. Now listen to this. *MP found out for not declaring his expenses accurately on his tax return. As if he doesn't get paid enough money.*

R1: Exactly, it is appalling. He should know better in his position of authority than to steal.

R2: Absolutely...he should lose his job, no question about that. (PAUSE while R1 & R2 read)

R1: Listen to this.....

R2: What?

R1: *Woman arrested for punching husband in the face after he had criticized her driving.*

R2: She must have quite a temper...

R1: I think a few days in a cell should cool her down...she needs to learn her lesson.

R2: How about this? *Group of ten children found playing cricket in Royston park during school hours. When questioned, they said that their lessons were boring!*

R1: Where are their parents...that's what I want to know? I blame them.

R2: So, do I. Honestly, I don't know what the world is coming to.

R1: It's a shame that it isn't full of decent people like you and me, isn't it? (both stand up and start to walk off as they deliver their final couple of lines)

R2: You're right there. No doubt you've heard about Emma's latest relationship disaster...

R1: It's so shocking!.....and I expect you've heard about Maureen's daughter.....

(Exit R1 and R2 with their newspapers)

Appendix 3 – Dramatized Reading – John 8:2-11

Cast: Narrator, Pharisee 1 (P1), Pharisee 2 (P2), Lawyer, Jesus, Sinful woman (SW), a few people

Props: Coloured sheet (to wrap around sinful woman), large stones for the Pharisees and lawyers to hold, a container holding more large stones.

Narrator: Early the next morning Jesus went back to the Temple. *(Enter Jesus centre stage)*
All the people gathered around him, and he sat down and began to teach them. *(Enter people who gather around Jesus. Jesus sits down at ninety degrees to the congregation, and so do the people around his feet)*

The teachers of the Law and the Pharisees brought in a woman who had been caught doing something very wrong, and they made her stand before them all. *(Enter lawyers and Pharisees dragging a woman with a sheet wrapped around her. They make her stand in front of Jesus, so she too is at ninety degrees to the congregation. The Pharisees and lawyers that aren't dragging the woman carry in the stones)*

P1: Teacher, this woman was caught in the very act of doing something very wrong.

Lawyer: In our Law, Moses commanded that such a woman must be stoned to death. *(Waves stone in the face of the woman)*

P2: Now, what do you say?

Narrator: They said this to trap Jesus, so that they could accuse Him. But he bent over and wrote on the ground with his finger. **(LONG PAUSE)**
(Jesus bends down and pretends to write on the ground with his finger. The lawyers and Pharisees hand out the stones to the people gathered around Jesus, so that they are all ready to stone the woman. The faces of the people are threatening towards the woman, who looks terrified)

As they stood there asking him questions, he straightened himself up:
(Jesus stands up and addresses everyone)

Jesus: Whichever one of you has committed no sin may throw the first stone at her.

Narrator: Then he bent over again and wrote on the ground. *(Jesus bends over)*
When they heard this, they all left, one by one, the older ones first. *(Lawyers, Pharisees and people stand and think and then one by one put down their stones and walk away – the older ones first!)*

Jesus was left alone, with the woman still standing there. He straightened himself up: *(Jesus stands up and looks compassionately at the woman, who is looking very fearful)*

Jesus *(to the woman)*: Where are they? Is there no one left to condemn you?

Woman: No one, Sir.

Jesus: Well then, I do not condemn you either. Go, but do not sin again.

(Jesus and woman exit)

Appendix 4 – Puppet Script: “Put down your stones!”

Characters:



The script is a dialogue between a young boy puppet called “James” who wants to follow Jesus but keeps getting things wrong, and his wise old “Grandad” puppet who helps to sort him out. Each puppet is operated by one person from behind a screen and so it is essential that the voices are heard; radio-microphones are ideal. Puppets and puppet screens can be purchased from many sources including <http://www.onewayuk.com/>

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Enter James and Grandad

- Grandad: How lovely to see you again James.....I hear from your dear mother that you revised really hard for all of your tests.....I am impressed!
- James: Mmmm.....sort of.
- Grandad: What do you mean sort of? Your mother said that you have spent hours of time in your bedroom. She assumed that you were revising!
- James: I did do some revision Grandad.....perhaps not hours, but definitely some.....
- Grandad: So, tell me how you did in all of your tests. Did you get some A grades?
- James: Mmmmm..... Grandad.....you never guess what?
- Grandad: What James?
- James: Billy is a cheat.
- Grandad: No James.....I do not believe you. Billy wouldn't cheat.
- James: Well, he did. He got caught by Mr Border three days ago looking at his mobile phone in the Science test. He was actually looking up the answers online.
- Grandad: Oh dear, what a shame.
- James: What a shame....he's a cheat....he should know better, after all he is the Head Teacher's son. I think he should be expelled, so do all of my friends. In fact whenever he comes out to play, we all sing, “*Cheater, cheater, Billy's a big cheater.*”
- Grandad: Poor Billy.....I do feel sorry for him.
- James: Why Grandad?
- Grandad: Because it can't be easy for Billy being the Head teacher's son and the pressure that puts him under.

James: Well, he did wrong, and he should pay for it. My friends and I think he should be sent to the rubbish school in Hepworth, where he can learn his lesson. They would certainly give him a hard time there.

Grandad: Now hold on a minute James.....I seem to remember a little incident a few years ago concerning you and exams.

James: Oh, come on Grandad, I was only in year one then, so I didn't know any better. I didn't know that looking at Emma's paper during a spelling test was cheating. Billy should know better. I always thought that Billy was a boffin.....now I know why. He obviously cheats his way through all of his tests and exams.

Grandad: I don't think that you are being very kind James.....yes what Billy did was wrong, and I am sure that he feels very ashamed about it, but we need to be careful not to condemn him.....because we aren't perfect ourselves are we?

James: I suppose not.

Grandad: Don't you remember that Jesus has told us that we can only condemn others if we are sinless ourselves?

James: But

Grandad: Let's change the subject shall we James? Anyway, you didn't answer my question about how you did in your tests. When we were talking about your revision it seemed to me that you were hiding something. What exactly have you been doing in your bedroom for hours on end, when your mother thought that you were revising?

James: This and that you know Grandad.....nothing interesting.

Grandad: Come on James you can't fob your old Grandad off that easily.....

James: Hmmmm..... well....I have been betting online on the horses, and then watching the races! It has been so much fun. This week has been Royal Ascot and the queen was there. Grandad.....you would have loved seeing the queen all dressed.....

Grandad: James....how on earth have you managed to do that? You have to be eighteen years old to place a bet on a horse.

James: Do you Grandad?

Grandad: Oh, come on James, I'm not stupid. You are nine years old, not eighteen years old. So how have you been "betting" on horses?

James: This is a bit embarrassing Grandad.

Grandad: Go on.....

James: Well it's like this.....I've used Dad's credit card.....I didn't think he would mind! PAUSE

Grandad: James, let me get this straight.....you are outraged about Billy cheating in his science test at school, and are happily throwing verbal stones at him, yet you have cheated in a much much bigger way, by using your dad's credit card to bet on horses. Do you think that is right?

James: Now you put it like that Grandad, I don't think it is right. In fact, I am feeling rather bad now about Billy. I think I will stop being horrid to him.

Grandad: Good. So, have you any idea how much money you have won, or lost on these horses?

James: I have won twenty pounds Grandad.....that's great isn't it...and I can give it to Dad.....and.....

Grandad: Maybe, but from what I know, you normally lose more than you win. So, James be honest with me, how much have you lost on your dad's credit card?

James: Only a mere two hundred and eighty pounds.

Grandad: Oh James!

(Exit James and Grandad)

Appendix 5 – Picture of a stone

