

— Chapter 5 —
Fork in the Road
Jesus and the Adulterous Woman

The Big Picture

A woman caught in the act of adultery is brought to the Temple. Her accusers demand a judgment from Jesus for her scandalous crime. In his response, Jesus illuminates the sin problem of everyone involved and offers grace, forgiveness, and a chance to start over. We, too, will face forks in the road. The direction we choose can lead to startling transformation. It's time to move forward!

Discuss

“It should not surprise us that Jesus, the exact representation of God’s being, should be so purposefully personal... His interactions began right where they were. He hit them between the eyes with the truth they needed to hear. He used their specific circumstances to draw them into a relationship with him, changing their lives forever with a single encounter.”

Has God dealt with you in a similar way? Was your experience with him intimately personal, meeting you exactly where you were at that time? What truth about himself or the circumstances did he reveal? Note as each person in your group shares how uniquely he approached each of you.

“There will be times when we come upon a fork in the road. Maybe circumstances in our lives make a sudden change. Or he gives us a startling revelation, some insight that demands a response. We stand uncertain at the crossroads, wondering where to go from here.”

Can you think of a time where you reached a fork in the road? What were your circumstances? What were your options? How did God use those crossroads in your life, especially in your relationship with him?

“Knowing their intent did not keep Jesus from giving them an answer. Jesus was concerned for each person in that courtyard... Both accusers and accused are dealt with in parallel fashion. Both interactions, first with the Pharisees and then with the woman, began with Jesus stooping to write in the sand. His words to each were a pronouncement about sin. He was offering each a chance to turn away from his or her sin.”

What about each party needed to be addressed? How did the things that were said, first to the Pharisees, then to the woman, match the needs of each?

“The Pharisees needed to be shown God’s way as well. They regarded themselves as holy, spending their lives carefully observing the Law, both Mosaic and oral traditions. As far as they were concerned, they were clean and had the right to stand in judgment

of others. Their thinking was nothing short of delusional. They desperately needed a reality check!"

Do you ever fall into that kind of delusional thinking? Are there sins you prioritize as "big" or "small"? Have you become complacent about certain sins in your life and even felt justified in judging others? What do Jesus' words implicate about that kind of thinking?

"Like the Connecticut River, our lives are moving in a general direction. While we often struggle with sin, our course has been altered as believers. God is at work in us to bring our new potential into a reality. And that transformation process will continue until the day of Christ Jesus."

Looking back over a period of time, are you able to discern movement in your life toward positive growth? What small changes can you note? What has been unmistakably transformed?

Moving Forward

1. What can you learn about the transformation process from the following verses? What is his end goal for you? How is he getting you there?

Philippians 1:6, 2:12-13, 3:20-21

Romans 12:1-2

2 Corinthians 3:18

2. The Pharisees became so obsessed with following the letter of the Law, their obsession with rule-keeping became the end in itself rather than a means to an end: a relationship with God. When God was bringing his people into the Promised Land, he warned them about this very danger. Read Deuteronomy 10:12-16. What do you think he meant by *circumcising their hearts*? What did he mean by *stiff necked people*?

3. Read Deuteronomy 6:5. Jesus quoted this verse when he was asked to identify the most important law. How will making this command our top priority keep us from a pharisaical attitude about our own sin? How will it keep us from becoming legalistic in our approach to others?

4. How does loving God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength impact the transformational process he is working to complete in you?