

What Did Jesus Mean?

Digging deep into Jesus' teachings.

THE CHRISTIAN
Working Woman



What Did Jesus Mean? Two Women Meet Jesus

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Introduction

What are some things we know about how women were treated in the culture of Jesus' day?
How did Jesus treat women differently?

We'll look at two women who met Jesus and see what he said to them and what he did for them.

Mark 5:25 – 34:

And a woman was there who had been subject to bleeding for twelve years. ²⁶ She had suffered a great deal under the care of many doctors and had spent all she had, yet instead of getting better she grew worse. ²⁷ When she heard about Jesus, she came up behind him in the crowd and touched his cloak, ²⁸ because she thought, "If I just touch his clothes, I will be healed." ²⁹ Immediately her bleeding stopped and she felt in her body that she was freed from her suffering.

³⁰ At once Jesus realized that power had gone out from him. He turned around in the crowd and asked, "Who touched my clothes?"

³¹ "You see the people crowding against you," his disciples answered, "and yet you can ask, 'Who touched me?'"

³² But Jesus kept looking around to see who had done it. ³³ Then the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell at his feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth. ³⁴ He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering."

This is the kind of information most women would keep private but, in that culture, it was a condition that had to be made public. Here's what the law said.

Leviticus 15:25 – 27:

When a woman has a discharge of blood for many days at a time other than her monthly period or has a discharge that continues beyond her period, she will be unclean as long as she has the discharge, just as in the days of her period. ²⁶ Any bed she lies on while her discharge continues will be unclean, as is her bed during her monthly period, and anything she sits on will be unclean, as during her period. ²⁷ Anyone who touches them will be unclean; they must wash their clothes and bathe with water, and they will be unclean till evening.

Let's look at these laws of cleanliness from a New Testament perspective.

Mark 7:1 – 9:

The Pharisees and some of the teachers of the law who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Jesus ² and saw some of his disciples eating food with hands that were defiled, that is, unwashed. ³ (The Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they give their hands a ceremonial washing, holding to the tradition of the elders. ⁴ When they come from the marketplace they do not eat unless they wash. And they observe many other traditions, such as the washing of cups, pitchers and kettles.)

⁵ So the Pharisees and teachers of the law asked Jesus, "Why don't your disciples live according to the tradition of the elders instead of eating their food with defiled hands?"

⁶ He replied, "Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written:

"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. ⁷ They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules. ⁸ You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to human traditions." ⁹ And he continued, "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!"

Jesus points out that the Pharisee had an over-emphasis on ceremonial cleanliness and they overlooked the real need for internal cleanliness. Furthermore, in Acts 15 the early believers were learning that under the New Covenant the believer was not bound to these laws of ritual purity. Jesus is the One who makes us clean and fit for worship now.

John 15:3: *You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.*

1 John 1:7: *But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin.*

Imagine what her daily life was like—just trying to stay clean herself. She's a woman in a patriarchal society, out of money, isolated from family and strangers, and she has no recourse.

It is into a large crowd around Jesus that this woman dares to enter. She has heard about Jesus and believes he can heal her. She can't approach him like Jairus did; but she believes touching his garment is all she needs.



This nameless woman simply fights the crowd to come up behind Jesus close enough to just touch. . . just touch his garment. All she wanted to do then was to get away as quietly as possible. But Jesus had a different plan.

Jesus stops the rush to Jairus' house and insists on knowing who touched him. The woman couldn't get away, so she came and fell at Jesus' feet and, trembling with fear, told him the whole truth.

What do you think she was expecting from Jesus after he heard her story?

Jesus says to her? *"Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be freed from your suffering"* (Mark 5:34). Matthew records that he said, *"Take heart, daughter, your faith has healed you"* (Matthew 9:22).

Jesus called her daughter! And he sets her free. With one touch Jesus does what no doctors, no amount of money could do!

Jesus says that it is her faith that has healed her. This isn't the first time that Jesus has told someone that their faith healed them.

Matthew 15:28: *Then Jesus said to her, "Woman, you have great faith! Your request is granted." And her daughter was healed at that moment.*

Mark 10:52: *"Go," said Jesus, "your faith has healed you." Immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus along the road.*

Luke 7:50: *Jesus said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."*

Luke 17:19: *Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."*

How is it that our faith can save us?

Her faith healed her because she reached out to Jesus by an act of faith, believing that he could and would heal her. Her faith was the conduit through which Jesus healed her.

And because she placed her faith in the right person, her faith was recognized by Jesus and it healed her. Now, because of Jesus she leaves in peace. Wonderful peace!

John 8:1 – 11

Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

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

⁹At 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. ¹⁰Jesus 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.”

What is it about this story that makes you a little angry or that causes you to have questions?

Why did those religious leaders think they could catch Jesus in a trap by bringing in this woman?

What did Jesus write on the ground?

When Jesus said, “*Let he who is without sin throw the first stone*” (John 8:7), he is obviously reminding them of their own sinfulness. Jesus certainly didn’t approve of her sin, and he made that clear, but he cared about her. He stood firm against the sin but showed great love and grace for the sinner. He is our role model for how we should see and care about sinners. Stoning was a method of execution where the people who accused someone of a terrible sin had to throw stones at the condemned person until he or she died. Why did the Old Law require stoning for certain sins, one of which was adultery?

Furthermore, the purpose of the Old Covenant of laws was to reveal the truth that nobody could keep God’s holy standards and make all of us aware of our sin problem and our need for salvation. The laws were a temporary system for national life, keeping the people God chose as his people from sin and from becoming extinct.

For example, take the story of Achan in the Bible (Joshua 7). God’s people have just come into the land God had promised them, but they had violated God’s covenant. So, Joshua had to find out who had done this evil thing of keeping the pagan things they were supposed to destroy, questioning each tribe one by one. Then he gets to Achan:

Achan replied, “It is true! I have sinned against the Lord, the God of Israel. This is what I have done: ²¹When I saw in the plunder a beautiful robe from Babylonia, two hundred shekels of silver and a bar of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. They are hidden in the ground inside my tent, with the silver underneath.”

²²So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent, and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver underneath. ²³They took the things from the tent, brought them to Joshua and all the Israelites and spread them out before the Lord.

²⁴Then Joshua, together with all Israel, took Achan son of Zerah, the silver, the robe, the gold bar, his sons and daughters, his cattle, donkeys and sheep, his tent and all that he had, to the Valley of Achor. Then all Israel stoned him, and over Achan they heaped up a large pile of rocks. Then the Lord turned from his fierce anger. (**Joshua 7:20 – 24**)

God hates sin still today as much as he did then. He wants his people to be pure, and he will deal drastically with us when we knowingly stray from the principles of God’s Word.

In the way he dealt with this woman, Jesus showed the compassionate heart of God – and he is preparing them for the truth that he will bring a New Covenant, which will replace these laws about stoning, and give us hearts of flesh to want to obey God out of love.

Luke 22:20: *In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”*

2 Corinthians 3:6 – 9: He has made us competent as ministers of a *new covenant*—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. ⁷ Now if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? ⁹ If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness!

The ministry of the Old Covenant brought death because there was no one who could keep all those laws! Now this new covenant, which is not engraved on stone tablets, is much more glorious because Jesus shed his blood so that we could be forgiven and we could become righteous in God's sight!