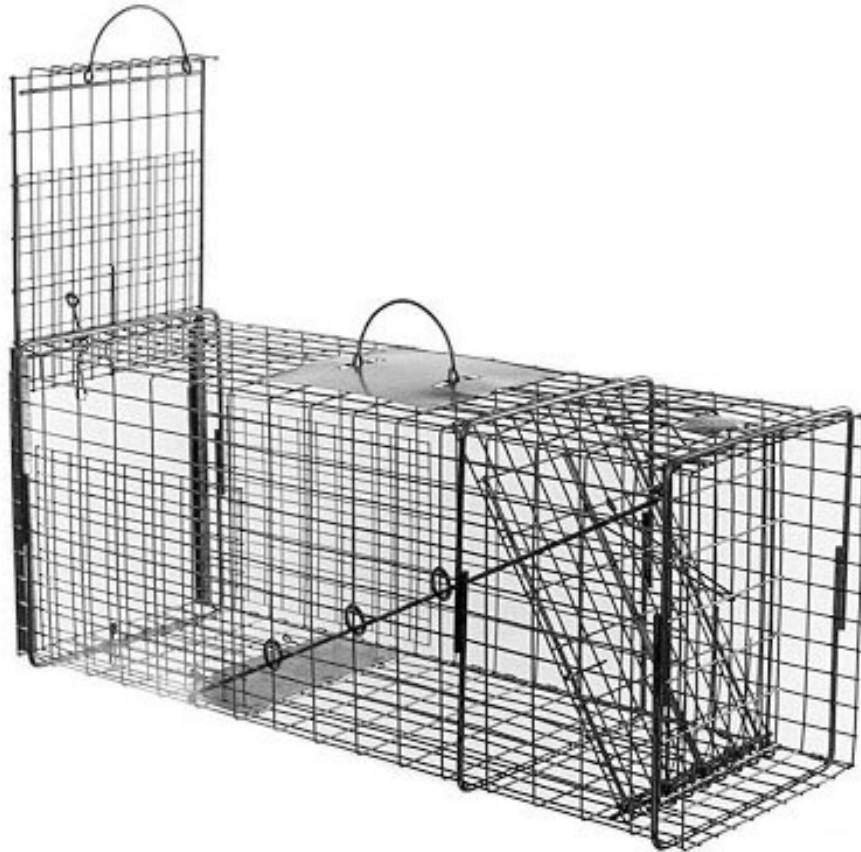


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# S Francis



**Trapped?**

December 10, 2014

*... he stood up and said to them, "Let him who is without sin among you cast the first stone. And once more he bent down and wrote on the ground. But when they heard it, they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones. and Jesus was left alone with the woman."  
John 8:7-9*

### **Was Jesus Trapped?**

The story of the woman caught in adultery came up in the readings for today. This story has a checkered history itself in that it was not always included in the earliest versions of the New Testament. There is enough scholarship pointing to its authenticity to include it now, although, it will be missing from some versions. It is also very tricky to interpret. One of the reasons is that no one can really say what Jesus was writing on the ground. However, there are a few clues that help us to see what is going on. The scribes and the Pharisees are trying to trap Jesus in his own words once again. To do that they have trapped a woman caught in the act of adultery so that they can use her case to trap Jesus. Jesus turns the tables and traps them. Kenneth Bailey, in his very helpful book [Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes](#), points out how all of this unfolded:

1. It was a sabbath (the sabbath during the Feast of Booths)
2. The scribes and Pharisees wanted to trap Jesus into working on the sabbath or trapping him in his own words
3. They brought a woman caught in adultery for Jesus to say what her punishment should be. Right away we can see through their plan. They wanted to use the law to trap Jesus to say something he would not have the apparent authority to say. Had they actually wanted to follow the law they would have brought the man along with the woman as well. Both would have been open to punishment.
4. Jesus wrote in the dust. That is not a violation of the sabbath because it is not permanent. Writing on parchment would have been a violation of the sabbath because it is permanent. This showed he was well versed in the law and its interpretation.
5. Jesus very likely wrote something like, "She is guilty."  
After they saw it he turned the tables by saying "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." The one who would have cast the first stone would have been guilty of violating the law of the Old Testament which points out that all have sinned (as in Isaiah 53:6).
6. So they walk away and Jesus does not pass any judgement on the woman.

### **Are You Trapped?**

One of the details of this story caught my attention where it reads, "...they went away one by one, beginning with the older ones." Why is that important? It seemed to me it was something more than the younger

people being polite. Once again Bailey shed some light on this. He points out that in a situation where a decision is needed a group of any size will look to the oldest ones first to make the decision. No one was going to make a decision like this and be trapped in it. There was only two choices to be made to avoid being trapped. One was to walk away from Jesus. The other was to start following Jesus. Which one would you have chosen? Is there a situation in your life right now causing you to feel trapped? Where will you go for help? Will you go to one who may feel as trapped as you? Or, will you go to the One who leads with mercy, wisdom, grace, and unconditional love?

## **Coming Attractions**

***Sunday, December 14, 2014*** worship at 10:00am followed by pot luck

***Sunday, December 21, 2014*** worship at 10:00am with offerings from Aspire Dance Academy

***Wednesday, December 24, 2014*** Christmas Eve Candlelight service

### ***Centerville Circle of Prayer***

For the Wells Fargo branch in Centerville, Tommy Cahoon, manager, that this branch would serve a growing number of customers, that businesses and households would prosper in our county through the work of this branch.

### ***Diocese of Virginia***

For the congregations of Santa Maria, Falls Church; St. Timothy's, Herndon; Trinit, Charlottesville; St. Luke's, Simeon

### ***Metropolitan Richmond***

For the families of Metropolitan Richmond: For persons who are lonely or have no family; for persons who are estranged from their families; for persons who are grieving the loss of a love one; for all who need to feel the love of God.

Grace and Peace,

John Maher

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