

# Speaking to the soul



## God's rules

**[Jesus said:] “Let the one who has never sinned throw the first stone!” John 8:7**

By this time, Jesus had become a deeply controversial person in Jerusalem. The teachers of the religious law and the Pharisees were always looking for ways to trip him up. On this particular day, they brought a woman to him who had been caught in the act of adultery. They reminded Jesus that, according to the Law of Moses, anyone who committed adultery should be stoned to death. This was a clever trap – if Jesus suggested he disagreed with the Mosaic Law, they would have all the proof they needed that he was a heretic, and if he took a hard line and encouraged the stoning of this woman, his reputation for kindness and compassion would be shattered. He would also have run into difficulties with the Romans who were proud of their exclusive right to execute people.

Jesus' response was incredibly wise. He said nothing at first but stooped down and wrote in the dust with his finger. We have no idea what he wrote, but his response clearly frustrated the religious leaders. His brilliant final answer was that the one who was sinless should throw the first stone. Then, one by one, her accusers slipped away.

Once everyone had left, Jesus asked the woman where her accusers were. "Didn't even one of them condemn you?" he asked. "No, Lord," she replied, to which Jesus responded: "Neither do I. Go and sin no more" (John 8:10-11). Jesus wasn't suggesting that what the woman had done was OK. He identified it as sin, and told her not to continue in this way. The woman must have been amazed by the grace and gentleness of Jesus, which stood in such sharp contrast to the harshness of her accusers. Jesus wasn't condoning her sin or treating it lightly, but he was lovingly encouraging her to live a life in line with God's will.

## **QUESTION**

How should we respond to people who flagrantly disobey God's rules?

## **PRAYER**

Lord Jesus, forgive me for times when I have been harsh and judgemental towards others. Help me to reflect your loving heart in all that I say and do. Amen

*Photograph - Keukenhof gardens blooming spring flowers by the pond. Colourful tulips and blue Muscari flowers. Beautiful ornamental garden landscape at Lisse, Netherlands.*

