



## Sojourner Truth

Sojourner Truth was born around 1797 in the state of New York. The exact year of her birth isn't known, because Sojourner Truth was born a slave, and the birthdates of slaves were not recorded. Her birth name was not Sojourner Truth, but Isabella Baumfrees. Sojourner Truth was a name she took for herself later in life when she was a free woman, having become a Christian.

As a slave, Isabella had no rights over her own body; she was sold as a wife twice, and told when she could have children. In 1826, she ran away from her slave master, taking only one of her three children with her. In her 30's, Isabella became a Christian, and began working publically for the **abolition** (ending) of slavery, as well as for women's rights. This is when she changed her name to Sojourner Truth.

Sojourner Truth became known as a powerful speaker and met with President Abraham Lincoln at least once to share her views on slavery. After the Civil War, Sojourner argued for an end to **segregation** (the separation of services for black people and white people). She rode in white-only street cars in Washington D.C. as a protest against different services for black Americans. Today, she is remembered as one of the key people in the struggle for human rights in the United States.

A **sojourner** is a visitor or traveler, living temporarily in a foreign country. It suggests a person who is simply passing through a place.

*Why do you think Isabella Baumfrees gave herself the name Sojourner Truth? What land or country was she just "passing through?" In what ways was she a foreigner?*



## A Woman Caught in Adultery

John 8:1-11 <sup>1</sup> But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. <sup>2</sup> At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them. <sup>3</sup> The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her

stand before the group <sup>4</sup> and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. <sup>5</sup> In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" <sup>6</sup> They 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. <sup>7</sup> When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." <sup>8</sup> Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground.

<sup>9</sup> At 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. <sup>10</sup> Jesus straightened up and asked her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

<sup>11</sup> "No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared. "Go now and leave your life of sin."

**Did you know?** In Jesus' day, adultery was a capital offense in Israel; however, only the Roman government could sentence a person to death. In this story, look for how the religious leaders are trying to trap Jesus. They were jealous of Jesus because of the miracles and the popularity he was gaining with the people.

1. **What do you think this woman's struggle was?**
2. **In the Old Testament book, Deuteronomy 22:22, it says, "If a man is found sleeping with another man's wife, both the man who slept with her and the woman must die. You must purge the evil from Israel."**

**Where was her partner? What does this tell us about the accusers?**

3. **Look at verse 6. Why was this situation a "trap" for Jesus? What would happen if Jesus said "stone her" – or if he said "let her go"? The Pharisees and teachers were very self-righteous. Do you think the religious leaders may have planned this whole event just to condemn Jesus? Why? Did they care about the woman?**
4. **How do you think she felt after being caught and dragged out in public by a mob?**

**\*How would you feel about having your wrongdoings exposed?**

In the same way, when we do something against the law, something that hurts another person, or something that hurts God, He takes those things very seriously and calls them sin. Sin is going our own way, thinking our own thoughts and doing what we want, rather than what God wants. Sin can involve either attitudes or actions or both.

God's standards in the Bible show us His heart, and when we rebel against them and pursue our own desires, we miss God's best for us and we cause Him to feel deep sorrow.

5. **How does Jesus respond to this woman and provide for her in her situation?**

- 6. Why did Jesus' response mean so much to her?**
- 7. Did the adulterous woman have to do anything to be forgiven?**

This is how a relationship with God differs from being religious. Religion says you do what is right in order to earn acceptance, love and forgiveness. A relationship with God through Jesus Christ is not based on our performance because we already are accepted, loved and forgiven.

- 8. Why do you think the men went away rather than stoning the woman (v 7-9)?**
- 9. Do you think Jesus was condoning the woman's sin by not condemning her? Explain.**
- 10. If you were the woman, how would you feel after meeting with Jesus?**
- 11. What can we learn from this story about Christ's attitude toward us – even when we feel awful about ourselves?**
- 12. Read John 3:16-17 and discuss how this relates to the story.**

**John 3:16-17 (New International Reader's Version)**

- 16 "God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son. Anyone who believes in him will not die but will have eternal life.*
- 17 <sup>17</sup> "God did not send his Son into the world to judge the world. He sent his Son to save the world through him.*