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Mark 2:1-12

WHO'S THIS GUY?

¹ A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ² They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³ Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴ Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. ⁵ When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶ Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷ "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ⁸ Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? ⁹ Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins

are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? ¹⁰ But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man, ¹¹ "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." ¹² He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"



Before the Study

PREPARING

In order to better understand the meaning of a passage, it's critical to know how the *original audience* would have heard it. The context below has been provided for you to better understand the world in which these listeners lived. It will also be helpful in answering cultural questions that arise during the study.

Paralyzed Man (v.3)

In this culture, a popular belief was that chronic health issues were caused by sin. If you had issues, you must be doing something wrong. Note that while this was not always the case (John 9:1-3), this man probably felt disconnected from God as a result of his paralysis and the popular belief. He probably spent his days begging just to survive.

Digging (v.4)

Roofs in this time consisted of branches laid over wooden beams covered with dried mud. They were sturdy enough to walk on, but easy enough to dig through.

Forgiveness (v.5)

It was ardently believed that only God had the authority to forgive sins. In Jesus' day, forgiveness could only be administered via a priest on God's behalf through a sacrifice after public confession.

 THE BIBLE PROJECT

OVERVIEW OF MARK

How do these passages fit into the larger story of Jesus?

Watch the "Read Scripture" video at [TheBibleProject.com/explore/mark](https://www.thebibleproject.com/explore/mark)

Teachers of the Law (v.6)

These teachers were like the religious law professors of the day. They devoted their life to knowing God's law and its punishments, and they knew when someone was crossing it.

Blaspheme (v.7)

Claiming authority to do things that only God could do (e.g. forgiving sins) was considered a form of blasphemy, which was an offense punishable by death according to the law (Leviticus 24:16).

Son of Man (v.10)

At this time in history, the Roman Empire controlled most of the known world including Israel. However, the Jewish people long believed that one day God would send a divine leader to overthrow their foreign oppressors and re-establish the nation of Israel (Daniel 7:13-14). All of their hope and desires for a better life depended upon the arrival of the Son of Man. Jesus primarily referred to himself as the Son of Man.

Get Up (v.11)

Miracles are not magic, and Jesus was not a magician. Miracles were performed with the specific purpose of revealing the authority and power of the person that performed them. Only someone with an intimate and divine connection with God could perform such an act.



During the Study

ENTERING THE PASSAGE



DISCUSSION GUIDELINES

Review the Discussion Guidelines (Page 3) before beginning.

PRIOR TO THIS PASSAGE

This is one of the earliest stories about Jesus. At this point, people hardly knew who Jesus was. He wasn't known as a religious or theological figure. He was just some random guy. However, just prior to this passage, Jesus had begun miraculously healing numerous people of various, incurable diseases in a small town called Capernaum. As you could imagine, Jesus became a local celebrity overnight. All of a sudden, everyone in town was talking about this Jesus guy. Now, after traveling around the local region for a while, Jesus has once again returned to Capernaum. Our story picks up as people gather to this see this random miracle worker for themselves.

READ ALOUD

Have 3 people read the passage aloud for the group. You can use the sections on the following page to assign verses to read.

CREATIVE ENTRY

Imagine you are in the crowd witnessing this event happen. How would you describe the experience to a friend who wasn't there? What details would you be sure to include?

STUDY SILENTLY

Invite everyone to reread the passage slowly and silently on their own. Tell them to note things that seem interesting, surprising, and/or unusual. Ask them to come up with at least one question. This could include questions about what characters say, do, or mean. Remind them that you'll be using their questions to drive the discussion.

DISCUSSING THE PASSAGE



SHARE OBSERVATIONS. GATHER QUESTIONS.

First, invite everyone to share their observations. Then, gather questions asking for verse references and write them in their respective sections below. Do not discuss until everyone has shared. Finally, use the checkboxes to select no more than six questions to discuss.

DISCUSS QUESTIONS

Bound & Determined (v.1-5)

- Why did these men go through all the trouble to get this man in front of Jesus? (v.4)
- _____
- _____
- _____

Blaspheme?! (v.6-10)

- Why are the teachers of the law so angry about Jesus forgiving sins? (v.6)
- Why would Jesus forgive sins knowing it was strictly prohibited and potentially lethal? (v.10)
- _____
- _____
- _____

Something to Prove (v.11-12)

- What does this healing reveal about Jesus' authority? (v.11)
 - If some random person said they would pay off your student loans, you'd probably be interested but seriously skeptical. However, if you checked your balance and it was \$0.00, what would you think about this random person?
- _____
- _____
- _____

APPLYING THE PASSAGE



10-15
MIN

SUMMARY

This sold out crowd has heard stories of Jesus' miraculous healings, but now they want to see it for themselves. These four men are so eager to see Jesus heal their paralyzed friend that they damage someone's property to do so. Yet, rather than heal their friend as everyone expects, Jesus forgives him! Everyone knew that only God had the authority and ability to forgive sins, which is why the religious leaders were so angry. Claiming this kind of authority was on the verge of blasphemy, which was a crime punishable by death. So why would Jesus say it?! Because Jesus has something to prove. You can't prove someone's sins are forgiven, but you can't ignore a paralyzed man walking out of the room. Jesus doesn't just claim God-like authority. He proves it. The crowd has never seen anything like this because they've never seen God... until now.

BIG IDEA

There is more to Jesus than meets the eye. When we are determined to seek him out, he is faithful to reveal himself.

APPLICATION OPTIONS

Discuss *one* Application Option from the next page. Then finish by sharing The Bigger Story and Creative Response.

THE BIGGER STORY

If these four friends had reason to seek Jesus out, we have even more. In this day, forgiveness could only be administered via an ordained priest on God's behalf through the killing of a sacrifice. So where's the priest? Where's the sacrifice? It's *Jesus*. Jesus was the divine high priest who had authority to forgive sins. Yet rather than sacrificing something else, he sacrificed *himself*. On the cross, Jesus became the sacrificed needed to forgive humanity, and then came back to life to assert his authority over everything that would keep us from God including death itself.

CREATIVE RESPONSE

Depending on the comfort of your group, you can simply pray or creatively respond through journaling, music, or another form of prayer.

APPLICATION OPTIONS

The Real Obstacle

There is a stark contrast between the religious leaders and these four friends. Religious leaders knew everything there was to know about God. Yet, they were skeptical of Jesus. In contrast, these four friends hardly knew anything about Jesus. Yet, they were willing to destroy property just to see him. How can our religious knowledge and experiences sometimes keep us from seeing Jesus for who he is? Or seeking him out? How can we seek to know Jesus in a new way this semester?

New Semester. New Start.

In this culture, people with chronic health issues were sometimes considered to be sinful. The paralyzed man would have thought God wanted nothing to do with him because of his past and present condition. However, Jesus gives him a new start both in faith and life. What are the things that lead us to believe God wants nothing to do with us? How might Jesus' actions here change the way you approach God this semester?

Faithful Vandalism

The paralyzed man's life is transformed because of his friend's radical faith. Their belief that Jesus could heal drove them through multiple obstacles even to the point of destroying property. Our faith can make a difference in our friend's life. Are their people in your life who don't know Jesus? What are the obstacles keeping them from knowing him? How could your faith play a key role in them coming to know Jesus?

