

“When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven’ ” (MARK 2:5, NIV).

Bible Study 52 On Mission Friends

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Read Mark 2:1-12, Luke 5:17-26 and Matthew 9:1-8.

Who brought the paralyzed man to Jesus? _____

How many people were involved in restoring the man physically and spiritually? _____

Why did the paralyzed man enter the house through the roof? _____

Why did Jesus forgive the man's sins? _____

Why did Jesus heal him? _____

This is truly a unique miracle—unlike any that Jesus or anyone else ever performed. Usually Jesus would come upon somebody with a huge need, they would ask Him to heal them, and He did. Then He would say something like, “Your faith has healed you.” (See Matthew 9:20-22 and 27-30, Mark 10:46-52 and Luke 17:12-19.)

Then, on some occasions Jesus would heal a person because of someone *else's* faith—usually the faith of a father or mother, as in Matthew 8:5-13 and 15:22-28.

On several occasions, Jesus publicly forgave people of their sins. Remember the story about the sinful woman who wept on Jesus' feet at Simon's house (Luke 7:36-50)? Jesus forgave all her sins and told her, “Your faith has saved you” (Luke 7:50, NIV). The Bible consistently says that we are saved by faith: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith ... it is the gift of God” (Ephesians 2:8, NIV).

However, in this rare incident, Jesus not only healed a paralyzed man, He forgave the man's sins because of the faith of his friends! Each of the Gospel writers was careful to point this out. (See Matthew 9:2, Mark 2:5 and Luke 5:20.)

The four friends who carried this man to Jesus provide a great example of how we should be involved in the lives of our lost friends. They knew that if they could just get their friend to Jesus, the Master would “fix” him. They realized that the man was paralyzed and totally unable to get to Jesus on his own. They weren't satisfied to study paralysis, to read Scriptures to him about the Messiah, or to pray for him. The four men stopped whatever they were doing, picked up their friend and took off. They let no barrier stand in their way. They were creative and persistent. Jesus saw their faith and was pleased to completely change their friend's life—eternally.

Do you have lost friends who need Jesus? Do you recognize when a person is paralyzed in sin? If not, you can't be *on mission* bringing people to Christ. Do you have Christian friends who are working with you to do whatever it takes to bring others to Jesus? Do you really have faith that Christ is able to change anybody you bring to Him? Are you creative and willing to take risks to get people face-to-face with Him? Is Jesus so impressed with your faith in His ability that He will stop whatever He's doing, forgive your friend's sin and totally restore him?

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List the names of two friends who are paralyzed by sin and need Christ. _____

List three friends who will work as your partners to bring these two to Jesus: _____

According to Luke, what was Jesus doing when the paralyzed man showed up? _____

Which is easier, to forgive someone's sins or heal their paralysis? _____

According to Mark, Jesus was preaching the Word when the man came through the roof. Luke said He was teaching a house full of Pharisees and teachers of the Law. Whatever Jesus was teaching or preaching about had to wait while He personally pronounced the man forgiven and innocent of all sin.

The Jewish teachers were correct when they complained in their minds that only God had the power or authority to forgive sin. But they were wrong to not accept the fact that Jesus was their God. They were spiritually and intellectually paralyzed by unbelief, the most deadly sin of all.

To help these theologians understand and believe in Him, Jesus healed the man of his paralysis. Did they see Jesus then for who He was and believe? How sad that in a room full of people who were looking God in the face, only one man had friends who would share their faith in Him.

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