

BGCC Community Group Guide



Take Heart

October 11th

You Are Forgiven

Matthew 9:1-8

Main Idea: Jesus sees beyond our immediate struggles to our deepest need: forgiveness from sin. Because He has the authority to forgive sins and paid the price for that forgiveness through His death on the cross, we can take heart, confess our sins, and walk in the freedom of His grace rather than continue carrying the burdens of guilt and shame.

Introduction: When Jesus Sees Beyond the Surface

We often come to Jesus with a particular problem we want Him to fix. We bring Him our anxiety, financial burdens, relationship struggles, health concerns, and regrets, hoping that if He would just change one thing, everything else would fall into place. Jesus cares about these struggles, but He also sees deeper than we do. He sees the sin, shame, guilt, fear, bitterness, and misplaced trust that we may not even recognize in ourselves.

In Matthew 9, four friends bring a paralyzed man to Jesus, believing that Jesus can heal him. They go so far as to lower him through a roof because the crowd makes it impossible to reach Jesus any other way. Yet when the man finally lies before Jesus, Jesus does not begin by healing his body. He says, "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." Jesus addresses the man's deepest need before meeting the physical need that brought him there.

This story challenges us to consider whether we trust Jesus only to change our circumstances or whether we trust Him to address the deeper condition of our hearts. The good news is that Jesus does not merely expose our sin; He has the authority to forgive it. Through Him, we no longer have to be defined by the things we regret, the shame we carry, or our sins.

Significance in the Biblical Story

Matthew presents Jesus as the promised Messiah, demonstrating His authority through His teaching and miracles. In Matthew 8–9, Jesus exercises authority over sickness, nature, demons, and ultimately sin itself. The healing of the paralyzed man reveals that Jesus is more than a teacher or miracle worker. *He possesses the authority that belongs to God.*

The religious teachers recognize the significance of Jesus' words: "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" Their objection points directly to the question at the heart of this passage—who is Jesus? Jesus responds by healing the man publicly, demonstrating that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.

The miracle points beyond physical healing to the greater work Jesus came to accomplish. He came to deal with humanity's sin, and the forgiveness He offers would ultimately cost Him His life on the cross. The passage invites us to recognize both the seriousness of our sin and the greatness of the mercy Jesus offers.

Section 1 – Jesus Sees Our Deepest Need

Matthew 9:1–2

"Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." — Matthew 9:2

Summary

Four friends bring a paralyzed man to Jesus, determined to get him before the One they believe can help. Their faith is demonstrated through their actions: they refuse to let the crowd become the reason they give up. They go to extraordinary lengths because they believe Jesus can do something for their friend that no one else can do.

Yet Jesus' first words to the man are unexpected. Instead of immediately telling him to walk, Jesus tells him that his sins are forgiven. The man and his friends may have been focused on physical healing, but Jesus sees a need that goes deeper than his physical condition. He sees the whole person, including the burdens of sin, guilt, and shame that may be hidden from everyone else.

We often approach Jesus in the same way. We know what hurts, what frightens us, and what we want Him to change (our felt need). We ask Him to fix our circumstances, relationships, finances, or anxiety. These things matter to Him, but He also sees the deeper condition of our hearts. Sometimes our immediate problem is not the first thing He wants to address. He may reveal our pride, selfishness, unforgiveness, or misplaced trust because He loves us enough to deal with what is happening beneath the surface.

Jesus is not dismissing the man's physical suffering. He is showing that forgiveness is an even deeper need. We can receive relief from a difficult circumstance and still remain burdened by sin. Jesus offers something greater than temporary relief: reconciliation with God and freedom from the guilt and shame of sin.

Group Question: Why do you think Jesus addressed the man's sin before healing his physical condition? What does this reveal about the way Jesus sees and cares for us?

Personal Relevance

It is natural to focus on the problem that feels most urgent. But we must also be willing to let Jesus examine our hearts. He sees the things we struggle to admit, the attitudes we justify, and the shame we try to hide. His desire to address these things is not a rejection of us; it is an expression of His love. When we lack a nutrient, sometimes we get aches or pains that we medicate when really we needed green beans.

Flow Question: When you bring a struggle to Jesus, what makes it difficult to consider that He may want to address something deeper than the immediate problem?

Reflection Question: Is there an area of your life where you have been asking Jesus to change your circumstances but have been reluctant to let Him change your heart?

Section 2 – Jesus Has Authority to Forgive Our Sins

Matthew 9:3–7

“But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” — Matthew 9:6

Summary

When Jesus forgives the man, the teachers of the law accuse Him of blasphemy. They understand the seriousness of His claim: forgiveness of sins belongs to God. Jesus knows their thoughts and challenges them with a question: Which is easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven,” or “Get up and walk”? Anyone could claim to forgive sins, but the claim cannot be visibly verified in the same way a physical healing can.

Jesus then tells the paralyzed man to get up, take his mat, and go home. The man immediately stands and leaves in front of everyone. By healing him, Jesus demonstrates His authority and confirms that His claim to forgive sins is not empty words. The miracle reveals who Jesus is.

This passage reminds us that forgiveness is not something we can earn, declare for ourselves, or accomplish through our own effort. Our sin is a serious matter, and Jesus does not pretend otherwise. He came to deal with it. The forgiveness He offers is possible because He would bear the weight of sin through His suffering and death on the cross.

What seems easy for us to receive was costly for Jesus to provide. He took upon Himself the punishment we deserved so that we could be forgiven and reconciled to God. We do not need to keep trying to pay for sins that Jesus has already paid for. Our response is to acknowledge our need, turn to Him in faith, and receive the mercy He offers.

Group Question: Why was it important for Jesus to demonstrate His authority to forgive sins by healing the man? How does the cross help us understand the cost of the forgiveness we receive?

Personal Relevance

We can struggle to believe that our sins are truly forgiven because we know how serious they are. We may keep punishing ourselves, hide our failures, or believe that we must somehow make ourselves worthy of God's love. But the foundation of forgiveness is not our ability to make up for the past. It is the finished work of Jesus.

Flow Question: Why do we often not think to ask for forgiveness? Instead we prefer to focus on our “problems?”

Reflection Question: How can you learn to give more appreciation and attention to our forgiveness of sins (as opposed to God helping with problems)?

Section 3 – We Must Confess Our Sin and Lay Down Our Burdens

Matthew 9:7–8; Proverbs 28:13

“Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.” — Proverbs 28:13

Summary

After Jesus heals the man, He tells him to pick up the mat he had been lying on and go home. The mat had been central to the man's life. It was how he was carried from place to place, and it represented the condition that had defined his daily existence. But after meeting Jesus, he no longer needs to remain on it. He can carry what once carried him.

Matthew uses this picture to help us consider the burdens we carry and the things that have come to define us. Sin, regret, shame, and destructive patterns can begin to feel like permanent parts of our identity. We may think, “This is just who I am,” or believe we cannot live without a habit, attitude, or behavior that has become familiar. But Jesus has the power to forgive us and change us. We do not have to remain defined by the things He came to free us from.

Receiving that freedom begins with honesty. Proverbs 28:13 warns against concealing sin and points instead to confession and renunciation. We cannot experience the freedom of forgiveness while insisting that our sin is not a problem. Jesus already knows the truth about us; there is nothing we can hide from Him. Confession means agreeing with Him about our sin and bringing it into the light rather than continuing to excuse, minimize, or conceal it.

Matthew also illustrates this through the story of Simon Kenton, who was known for carrying his rifle and eventually laid it aside after coming to faith. He wanted people to know him not merely for what he had been known for before, but as someone who had been forgiven. In the same way, our past may be part of our story, but it does not have to remain our identity. We can walk forward as people who have received mercy and are being changed by Jesus.

Group Question: What do you think it means to “pick up your mat and go home” as a picture of life after forgiveness? How can something from our past become a burden or part of our identity?

Personal Relevance

Jesus does not call us to pretend that our sin never happened. He calls us to confess it, receive His mercy, and stop allowing it to define who we are. This may include seeking accountability, making things right where possible, or asking trusted believers to walk with us as we leave old patterns behind.

Flow Question: What is the difference between acknowledging your past honestly and allowing your past to define you?

Reflection Question: Is there a sin, regret, or shame that you continue to carry as though it defines you? What would it look like to confess it to Jesus and begin walking in the freedom He offers?

Section 4 – Take Heart: You Are Forgiven

Matthew 9:2, 8; 1 Peter 5:7

“Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.” — Matthew 9:2

Summary

The story begins with a man who cannot walk and ends with him going home on his own, while the crowd praises God. But the greatest change in the story is not simply that the man can walk. Jesus has declared that his sins are forgiven. The man who arrived carried by others leaves with a new freedom, and everyone present sees a demonstration of Jesus' authority.

Jesus' words, “Take heart,” are not a command to ignore pain or pretend that life is easy. They are an invitation to find courage in what He has done. The man did not have to convince Jesus that he was worthy of forgiveness. He needed to receive what Jesus offered. In the same way, our hope rests not in our ability to overcome every struggle or make ourselves good enough, but in the mercy and authority of Christ.

Matthew reminds us that forgiveness was not easy for Jesus to accomplish. He knew the cost of what He was offering. He bore our sin and shame on the cross so that we could be forgiven. We

may receive forgiveness freely, but it was purchased at great cost. Remembering that sacrifice helps us resist treating grace as old news or something we can take for granted.

The proper response to forgiveness is worship, gratitude, and a changed life. We can bring our burdens to Jesus because He cares for us, as 1 Peter 5:7 teaches. We can also become the kind of friends who help others come to Him. Just as the four friends carried the paralyzed man to Jesus, we can pray with people, encourage them to seek Him, and walk alongside them as they face sin, shame, and struggle. The message we have received is too glorious to keep to ourselves.

Group Question: What does it mean to “take heart” because your sins are forgiven? How should the cost of Jesus’ sacrifice shape the way you live and worship?

Personal Relevance

Forgiveness is not something we outgrow. Whether you have followed Jesus for decades or are only beginning to trust Him, your greatest hope remains the same: you are loved by a holy God who offers mercy through Jesus. Let that truth shape how you see yourself, how you respond when you sin, and how you treat others who need grace.

Flow Question: How might remembering the forgiveness Jesus has given you change the way you respond to failure, temptation, or someone who has hurt you?

Reflection Question: Who in your life might need help coming to Jesus with a burden they are carrying? What is one concrete way you could pray for them, encourage them, or walk alongside them this week?

Conclusion

Matthew 9:1–8

Jesus sees more than our outward circumstances. He sees our deepest need, has authority to forgive our sins, calls us to confess and lay down our burdens, and gives us reason to take heart because of His sacrifice.

1. **Jesus sees our deepest need.** He cares about our circumstances, but He also sees the sin and shame beneath the surface.
2. **Jesus has authority to forgive our sins.** His healing of the paralyzed man demonstrates who He is and the authority He possesses.
3. **We must confess our sin and lay down our burdens.** We do not have to remain defined by our past or cling to what Jesus came to free us from.
4. **We can take heart because we are forgiven.** Jesus paid the price for our forgiveness through His death on the cross, and His mercy gives us hope and freedom.

The gospel is not that we finally become good enough for God. It is that Jesus did what we could never do for ourselves. He bore our sin, shame, and guilt so that we could be forgiven. We do not need to conceal our sin or continue carrying the burden as though we must pay for it ourselves. We can come honestly to Jesus, trust His sacrifice, and begin walking in the freedom He gives.

As you reflect this week, consider these questions:

- Am I bringing my deepest needs to Jesus, or only asking Him to change my circumstances?
- Is there a sin I need to confess rather than conceal or excuse?
- Am I still allowing guilt, shame, or my past to define me?
- Have I stopped to remember what Jesus' forgiveness cost Him?
- Who could I draw closer to Jesus through prayer, encouragement, or practical care?

The paralyzed man arrived on a mat, but he did not leave the way he came. Jesus changed his life, and the crowd praised God. The same Jesus has authority to forgive sins today. We can take heart—not because our sin is insignificant, but because His mercy is greater. We can lay our burdens before Him, receive His forgiveness, and walk forward as people who have been made new.