

Mark 2:1-12 Discussion Guide

TEXT - Read Mark 2:1-12 (ESV) **Jesus Heals a Paralytic**

¹And when he returned to Capernaum after some days, it was reported that he was at home. ²And many were gathered together, so that there was no more room, not even at the door. And he was preaching the word to them. ³And they came, bringing to him a paralytic carried by four men. ⁴And when they could not get near him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and when they had made an opening, they let down the bed on which the paralytic lay. ⁵And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." ⁶Now some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts, ⁷"Why does this man speak like that? He is blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" ⁸And immediately Jesus, perceiving in his spirit that they thus questioned within themselves, said to them, "Why do you question these things in your hearts? ⁹Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise, take up your bed and walk'? ¹⁰But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the paralytic— ¹¹"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed, and go home." ¹²And he rose and immediately picked up his bed and went out before them all, so that they were all amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"

- What sticks out to you in this text? Any questions that come up?
- What is going on in this text (summarize the main points)? What is the context for the text?
- How does this text connect with the Gospel? What Gospel themes do you see in the text?

THEOLOGY - What do we learn about God from this text?

- What attributes or aspects of the character and nature of God do you see in these passages? What else can we learn about God from the text? Take a moment to list these out together.

LIFE

- The paralytic and his friends mistakenly thought their greatest need was for his physical healing. We often mistakenly come to Jesus with what we THINK we need/want. Why do you come to Jesus? What are you seeking?
- Without their having uttered a word, Jesus "senses" the questioning rebellious hearts of the religious rulers. Jesus knows what is in everyone's heart. He welcomes us when we have questions which would help us grow in Christ-likeness. What answers has Jesus given to your heartfelt questions?
- Jesus confronts the religious rulers by asking them if it easier to forgive sins or heal. Then He demonstrates his authority by doing both. In what ways or areas of your life has Jesus demonstrated His authority?

PRAYER

- Pray in response to what God revealed to you in this text. If there is sin, confess it to him in prayer. If there is a need, petition God in prayer. If there is encouragement, praise God and share with others.
- What is one personal need you have that we can pray for you as a group?
- Pray for one friend, family member, or coworker with who you want to share the love of Jesus with.

Commentary on Mark 2:1-12

v. 1-2 There was no longer room to receive them, not even near the door: [Mark 1:28](#) says that after a dramatic rescue of a demon-possessed man, *immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee*. At this point in His ministry, Jesus attracted crowds wherever He went.

And He preached the word to them: Mark doesn't tell us what Jesus **preached**, yet he still emphasized the preaching ministry of Jesus as he did in [Mark 1:28](#) and [Mark 1:38-39](#).

"It is clear that he was avoiding the streets because they had been turned into a healing campaign. Everywhere he went people besieged him with requests for healing and the casting out of demons, so that he was unable to do what he had come to do primarily, which was to preach the Word." (Steadman)

v.3-4 When they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was: Because of the crowded room, the friends of the paralyzed man had to lower him down through the roof. This was an unusual way to interrupt a sermon.

Uncovered the roof: The roof was usually accessible by means of an outside stairway and was made of thatch, dirt or tile laid over beams. It could be taken apart, and the friends of the paralyzed man lowered their friend down to Jesus.

So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying: This proved the determination and faith of the friends of the paralytic man. They counted on Jesus healing their friend, because it would be a lot harder to bring him back up through the roof than lowering him down. They counted on him *walking* out of the room.

v.5 When Jesus saw their faith: Jesus looked up at the four men struggling with crude ropes tied to each corner of the stretcher with a paralytic on it. He looked at them and **saw their faith**. Their faith could be *seen*. Their bold, determined action to bring their friend to Jesus proved they had real faith.

Son, your sins are forgiven you: We can imagine how the friends on the roof felt. They went to a lot of trouble to see their friend healed of his paralysis, and now the teacher only wants to *forgive his sins*. We might imagine them shouting, "No, he's paralyzed! We wanted him to walk, not to be forgiven!"

Yet, Jesus knew what the man's *real* need was and what his *greatest* need was. What good was it if the man had two whole legs and walked right into hell with them. Whenever there is a problem, almost always, *sin* is the real problem. Jesus got right to the problem.

Jesus did not mean that the paralyzed man was especially sinful or that his paralysis was directly caused by sin. Instead, He addressed the man's greatest need and the common root of all pain and suffering – man's sinful condition.

"Forgiveness is the greatest miracle that Jesus ever performs. It meets the greatest need; it costs the greatest price; and it brings the greatest blessing and the most lasting results." (Wiersbe)

v. 6-7 Who can forgive sins but God alone? The scribes used the right kind of logic. They correctly believed that only God could forgive sins, and they are even correct for examining this new teacher. Their error was in refusing to see who Jesus is: God the Son, who has the authority to forgive sins.

“The words suggest a gradual intensification of the fault-finding mood: first a general sense of surprise, then a feeling of impropriety, then a final advance to the thought: why, this is blasphemy!” (Bruce)

“Again and again during the life of Christ the same dilemma was to re-appear. If he were not divine, then he was indeed a blasphemer; there could be no third way out.” (Cole)

v.8 Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus: In a stunning moment, these scribes knew Jesus could read their evil hearts. This should have helped persuade them that Jesus really was God, having power to forgive sins.

It is hard to know if Jesus **perceived** this by His divine nature or by His human nature with the spiritual gift of discernment or a word of wisdom. Trapp finds Scriptural basis for either approach: “That is, by his Deity, as [1 Timothy 3:16](#); [Hebrews 9:14](#). Or by his own spirit, as [1 Peter 3:8](#), not by inspiration, as [2 Peter 1:21](#).”

v.9 Which is easier: For men, both real forgiveness and the power to heal are impossible, but for God, both are easy. It is a logical assumption that if Jesus has the power to heal the man’s disease, He also has the authority to forgive his sins.

In a way, it was “harder” to heal the man than to forgive his sins, because forgiveness is invisible – no one could verify at that moment the man was forgiven before God. Yet it could be instantly verified whether or not the man could walk. Jesus is willing to put Himself to the test.

Jesus also met the scribes on their own scholarly ground. “The Rabbis had a saying, ‘There is no sick man healed of his sickness until all his sins have been forgiven him’... to the Jews a sick man was a man with whom God was angry.” (Barclay)

v.10-11 The Son of Man: Jesus used this title often because in His day, it was a Messianic title free from political and nationalistic sentiment. Jesus could have more commonly referred to Himself as “King” or “Christ,” but those titles, in the ears of His audience, sounded like “the One Who Will Defeat the Romans.” Son of Man was “Christ’s favourite designation of himself, a claim to be the Messiah in terms that could not easily be attacked.” (Robertson)

v.12 Immediately he arose: Imagine the tension in this scene. The scribes were tense because Jesus challenged them and said He would demonstrate He was the Son of God. The paralyzed man was tense because he wondered if Jesus really would heal him. The crowd was tense because they sensed the tension of everyone else. The owner of the house was tense because he wondered how much it would cost to repair his roof. And the four friends were tense because they were getting tired by now. The only one *not* tense was Jesus because He had perfect peace when He said, “arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.” The man was immediately healed. The *power* of Jesus to heal and the *authority* to forgive sins were immediately vindicated.

All were amazed and glorified God, saying, “We never saw anything like this!” Jesus carried the day, and the people were **amazed** to see the power of God in action.

“The experts in the law were hoist with their own petard. On their own stated beliefs the man could not be cured, unless he was forgiven. He *was* cured, therefore he *was* forgiven. Therefore Jesus’ claim to forgive sin *must* be true.” (Barclay)