

**READ MARK 2:1-12**

In verses 2:1-5, how is Jesus' treatment of the paralytic surprising? What is Jesus teaching us?

In verses 2:6-12, why do both Jesus (v. 10) and the teachers (v. 7) say it takes authority to forgive sins?

In verses 2:9, what is the answer to Jesus' question? What is his point in asking it?

Why do you think that Jesus first said to the paralyzed man “your sins are forgiven”, before healing him?

How does Jesus respond to the four people making a hole in the roof of his house and letting their paralyzed friend down through it?

What inspires you most about the account of the four men who lowered their friend through the roof so Jesus could heal him?

In this account, what relationship did Jesus' forgiving the man's sin have with healing his body?

The four friends from the sermon absolutely would have wanted a front row seat to see Jesus, but instead went out of their way to bring their paralyzed friend through a roof. As you think about their great sacrifice, what comes to mind about your own willingness to serve others?

Proverbs 27:17 points out how two friends have the ability to “sharpen” each other, similar to how iron is able to sharpen iron. Can you think of any ways friendships have helped sharpen your faith?

Can you think of any ways friends can do the opposite and make each other dull?

As you look back on the sermon and study questions, can you think of any friends/co-workers/family you want to be more intentional in serving in the next few weeks?

**Determine to love those in your circle of influence. (OIKOS)**

**Finally along with that love, we must believe that Jesus Christ is the only One who can heal the paralyzed. It is simply a matter of believing his own words: “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through**

Looking back at your notes from this week's teaching, was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged or confused you?

**[DIGGING DEEPER – click on the link](#)**

[Jesus Breaks It All Down - Chris Brown](#)

[Book of Mark Introduction- Spoken Word](#)

[Week 4 Loophole Religion- Andy Stanley](#)

From an early age, we learn quickly to look for loopholes in the rules. We try to figure out what we can get away with and still be okay. We tend to take this same mindset into our relationship with God, but it doesn't work. When we opt for loopholes and workarounds, we find ourselves in a category no one wants to be in: hypocrites. Jesus calls us to move beyond loophole religion.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Did you grow up with any religious traditions that, looking back, made God seem small and petty?
2. Are you inclined to believe that confessing your sin to God makes things right between you and God, regardless of whether or not you've made things right with the person you sinned against? If so, why?
3. Read Mark 7:1–15. • What stands out to you? • Jesus accused religious leaders of nullifying the intent of God's commands with made-up traditions. Can you think of any modern-day examples of this?
4. Are there any ways you have let go of the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions? Do you identify with any of the following? If so, how?
  - Do you ever try to figure out how close you can get to sin without sinning?
  - Do you believe there is a ritual that makes you right with God while removing your responsibility to make things right with others?
  - Do you feel guiltier about missing church than mistreating someone at work (or home, school, or in your community)?
  - Are you banking on the myth that God has short-term memory loss?

### **Changing Your Mind**

Loophole religion is pervasive in our culture, but following Jesus is an invitation to be done with all the games and traditions. We are part of a kingdom of conscience informed by the law of Christ: to love others as God through Christ has loved us. There are no loopholes in that kind of love—no workarounds.

In this kingdom, we wake up every day with the question:

What does love require of me?

**The kingdom of God is near, and everyone is invited to participate**