

Lesson 2

Jesus Heals a Paralytic

Read Mark 2:1–12

As a result of His teaching and miracles, Jesus' popularity grew rapidly. So many wanted to hear Him that they filled the house in Capernaum where He was teaching and crowded around it. Just then, five men arrived, eager to see Jesus too. One of them was paralyzed and the other four carried him on a stretcher. It was impossible for them to get in through the door, so they climbed up on the roof, dug a hole in it and let the paralytic down through the opening they had created. You can imagine the commotion among the crowd in the house below.

When Jesus saw the faith they had demonstrated, He told the lame man that his sins were forgiven. That was probably not what the man had expected, but it is every man's greatest need. The scribes who were present thought Jesus had blasphemed because God alone can forgive sins. Jesus read their minds and asked: Which is easier to say—your sins are forgiven, or get up and walk? To prove His ability to forgive sins (something invisible and therefore impossible to verify), He healed the paralytic who then got up and walked. Jesus proved His power to conquer invisible, spiritual problems by overcoming a visible, physical problem. The crowd was dumbfounded. They had never seen anything to compare with Jesus.

Note -- Who will reach Jesus? Consider the five men as they approached the house in which Jesus was teaching. They had come in order to see Him, but their way to Jesus was blocked by a big obstacle: the crowd. Many would have simply turned around and gone back home. Not these men. They were determined, even desperate, in their desire to see Jesus. Their procedure, unroofing the roof, was radical but it worked. Even today, those who want to come to Jesus frequently encounter barriers in their path. The only ones who actually reach Him, are those who are absolutely determined and who refuse to allow anything to keep them from following Him. How determined to be with Jesus are you?

1. What did the paralytic and his friends do when they were unable to reach Jesus?
a) gave up and went home; b) waited for God to open a path through the crowd;
c) offered a financial contribution; d) took off part of the roof so the paralytic could enter the house through the opening.
2. What did Jesus do for the paralytic before healing him? Answer: He _____ his sins.
3. Who alone can forgive sins? Answer: Only _____ can forgive sins.
4. How did Jesus prove He has the power to forgive sins? Answer: He _____ the paralyzed man.

(Thought question: If only God can forgive sins, but Jesus proved that He could forgive sins, what does that prove about the nature of Jesus?)

Read Mark 2:13–17 Jesus Socializes with Outcasts

One of Jesus' more surprising actions was calling Levi to be a disciple. Levi had been a tax collector. In that era, tax collectors were viewed as both thieves and traitors because they used dishonest tactics to raise funds for the hated Roman invaders. Adding a tax collector to His inner circle was hardly a move that could be expected to increase Jesus' popularity! Later, Levi held a banquet in Christ's honor. He invited his friends: other tax collectors and sinners. The scribes and Pharisees were outraged because they thought it improper for a teacher of religion to eat with immoral people. When Jesus overheard their criticism, He asked: Who needs a doctor—the sick or the well? His purpose, He said, was not to call righteous, but sinners. The Lord never hesitated to break society's norms and customs.

5. Name the tax collector whom Jesus called. Answer: His name was _____.
6. What reason did Jesus give to explain why He socialized with sinful people? a) He wanted to participate in their sins; b) He did not believe that sinful people can be a bad influence on good people; c) He wanted to teach the sinners to repent; d) He believed sinners will be saved, even if they don't change.

Read Mark 2:18–22 Jesus' Disciples Don't Fast

Some of the Pharisees and disciples of John came to Jesus asking why He and His disciples didn't fast like other religious people did. Jesus explained by illustration. He said that no one would fast at a time of celebration, such as a wedding. His own presence on the earth made it a joyous time of feasting because He was the bridegroom. Since fasting should fit the occasion, it was inappropriate in this situation. He also explained that just as no one would put new wine in old bottles or a new patch on old jeans, it was equally out of place to put the newly revealed gospel of Christ into the old traditional forms of the Jews. Fasting was just not the right thing to do when the Son of God Himself was present.

7. How did Jesus explain why His disciples didn't fast? a) He said they did fast, but did it secretly; b) He said that His presence made it a time of joy in which fasting was inappropriate; c) He condemned all fasting; d) He admitted they were wrong and should have fasted.

Read Mark 2:23–28 Disciples Break Sabbath Traditions

The more popular Jesus became, the more outspoken His opponents' attacks. Jesus and His disciples provided easy targets for their critics, because they refused to follow the religious traditions of their age. Jewish tradition regarding the Sabbath day prohibited all activity, including plucking grain to eat, but Jesus and His followers ignored these cherished doctrines. When the Jewish officials criticized the disciples, Jesus defended their actions by noting His opponents' inconsistency: they justified David when he broke God's law, but they condemned Him when He merely violated men's traditions. Then He explained that God had intended for the Sabbath command to provide relief for man, not be an additional burden. Finally, Jesus proclaimed His authority over the Sabbath saying that He Himself was Lord of the Sabbath. If Jesus created the Sabbath, surely He knew what activities violated it.

8. What did Jesus call Himself? Answer: He was Lord of the _____.