

Sick of Religion?

Weekly Devotional

A ministry of Chapel Hill

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WEEK 2

This devotional pairs with Mark 2:1-12 and the sermon preached on March 2-3 at Chapel Hill.



Written by Jena Meyerpeter

Jena and her family moved to Gig Harbor in the fall of 2017. Although she considers herself a Midwest girl at heart, she and her husband Josh are loving raising their three daughters here in the Pacific Northwest. Jena's love for God's Word inspires her to write and speak on a variety of topics surrounding faith and family.

LifeGroup Guide

Head

What do we learn about Jesus' ability and authority to forgive sins? What does this mean about who he is?

What about the behavior of the people in this story helps us understand their motivations and desires? How does Jesus respond to their faith in action?

Jesus refers to himself in this passage as the Son of Man. What connotations did this title have for the original hearers and readers of this word? (Hint: look up Daniel 7:13-14) What significance does it have for us today as believers?

Heart

This is yet another story of people desperately seeking the help of Christ. This time, it is a group of friends on behalf of a paralyzed man. When have you experienced the support of friends bringing you to Christ when you couldn't have done it alone?

Jesus turns a conflict into a moment which glorifies God. Do you have any areas of conflict right now in your life where you need God's wisdom in how to respond?

Hands

Are you someone who finds it easier to give, or to receive support from others? Think about who in your LifeGroup needs to "get on the mat" in this season of life. If it's you, may this be the week you ask for help. If it's someone else, may you have eyes to see them and do something to come around that person this week!

Pray

DAY 1 – Monday
Daily devotional

Read

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

Ask

What do all three gospel accounts of this story have in common?

What differences do you see?

Reflect

Sift through past vacation photos with someone who experienced the trip with you. Attempt retelling the adventures one at a time and see what similarities and differences you come up with. Details, timelines, and highlights might differ slightly depending on your experiences and memory. They also vary depending on your purpose behind retelling the event and your intended audience.

The gospels of Mark, Matthew, and Luke each tell their own version of what went down inside the walls of that home in Capernaum. These are three unique vantage points all about the same event. Regardless of the details or perspective each writer points to a critical revelation: Jesus is the long awaited for Messiah; the Son of Man referred to in Daniel 7:13-14 who is “given dominion and glory”. By Jesus’ authority alone souls paralyzed in sin and bodies in a physical paralysis both find healing. Back in Mark 1:21-28 we saw Jesus demonstrating his authority over unseen evil, and now days later Jesus returns to Capernaum and establishes his rule over the physical world as well.

All three authors set the scene of a hopeless situation. All three gospels tell of Jesus perceiving hearts of faith and responding to them in power. He confronts their preconceived ideas of sin born sickness with his declaration, “Son, your sins are forgiven” and backs his claim of authority with a visible miracle. Jesus always has our eternal healing in mind, and here in Mark we’re witnessing Jesus revealing his earthly authority to heal souls for eternity, as only God can do. How does reading all three gospel accounts give you a clearer mental image of just how radical the love of Christ was and is still today? Where have you witnessed God at work transforming you from the inside out?

DAY 2 – Tuesday

Daily devotional

Read

Mark 2:1-12, Jeremiah 17:14, James 5:15

Ask

Who do you relate to most in this story?

How is Jesus challenging you through this scripture (in your faith, relationships, habits, actions, traditions, etc.)?

Reflect

Imagine you're playing the starring role of each person in this story: cynical scribe, amazed onlookers, supportive friend, and paralyzed man. Each of these people came to Jesus for different reasons that day, yet each walked away having gained something new:

- Scribes: cynical yet amazed hearts over Jesus' claims and objective proof that Jesus has the power to heal people physically.
- Amazed onlookers: exciting and unbelievable news to share, amazement over Jesus' ability to read thoughts and heal paralysis.
- Four mat carriers: proof that faith matters and Jesus has the power to heal.
- Paralyzed man: eternity with God and a restored body.

Putting ourselves in the shoes of these people helps us sink this story into reality. These were real people like us with real world problems. They were living in a world where power and authority were used as weapons to oppress and control; where physical suffering was reason enough to assign guilt.

Regardless of how or why people encounter Christ, we can be sure that he offers us exactly what we most desperately need: eternal salvation by grace. It's easy to see how paralysis of the body needs healing, but paralysis of the heart is an even more serious matter because of its eternal implications. Every person in that room heard Jesus' radical teachings and saw his demonstration of power, but did they all walk away believing Jesus was the Messiah?

After this week we'll move on from Mark 2:1-12 as well. While we can't say for sure what those people believed after seeing a miracle with their own eyes, we can ask ourselves, "What do I believe?" Will you walk away simply amazed by Jesus' claims and miraculous healings, or will you believe he's the miraculous healer your soul most needs?

DAY 3 – Wednesday
Daily devotional

Read

Mark 2:5-12, 1 Samuel 16:7, Romans 6:10

Ask

What do we learn about Jesus' ability and authority to forgive sins?

What did Jesus know about the hearts and motives of people in this story?

Reflect

When was the last time you had to wait? I don't mean waiting for your pizza delivery or standing in line at the post office. I mean heart-on-the-floor, nerves-on-the-fritz kind of waiting? In Mark 2:5 we see a man waiting for a miracle. However, no one expected the miracle that came next.

"Son, your sins are forgiven." This wasn't the miracle anyone expected from Jesus. This inner soul healing was impossible for these teachers of the law to judge, so they assumed the worst - blasphemy. In fact, to the gawking crowd and four men peering through the hole in the roof it didn't appear like a miracle at all! There was still the obvious issue of a paralyzed man waiting on his mat.

Jesus used those precise moments of waiting to teach a lesson about his authority on earth; the power to forgive sin, a holy act of God. Every miracle Jesus performed serves as an arrow pointing us to place our trust and hope in faithful, loving, and able Savior. Jesus knew every doubt and fear in the crowded room and finally gave what he knew they were wanting, physical proof of his authority. As the paralyzed man stood and walked out of the home fully restored the crowd was amazed, but the most amazing part was that Jesus had not only given him temporary restoration for this life but internally he sealed the man's complete restoration for all of eternity.

No moments of waiting are ever wasted in Christ. What feels like deferred hope in this world is God's orchestrated opportunity for us to know the love and faithfulness of Christ in our darkest moments.

DAY 4 – Thursday
Daily devotional

Read

Mark 2:1-12, James 2:14-17, Luke 8:40-56, Mark 10:52

Ask

How does Jesus respond to faith in action?

What about the behavior of the people in this story helps us understand their motivations and desires?

Reflect

My daughter failed her first driving test. Not an “I missed too many points” kind of fail, but an “I broke a traffic law” automatic fail. She drove on the wrong side of the road. After we talked about the seriousness of her mistake we had a good chuckle because all was well and no one was hurt. The truth is, her dad and I are thankful for the life lesson she learned. You see, we can know in our head all the rules and believe them to be true and necessary, but if we don’t act consistently on those beliefs then what good are they? My intelligent, conscientious daughter knows traffic laws, but in that one moment she failed to act consistently on what she believed was true.

We’re all guilty of this at various points in our lives; when our actions aren’t consistent with our beliefs. We believe the Holy Spirit is alive in us, yet we choose habits that are destructive and limiting. We believe God is our provider and sustainer, yet we give of our resources like they’re in limited supply.

Jesus saw the opposite behavior in Capernaum that day. He saw a thread of consistency between the faith and actions of four men and their paralyzed friend, and he called it out in front of a standing room only crowd. “And when Jesus saw their faith, he said...” (v. 5). We see similar faith to action scenarios played out throughout the gospels like in Luke 8. Zero in on verses 48 and 50 specifically and see outstretched arms of faith grabbing hold of the power of Christ. Responding like only God can, Jesus offers gracious healing to these hearts of active faith.

DAY 5 – Friday
Daily devotional

Read

Mark 2:8-12, Daniel 7:13-14, Revelation 1:13 and 14:14

Ask

What was the significance behind Jesus referring to himself as the Son of Man in this passage?

What historical and future connotations did it hold for both Israelites then and us today?

Reflect

Certain words and terms have the ability to stir up old memories and emotions. What thoughts jump into the forefront of your mind at the mention of the words “twin towers”? Or how about the phrase, “I have a dream?” These recognizable words aren’t void of attachment and significance. They’re markers in our history and give us perspective for our future.

In the gospel of Mark Jesus uses the term “Son of Man” 14 times and each time it holds significance for his audience. It acts as a piece of identification placing him in Israel’s past, present, and God’s coming kingdom. “I saw someone like a son of man coming with the clouds of heaven,” Daniel 7:13 says, “He was given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world.”

Throughout scripture when we see the term ‘Son of Man’ in relationship to Jesus, it’s his way of claiming his full humanness, and of threading one consistent thread from Genesis (the fall of humanity) through Old Testament times (humanity under God’s law waiting for a coming King from the line of David) and into God’s reigning eternal kingdom (where lost humanity is eternally under the dominion of this heavenly sent Son of Man).

This complex and multifaceted title is worthy of hours of study ([The Bible Project](#) Podcast and video has hours of material on this term alone), but our takeaway from Mark 2:8 when Jesus self-identifies as “Son of Man” is that Jesus is the fulfillment of the visions in both Daniel and later in Revelation (1:13 and 14:14). To the crowded room that day Jesus stood before them, fully human, demonstrating miracle by miracle his complete authority as God, the Anointed King from the line of David who had come to claim his eternal throne (Daniel 7:27).

DAY 6 – Saturday

Daily devotional

Read

Mark 2:8-12, 2 Timothy 1:7, 2 Timothy 3:16-17

Ask

Do you have any areas of conflict right now in your life where you need God's wisdom in how to respond?

What are three scriptures that speak truth and power into your life and heart today?

Reflect

If emojis were in the Bible, we'd see a cringing face emoji by Mark 2:8. Having someone read your thoughts and call you out on it in a crowded room is awkward exposure of the highest degree. However, any time Jesus calls anyone out, rest assured it's to bring his creation from darkness into light; to turn unbelief into truth. Why do you question these things in your hearts?" he asked knowing full well why they were questioning his authority to forgive sins, and thus act as God. Blasphemy was punishable by death (Leviticus 24:16) and these scribes were hearing a carpenter from Nazareth speaking as if he were God. We can read on in confidence knowing that anytime Jesus engages conflict he comes out the victor, and his truth prevails.

Do you have areas in your life right now where you need God's present and perfect wisdom? Have you experienced circumstances recently where a cringing emoji would best fit the situation because you've been questioning God's faithfulness or authority in your life? Are you replaying any awkward or crucial conversations in your mind where God's Word can bring healing and love?

Begin by holding up your situation under the light of God's Word and see where he can reveal truth in your life: Ephesians 4:31-32, Colossians 3:13-14, Proverbs 15:18, and James 3:16-17 are great places to begin. The love and power of Christ isn't seen in cutting arguments or clever comebacks, and it isn't in his ability to shame or ridicule anyone's mistakes or shortcomings. It's in his complete and divine authority to crush sin. In Christ, we have the power, love, and self-control necessary to respond like Jesus in every situation we face.

DAY 7 – Sunday
Daily devotional

Read

Mark 2:1-12, James 5:16, Ephesians 2:8-9, Acts 20:35, Isaiah 58:10

Ask

When was a time when you needed to accept help from someone else?

Are you someone who finds it easier to give, or to receive support from others?

Reflect

My three daughters and I flew 2,000 miles from our temporary home in Vancouver, BC, to Kansas City in order to get our house listed on the market to sell. Closets needed decluttering, the landscape freshened up, furniture rearranged, and “stuff” hauled off for giveaway. I had three days to get everything ready and locked back up. Long story short, I *needed* help. One thing I’m terrible at: asking for help. This situation felt dire and the clock was ticking so I called in backup. The next day my brother-in-law arrived with extra hands and a pickup truck. Friends walked through our door with time and energy to help. After 48 hours, my house was in pristine condition and ready for the realtor’s inspection. My heart still overflows with humility and gratitude for people who showed up that day. God answered my prayers with their willing hands.

We don’t know what events led up to the moment when men were ripping apart a roof in order to lower their friends into the presence of Jesus. We don’t have record of their deliberations of how to overcome the problem of a blocked front door. We don’t know the ins and outs of any of their relationships, but we do know these four people went literally above and beyond a normal idea of “assistance” in order to help their helpless friend. Jesus said it was their faith he was responding to with healing.

I wonder if the words of Isaiah 58:10 shown on the men’s faces that day? We can only imagine, but what we do know is that four men walked up to the house that day in Capernaum and five men walked home. When in your life have the words of Jesus recorded in Acts 20:35 felt significant and true?
