

Loved by your friends

MARK 2:1-13 (NIV)

Jesus Forgives and Heals a Paralyzed Man

1A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. 2They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. 3Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. 4Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on. 5When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

6Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, 7"Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

8Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? 9Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? 10But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man, 11"I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." 12He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

13Once again Jesus went out beside the lake. A large crowd came to him, and he began to teach them.

Loved by your friends

What love those friends have for their paralyzed friend!

If you were paralyzed in biblical times, you often lived in isolation. You were dropped off somewhere in the morning and picked up again in the evening. If you were lucky, you lived in a city so you could beg along busy roads. Or, if you lived in Jerusalem, you might have been near the city gate or the temple.

Often, your family members were the only ones who had contact with you. What loneliness.

But this man had friends (had he become paralyzed later in life?) and this man's friends are different; they don't just accept that. They had heard about Jesus and had talked among themselves: how wonderful it would be if we could bring our friend to Jesus!

And one day they hear: Jesus is in Capernaum. That's within walking distance! They set out immediately, carrying their paralyzed friend on a mat between them. But what a disappointment when they arrive at the house where Jesus is. There's a crowd so dense they can't get through. People have come from all directions to hear Him; the house is overflowing, and there are many people standing outside as well. No one wants to step aside to let them through. What now? Wait until He's finished and hope that people will leave

then? No, the friends have no more patience—their friend has to get to Jesus right now. And if they can't get through the door, then they'll go through the roof.

Maybe someone had to go get ropes first, and it was quite a hassle to get the paralyzed man up onto the roof. Or maybe there was a strong friend who carried him up on his back—we don't know. Actually, it doesn't really matter. Disappointment doesn't stop them. Neither do the people standing in their way. They do their own thing because they know where they want to end up: with Jesus! Sometimes you have to chart your own course, and that isn't the path others lay out for you. They might even block your way.

Be determined and take heart: the Master is near!

Loved by Jesus.

Meanwhile, inside the house, they've probably heard the commotion on the stairs and on the roof. What on earth is going on up there?

Then suddenly a tile is broken from the roof, and pieces crumble down. Sunlight streams in, and the people see that more pieces of the roof are being broken away. When the hole is large enough, they see a mat being carefully lowered down with a man on it. The man on the mat comes to a stop at Jesus' feet. It becomes deathly quiet in the house: what is going to happen now?

Jesus looks up. Through the hole, the friends look down expectantly to see what will happen to their friend. Jesus looks and sees their faith. Then He says to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

What must the friends, the paralyzed man, and the bystanders have thought? Was it a disappointment? Jesus knows what we need when we come to Him. The paralyzed man must have been happy; he felt in his heart: I was a sinful person, how could I come to Jesus? But Jesus has made the way clear; my sins are forgiven. When Jesus looked at me, He saw not only that my legs didn't work, but He saw my heart that needed healing.

We so often look at people who are sick differently; we ignore them, exclude them. If you're sick or have a disability, you might feel like you don't count, like you're not contributing to society

Jesus sees things differently: you belong! You matter! He sees your brokenness and wants to heal you. Sometimes that happens in a different way than we expect, and it's possible that the illness or disability won't go away. But then you can be sure of this: Jesus wants to forgive your sins; He wants to heal your heart!

Meanwhile, some of the scribes who see all this think: What is happening here? Only God can forgive sins! This is blasphemy!

Jesus says to them: Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier to say to the paralyzed man: "Your sins are forgiven," or "Get up, pick up your mat, and walk"?

God has given Me authority to forgive sins; I will show you that.

Then He turns and says to the paralyzed man: “Get up, pick up your mat, and go home.”

The man feels strength coming into his legs; he stands firmly on his feet and bends down to roll up his mat. How gratefully he must have looked at his Savior; joy floods his heart. There is cheering among the friends who witnessed everything from the roof, and the man who was once paralyzed walks out. Everyone in the house sees him and is moved. What a miracle. They see it with their own eyes.

The man can now do what his friends can do; his life has been completely transformed: his legs are healthy, and his heart is healthy.

Jesus then goes to the sea, and the people continue to seek Him out. But why? Do they want to see more miracles, or do they want to get to know Jesus better? Jesus teaches them. Teaching for the heart, because they all need a healthy heart. He knows what they—and we—need most. And He gives so much more than we expect.

Prayer: Lord, what love these people have for their friend. They want to bring him to You at all costs. Because they have an unshakable faith in You. You can give him what he needs. Are there people like this in my circle, Lord, whom I can be a friend to? A man, a woman, a child, whom I can bring to You? Someone who is lonely or sick. Someone who needs love. Will You help me see them, Lord? Lord, You are mighty. I kneel before You in worship. You know what they need, but also what I need. I lay my life before You. Hallelujah!

Questions:

- Do you have people around you who bring you (closer) to Jesus?
- Other people can get in the way of your journey to Jesus. Have you ever experienced that? Why do people do that? Is it intentional?
- When Plan A (through the door) didn't work, the friends came up with Plan B (through the roof). How do you deal with plans that fall through, for whatever reason? Do you give up? Can you easily come up with a Plan B?
- There is always a way to get to Jesus. How do you come to Him?
- The friends had to break open the roof to bring the paralyzed man to Jesus. Is there something in your life that needs to be broken through to get past an obstacle?
- Jesus sees the friends' faith and therefore says to the paralyzed man: your sins are forgiven. What does that mean for our (prayer) life?
- What do you need from Jesus? (Do you need anything?)
- Do you feel loved? By others/friends/Jesus?

This Bible study was written by Carla Heuvelman and can be found at www.febebijbelstudies.nl