

The Gospel of Mark

Walking with the Servant Savior

Lesson 3 Mark 2:1-28

Day One: Persistent Faith

We may not realize it, but our faith can at times dramatically affect the lives of other individuals. In this week's lesson we see the perfect illustration of how the faith of four men resulted in the physical and spiritual healing of their friend. While our faith cannot save someone else, it does have a saving influence that can bring them to Jesus where they receive the grace and help that they need.

Read Mark 2:1-12 and the parallel account in Luke 5:17-26.

Do you think the people assembled that day sensed something was about to happen? The news had gotten around that Jesus was back in town. There were many outside the door, and a crush inside that had resulted in standing room only.

1. What was Jesus doing at this time? v. 2
 - a. Who came to Him and what were they carrying? v. 3
 - b. Describe what took place when they could not come through the door.
v. 4

Picture it: four men struggling to carry the weight of a motionless paralytic, unable to get him through the door to see Jesus. We have to smile at their inventiveness, which prevented them from being deterred from their mission. If plan "A" didn't work, they would simply switch to plan "B," which required considerably more effort and determination. Apparently their faith was equal to the task!

2. It wasn't the faith of the paralytic but rather the faith of his four friends that got the attention of Jesus. How did He reward *their* faith? v. 5
 - **Personal:** Has there ever been a time in your life when you've been too weak to help yourself and you relied on someone else's faith to get you through? Briefly relate the experience.

There is a stark contrast between the faith of these four men and the unbelief of the religious leaders present in the room.

3. What were the scribes (teachers) and the Pharisees doing? vv. 6-7 (See also Luke 5:17)
 - What does Luke 5:17 say was available to these men this day?

The friends of the paralytic had to exert considerable effort to come close to Jesus, but those sitting near Him were there to question and accuse Him. They considered Jesus' claim to forgive sins as blasphemy because it put Him on an equal basis with God. Jesus had been given God's authority and power to forgive sins and heal bodies, but these men were blinded to the fact that they were addressing the Messiah. They, too, had the opportunity to receive spiritual healing and salvation.

4. How does Jesus address this issue with those who questioned Him? vv. 8-11

We know that sickness and death came into the world as the result of man's sin (Psalm 41:4; 103:3; Jeremiah 3:22). Mark's emphasis in telling this particular story was more on the *spiritual* rather than the *physical* healing of the paralyzed man. The man was aware of his sinfulness and Jesus spoke first to that condition, and then He healed him.

Getting a workout . . . (Word study)

Using the resources you have on hand (i.e., dictionary, Bible dictionary, additional Bible translations, concordance, etc.), research the word **forgiven** (verses 5, 9 and 10) and write a summary definition in the space below.

The Greek word for forgiven—*aphieme*—means *to let go from oneself or from one's power; or to let go free*. Only God is able to forgive and free us from sin. As we confess and ask forgiveness on the basis of Christ's shed blood, He forgives our sins, removing them so that we no longer stand guilty of them or remain under their power. The Bible does not say that there is a corresponding sin for each incidence of sickness; therefore we must be careful not to try and measure a person's spiritual condition by looking at their physical condition.

5. The New Testament teaches that God works healing and forgiveness together. According to James 5:14-16, what instruction is given to meet the needs of those who are suffering?

Heartbeat . . . (Memory verse)

"But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6

Day Two:

Keeping His Focus

What to look for:

The healing of the paralytic man had caused an uproar; all were amazed and glorified God. Jesus' popularity with the people continued to increase, but so did the scrutiny by the religious leaders, who would now have cause to question the company He kept.

Read Mark 2:13-17

After the successful healing ministry at Capernaum, Jesus once again retreated to be alone by the seashore; but the people continued to come to Him and He taught them.

1. Walking through the city upon His return, whom did Jesus see and what did He say to him? vv. 13-14
 - What was Levi's response?

To appreciate the call of this particular man, we must realize that tax collectors were known extortionists, clearly the most hated men in society. They were all considered dishonest men and a part of the criminal element of their day. The fact that Jesus would single out such a one to be His follower was most unacceptable to everyone else.

2. Describe the scene at Levi's house on that day? vv.15-16
 - How did the scribes and Pharisees feel about Jesus keeping such company?
 - What would *you* think if you observed Jesus sitting down among such people?
3. When Jesus heard their comments He responded. Try to summarize His intent.
 - a. *It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick.* v. 17
 - b. *I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners.* v. 17

To the religious leaders who avoided at all cost those who were "impure," the act of sitting down and dining with sinners who did not keep Jewish traditions was an unforgivable disgrace. But Jesus often associated with the people society turned away from in an effort to reach out to them. They understood their need but, tragically, the religious leaders closed their hearts and minds to His extended hand of grace.

Jesus saw the potential in Levi, who came to be known by the name of *Matthew*, which means "gift of God." He reached out to the man that no one else wanted, a man hated by those around him. Jesus could see what he would become, that one day Matthew would be given the honor of writing the gospel account that bears his name.

Selah . . . Take a moment to meditate on 1 Corinthians 1:26-29 (NLT).

- ❖ It has been said that each individual is portrayed in three different ways: *the person you see yourself as; the person others see you as; and the person God truly knows you to be!* What did the verses you just meditated upon tell you about yourself?

- ❖ Whom would you say you are living to please: *yourself—others—or God?* Please explain.

Review this week's memory verse.

Day Three: Making Room for New Life

What to look for:

When Jesus came into the picture, the old way of obeying religious rules and traditions was set aside, giving way to the new message of the Gospel, which set people free! Now, whenever believers begin to follow Christ, they do so with a fresh perspective, a new way of looking at life. The old things have truly passed away and all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Read Mark 2:18-22

The disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees practiced the discipline of *fasting*—going without food in order to spend time in God's presence. (The Old Testament law called for it.) Perhaps the occasion of Levi's feast coincided with an accustomed day of fasting, prompting some people to point the finger and ask why Jesus' followers did not.

The religious leaders were always concerned about keeping up the right (outward) appearances while Jesus always focused upon the (inward) intent of the heart. In response to their questions about *fasting*, Jesus turned things around to challenge their reasons for doing so.

1. Because fasting was associated with sorrow, mourning, or an act of humility, why did Jesus say it was inappropriate to fast while He was among them? v.19
 - When would it be appropriate for them to fast? v. 20

2. Jesus went on to say that the old fibers of traditional religion could not be interwoven with the new fibers of the Gospel. What would happen? v. 21

3. In biblical times wine was not stored in glass containers, but rather in animal skins that could stretch with age and fermentation. What did Jesus say would happen if *new wine* was put into *old wine* skins? v. 22

The point here is that the salvation available through Jesus Christ could not be mixed in any way with the old traditional Jewish system of belief. In practical terms this analogy is still applicable to us today. Those who have not yet met Christ have no idea of how dramatically they will be changed! The dynamic of the believer's life is such that everything previous that is of *old wineskins* must give way to the Spirit filling up to overflow in every area!

4. **Personal:** Everything that is prior (likes, dislikes, attitudes, desires, habits, experiences, etc.) apart from Christ is considered "old wineskins." If you have not allowed Christ entrance into one of these areas, you must or you will burst!
 - Can you name something that you would like to give over to Him to make room for the fullness of His Spirit? Have you told Him about it?

Only a new life can hold new wine. What people need is not religion, but the relationship with Jesus Christ that results in the filling up of the Spirit. Have you received Him yet?

Review this week's memory verse.

Day Four: Lord of the Sabbath

What to look for:

Through a series of confrontations with the Jewish leaders, Jesus had been instructing as to who He was and what His mission was about. The first clash came with the healing of the paralytic man when Jesus showed His power to forgive sins. The second conflict occurred when Jesus called Matthew to follow Him, thus revealing that He came to save the lost. In the third clash over fasting, Jesus spoke about the new life believer's have in Him. The final conflict in our chapter involves the disciples picking some heads of grain on the Sabbath. This time Jesus laid claim to His own deity by stating His title as Lord of the Sabbath.

Read Mark 2:23-28

1. According to Matthew 12:1, why were the disciples picking grain?

The Pharisees had well established regulations governing what could and could not be done on the Sabbath. Work of any kind was forbidden, so was traveling any distance.

The disciples may have violated the Pharisees own rules, but they had not broken God's law. Read this story in 1 Samuel 21:1-6.

2. To what did Jesus direct them? vv. 25-26

Referring back to 1 Samuel 21, after the bread's use in the temple, the priests were permitted to eat it. Once when David was on the run from King Saul, he and his men were given permission by the high priest to eat the bread. The actual loaves given to David and his men were those that had just been replaced by fresh ones. Their need for food was greater than the priestly regulations in place at the time. And that is the point Jesus was trying to make here in Mark 2, that the need of the disciples for food was greater than any existing regulations.

Jesus makes personal application of His question: "*Have you never read . . . ?*" These men claimed to know so much but they had missed the actual meaning of the Scriptures.

3. When you sit down to read the Word of God, are *you* able to discern the meaning of what is written? Perhaps it would be beneficial to ask yourself what you hope to gain from your Bible reading. Do you hope to gain *knowledge—understanding—information—or enjoyment?* Which would be applicable to you? Why?

Gaining knowledge, information and enjoyment from your Bible reading are helpful, but apart from true understanding of it, no real personal application can be made to daily life. Be careful—and *prayerful*—when you read God's Word, for when you do you are accountable to God for what it says!

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15 (NASB)

4. **Personal:** Does the above verse in 2 Timothy reflect your heart's intent? Are you diligent about it? If not, have you presented yourself to God and asked Him to help you handle His Truth with accuracy?
5. To summarize, what did Jesus mean when He said, "*The Sabbath was made for man?*"

Jesus Christ had brought something entirely new into the lives of God's people. In place of ceremonialism and burdensome restrictions, the Lord of the Sabbath brought joy, fulfillment, and rest.

Review this week's memory verse.

Day Five:

Praying God's Purpose

It's time to do some *prayer walking*—not in the literal, but the *spiritual* sense. The Holy Spirit will lead you today as you consider three points from your lesson, write them in the form of a prayer, and lift them to the Lord. If practicing the presence of God is new to you—be patient—it will come, and you will be blessed!

"... We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will." Romans 8:26-27 NLT

A prayer for putting your faith to work . . .

When was the last time that you used creativity and persistence on behalf of someone else? Believing faith always finds a way, but it needs to be exercised. Look around you and tell God whose stretcher you are willing to carry.

A prayer for living up to your full potential . . .

Just like Matthew, the Lord also sees the potential in *you*—who you are now and what you will become! He is reaching out to you today. In responding to His grace and mercy, you are putting yourself into His hands to accomplish His purpose for your life.

A prayer for being filled with His newness . . .

Have you made room in your life for all God desires to give you? Tell Him you want all you can get—to be filled up to overflow!

Write out this week's verse from memory:

Notes