

Teaching Plan EXPLORE THE BIBLE

Date: March 10, 2019
Lesson Title: "Forgives"
Lesson Passage: Mark 2:1-12

ABOUT THIS LESSON

This lesson is based on Mark's account of the healing of a paralyzed man. Four men, determined to bring a paralytic to the attention of Jesus, let him down through a hole in the roof of a crowded house. When Jesus assured the afflicted man that his sins were forgiven, certain scribes sitting there are horrified at this, and they accuse Jesus of blasphemy. Then Jesus healed the man, thus demonstrating his authority over sin and sickness.

TEACHING/LEARNING GOALS

(1) Describe the unusual tactics of the four men who brought the paralyzed man to Jesus. (2) Explain why the scribes accused Jesus of blasphemy when he assured the paralytic that his sins were forgiven.

BEGINNING THE LESSON

Opening remarks: Resistance to change is a common human trait. We tend to find comfort in familiar things. Surrounded by the social chaos and breakneck pace of life today, some people think longingly of "the way things used to be." This tendency permeates religion, too. Church leaders sometimes talk about "getting back to basics," when, in fact, the "basics" of yesterday might be no longer operable today. Link this to the lesson passage: This lesson has to do with one of the major reasons Jesus got into trouble with the religious establishment of his day. His teachings seemed radical and dangerous to those who wanted to preserve the *status quo*. Rather than acknowledge his messianic authority, even in the face of indisputable evidence, they saw him as a threat to their cherished traditions.

TEACHING PROCEDURES

1. Describe the context in which this healing of the paralytic man took place: (1) At this point in his ministry, Jesus was attracting a lot of attention. The miracles he was performing were eliciting exclamations like, "What is this? A new teaching!" (Mk. 1:27). His fame had spread throughout Galilee (Mk. 1:28). (This accounts for the crowd mentioned in Mk. 2:2.) (2) But his teaching and miracle-working produced quite a different kind of reaction among the skeptical scribes and Pharisees, who did not welcome a "new teaching." Their lives were devoted to the preservation of the *status quo*, and they were hostile toward anyone who dared "color outside the lines."

(To illustrate their intensifying opposition to Jesus, let class members read Mk. 2:6-7, 16, 24.) (3) The RSV translates Mk. 2:1b, "it was reported that he was at home" (the NIV has says, "he had come home"). Since Jesus did not own a house (Luke 9:58), he probably was making Simon's house his headquarters in Capernaum (Mk. 1:29).

2. Examine the story of the healing of the paralytic (Mk. 2:1-12):

(1) Many of us have known this story since childhood, when our imaginations were captured by the unusual strategy adopted by the four men who brought the paralytic to Jesus (2:3-5). (2) The roof (v. 4) probably was formed by beams and rafters covered by matting, branches and twigs, overlaid with dirt trodden hard. Given this type of roof, it would have been no great chore to dig a hole and cover it again. (3) One of the remarkable things about this story is the patient response of Jesus to such a rude interruption. He had just returned to Capernaum, and undoubtedly would have welcomed some “down time” for a relaxed visit with his friends, after being surrounded by people day after day. (Refer to the mob scene in Mk. 1:32-33, and to the intrusion of the disciples even when he was trying to pray in private, in Mk. 1:35-37.) But here was a crowd again, pushing in at the door (Mk. 2:2) And, worse still, here were men damaging the roof in order to get “to the front of the line.” But Jesus was not perturbed by any of this; he only saw their faith (refer to v. 5). (4) “Their faith” (v. 5) seems to refer to the faith of the four men who, presumably, were friends of the paralytic; but it most likely includes the faith of the paralyzed man himself.

3. *Examine the skeptical reaction of the scribes and Jesus’ response to it (Mk. 2:6-12):* (1) Even as they were witnessing a work of loving mercy, the scribes could only scowl in disbelief (v. 6). They could see nothing but an inexcusable departure from their tradition. (2) In Old Testament thought, forgiveness is a prerogative of God (Isaiah 43:25). It seemed to the scribes, therefore, that Jesus was usurping a right that belonged only to God (Mk. 2:7). And this, they thought, was blasphemy, the penalty for which was death by stoning (Jn. 10:33). (3) *Note that the scribes didn’t say this aloud;* but Jesus, with his keen insight into the thoughts and feelings of the persons around him, perceived what they were thinking (2:6-8). He “knew what was in man” (Jn. 2:25). (4) The word “power” in v. 10 (KJV) is the Greek term *exousia*, which means, more precisely, “authority.” “Power” (Greek, *dunamis*) is the ability to do something; “authority” is the right to do it.

CLOSING THE LESSON

A closing thought: There are places in the world today where the difficulty of coming to Jesus is greater than that faced by the paralytic and his friends. Yet, in our land, where no such hindrance exists, many refuse to come to Him.

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