

## Session 2



# The Greatest Need

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## THE POINT

*Only Jesus can take care of our need for forgiveness.*

## THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

DIY, do it yourself. It saves you money, gives you a sense of pride and accomplishment, and is also a great learning opportunity. Sometimes it's a great idea and the best way to accomplish a task or complete a project.

There are other times when DIY just won't work. Certain jobs need a specific professional, and DIY won't cut it. If you have a tooth problem, you go to a dentist, not a cardiologist, even if he is a world-renowned heart doctor. And if you have a cardiac issue, you don't call a mechanic.

Some friends in the passage we'll be studying had an issue that was not a DIY project. They wanted healing for a paralyzed friend. As much as they helped him, carried him, and maybe even tried to coach him to walk, it wasn't happening. In fact, what afflicted their friend was greater than what they could see. Their friend needed a special, one-of-a-kind professional.

His name was Jesus. Only Jesus had the cure for what ailed their friend, but seeing Jesus wouldn't be as easy as they thought.

### QUESTION 1:

***What are some situations when DIY simply will not cut it?***

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## WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

### LUKE 5:17-19

<sup>17</sup> On one of those days while he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea, and also from Jerusalem. And the Lord's power to heal was in him. <sup>18</sup> Just then some men came, carrying on a stretcher a man who was paralyzed. They tried to bring him in and set him down before him. <sup>19</sup> Since they could not find a way to bring him in because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on the stretcher through the roof tiles into the middle of the crowd before Jesus.

Jesus had gone viral; His reputation was growing. After returning from His wilderness temptation and before selecting His disciples, Jesus started teaching and healing throughout Galilee. This mini tour attracted crowds, including the religious elite, sick, and social outcasts, all eager to hear and witness His supernatural ability.

Luke opened his historical account with: "On one of those days" (v. 17). He chose those words to highlight that it was just an ordinary day, not the Sabbath, with special rules that must be kept. Religious dignitaries were in the house, and Luke noted that the Pharisees and teachers of the law were present. His choice of words is interesting. The dignitaries weren't there to learn from Jesus, and they weren't sick. They were sitting there, having come from near and far. The trek from Jerusalem was approximately 121 miles, which is at least a three-day journey, but probably closer to five days.

Why were these religious authorities present? Experts in Mosaic law should have known

how important it was for someone to come to God. They should have been ushering people into His presence, but instead, they were just sitting there, taking spaces from people who desperately wanted to hear Jesus speak. "Just then some men came" (v. 18). They weren't men of position, power, or renown. But they had a friend they desperately wanted to bring to Jesus.

Notice the contrast between the two groups of men. The religious leaders just sat there. The other men brought a friend in need to Jesus. The religious leaders invested and sacrificed nothing, but the other men invested their personal time and energy for someone else. When they encountered obstacles, they didn't give up. Unable to get their friend in front of Jesus because of the crowd, they took him to the roof and lowered him down right in front of Jesus.

Homes in ancient Israel were built with stairways leading to the roof. The rooftops provided a place to sit and enjoy the daily breeze and the cool of the evening. These roofs consisted

of wooden beams covered with branches and clay. The branches or reeds, supported by the beams, held thick layers of plaster made from mud. The men dug through the plaster, mud, straw, and even wood beams to create an opening in which they could lower their friend to Jesus.

Consider the risk versus reward. These men took great risks in getting their friend before Jesus. They risked their:

- **Reputation.** What would people say or think? What if Jesus wouldn't heal their friend?
- **Finances.** Who would pay for the damage done to the home to get their friend to Jesus?
- **Freedom.** What if the homeowner decided to press charges for the damage done to his home?

Why did they do it? Possibly because of what they had seen and heard in Jesus's Galilean

tour, they genuinely believed Jesus could heal their friend. If they could just get him before Jesus, Jesus could cure him. While the Pharisees and teachers of the law sat by, not even offering their seat to those more in need, the men overcame every obstacle and got their friend to Jesus. It's so much easier to sit and watch than to go and bring, isn't it?

C. H. Spurgeon wrote this about the men: "They need be strong, for the burden is heavy; they need be resolute, for the work will try their faith; they need be prayerful, for otherwise they labor in vain; they must be believing, or they will be utterly useless."<sup>1</sup> May we be such friends ourselves.

#### QUESTION 2:

*In what ways have you seen Jesus meet physical needs?*

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## LUKE 5:20-21

<sup>20</sup> Seeing their faith he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." <sup>21</sup> Then the scribes and the Pharisees began to think to themselves, "Who is this man who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

As noted earlier, the men couldn't cure their friend, only carry him. Only Jesus could cure what ailed him. They broke through the roof and lowered him before Jesus. Mission accomplished; their helpless friend lay there, right before Jesus. What would happen now?

"Seeing their faith" (v. 20) causes us to reflect on the friends' faith, which was determined

to overcome obstacles and take personal risks. Their actions demonstrated their belief that Jesus could surely cure their friend. Yet, we can't overlook the faith of the paralyzed man. He trusted that the stories about Jesus were true, and displayed tremendous faith by allowing his friends to do all they could to get him before Jesus. He had enough faith in their ability—and willingness—to walk him to the roof

and lower him down through the hole at the risk of being dropped. It was a cornucopia of faith that Jesus saw.

We often hear the challenge to be like these friends. Before we can demonstrate the faith of the friends, we must first recognize that we are, or at one time were, the paralyzed man in deep need of Jesus's touch. The friends may have already witnessed the miracles of Jesus's Galilean tour. They probably were banking on the fact that if they could get their friend before Jesus, He would do what only He could do—heal their friend. They knew that he needed healing, but what they didn't know was that Jesus gives us more than what we want. He gives us what we need.

Jesus's response to their faith was: "Friend" (v. 20). Calling the paralyzed man His friend would have likely shocked both him and his friends. The man must have been overwhelmed with gratitude. The religious leaders were shocked for the opposite reason. In their view, a teacher should not lower himself to be part of the common people's world.

What Jesus said after calling the paralyzed man a friend pushed the Pharisees over the edge and probably confused the friends peering down from the roof: "Your sins are forgiven" (v. 20). I'm sure everyone in the place could not believe what they heard.

Of course, God alone can forgive sin. The religious leaders realized Jesus was making an identity statement. Since all sin is committed against God (Ps. 51:4) and only God can forgive sin (Isa. 43:25), Jesus was identifying Himself as divine.

Were they wrong in their outrage by declaring Jesus's statement blasphemous? No, they weren't—if it were anyone other than Jesus. Their error wasn't in their belief about blasphemy; it was in their rejection of Jesus, God in the flesh.

### **QUESTION 3:**

***What are some misconceptions our culture has about forgiveness?***

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## **LUKE 5:22-26**

<sup>22</sup> But perceiving their thoughts, Jesus replied to them, "Why are you thinking this in your hearts? <sup>23</sup> Which is easier: to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up and walk'? <sup>24</sup> But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he told the paralyzed man, "I tell you: Get up, take your stretcher, and go home." <sup>25</sup> Immediately he got up before them, picked up what he had been lying on, and went home glorifying God. <sup>26</sup> Then everyone was astounded, and they were giving glory to God. And they were filled with awe and said, "We have seen incredible things today."

## Engage

### HEALED AND FORGIVEN

Use the acrostic below to express your gratitude to God for the healing and forgiveness you have received. [See the example.]  
Then, write a prayer combining your thoughts and pray it to the Lord.

**H** - *He took the pain of relational trauma  
I've experienced away.*

**E** -

**A** -

**L** -

**E** -

**D** -

**My Prayer:**

**QUESTION 4:**

***How have you seen Jesus bring healing to your life?***

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Jesus could certainly read a room. From the visual cues given by the religious leaders, He could see they were not happy. His words to the paralytic man brought out their wrath and ire. Jesus surely knew that what He said would set them off. The dreaded and beautiful words: “Your sins are forgiven” (v. 23). In their eyes, this was blasphemy—claiming to do what only God could do.

Instead of just bluntly setting the record straight about His identity, Jesus, as He often did, posed a thought-provoking question: “Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’?” (v. 23). The question created a conundrum for everyone in the room.

From the vantage point of visual confirmation, it was much easier for Jesus to say, “Your sins are forgiven” (Luke 5:23). No one could visually confirm that the paralytic man’s sins were forgiven, so, in that sense alone, it was easier. Jesus saying, “Get up and walk” (v. 23) carried the risk that the paralytic man might not get up and walk away, which would have brought ridicule from all the people gathered at the home.

As always, Jesus was light years ahead of everyone else. He wanted to send the message of who He is and what He has the authority to do. Knowing the Pharisees’ correct belief that only God could forgive sin, Jesus chose to announce His true identity through His

proclamation: “The Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins” (v. 24). By referring to Himself in the third person as the Son of Man, Jesus put Himself on the same plane as God. Daniel had used this title to describe the coming messiah (Dan. 7:13-14), and it became one of Jesus’s most frequently used titles for Himself.

Jesus’s plan of action was divinely brilliant. This is what His plan accomplished:

- He positioned Himself as divine by declaring the paralytic man’s sins forgiven.
- He called Himself the Son of Man, with all the implications mentioned above.
- He verified His divine power by healing the man lying on the stretcher.

In a dramatic final act, Jesus said to the paralytic man, “Get up, take your stretcher, and go home” (v. 24). Jesus’s entire plan hung in the balance as all eyes in the crowd were focused on the man lying on the stretcher. The man obeyed Jesus—he got up, picked up his stretcher, and walked out in full view of everyone.

Jesus made His point. Luke wrote, “Everyone was astounded, and they were giving glory to God” (v. 26). As the people departed, their conversations revolved around the incredible things they had seen that day. Everyone agreed that what they witnessed was remarkable, and many lives were changed as a result.

**QUESTION 5:**

***How does Jesus meet our greatest need?***

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## LIVE IT OUT

Only Jesus can take care of our need for forgiveness. Choose one of the following applications:

- **Identify with the paralytic man.** How do you relate to the paralytic man? What fears or sins paralyze you? Ask God to reveal these things to you. Then turn them over to Him and walk forward in faith.
- **Identify with the religious leaders.** In what ways are you like the religious leaders? How have your actions and attitudes prevented others from seeing who Jesus is? Ask God to reveal these things to you. Then turn them over to Him and walk forward in faith.
- **Identify with the friends.** In what ways do you resemble the friends? Identify someone in your community who needs help with a physical need and provide for them in Jesus's name.



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1. C. H. Spurgeon, *Carried by Four* (Luke 5:16-26), StudyLight.org, accessed January 2, 2025, <https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/spe/luke-5.html#:~:text=They%20need%20be%20strong%2C%20for,faith%20it%20is%20impossible%20to.>