



## Life Guide

applying God's Word to life

### Jesus Reveals and Heals Your Greatest Need! 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Epiphany

*Mark 2:1-12*

<sup>1</sup> A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. <sup>2</sup> They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. <sup>3</sup> Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. <sup>4</sup> Since 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. <sup>5</sup> When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven." <sup>6</sup> Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, <sup>7</sup> "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" <sup>8</sup> Immediately 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?"

<sup>9</sup> Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'? <sup>10</sup> But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man, <sup>11</sup> "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." <sup>12</sup> He 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!"

1. The paralytic in the story likely thought that his paralysis was his greatest need to get fixed. There's always urgent problems that pull our attention in different directions. What wants/needs have you been tempted lately to identify as your greatest need?

The end to COVID-19 is probably the biggest thing on everyone's list right now. National peace or societal change is another big one. For a while, people thought their biggest need was for their candidate to get elected. Whenever a trying illness comes up, that seems to take over our priorities list.

2. What does each passing challenge or problem reveal about what our greatest need really is?

Since all of those things come and go to some extent, or will end when our time on this earth ends, they can't be our greatest need. Life goes on beyond and the grave, and so our greatest need must be something that affects our eternal life. No matter how pressing, urgent, or painful something is, we can't let it crowd out our most important need.

3. See Mark 1:44,45 Why didn't Jesus want the people he healed to go and tell everyone about it?

In the stories leading up to him healing the paralytic, Jesus told the leper he healed not to tell anyone. He also silenced the demons. In Mark 1:38, Jesus says, "Let us go somewhere else so I can preach!" The healings were an important testimony to verify his word, but he still wanted to be able to preach without being constantly mobbed to heal everyone.

4. Agree or Disagree: "The church doesn't do enough to help the poor or community charities."

This complaint is often made, and there probably are times when it is true enough. Sometimes our congregations can become inward focused and maintenance oriented.

However, many believe this is the true mission of the church, to be a humanitarian organization for the good of earthly society. That is where we have to realize that the church's mission is to proclaim the gospel, just as Jesus' primary concern was to preach. Humanitarian efforts may accompany our ministry as a way to carry out our charge to preach the gospel, but they cannot become the primary concern.

5. These 4 creative friends figure out a way to get their friend to Jesus. Their way involved digging a hole through the roof. Think of one real way that you are going to get your real friend who really needs Jesus to Jesus (or get Jesus to him/her).

My cousin lives on the other side of the globe. She sent me a Christmas card that revealed great stress about all that's going on in the world. I sat down to write a letter back trying to connect her concerns to the Bible and God's plans to restore his fallen creation. Now, I need to follow up with her by Facebook Messenger, since that is such an easy connection across the world.

6. Standing over the paralytic man, Jesus reveals and heals his greatest need. What is it and what wasn't it? What does that reveal about your greatest need?

Jesus puts first things first, and the first thing he addresses isn't the man's obvious paralysis, it's his sin. Our greatest need is for a Savior who gives us the forgiveness of sins to heal us from the sinful condition that makes us worthy of death.

7. What did the teachers of the law mean when they said Jesus was blaspheming? What is ironic about their accusation?

Sometimes the word blasphemy is used in different ways. Blasphemy can refer to when someone is heaping abuse and slander upon God by their words (1 Timothy 1:20). Sometimes blasphemy can refer to a belligerent level of unbelief that a person has reached when they trample on the Son of God and wholly and finally reject the work of the Holy Spirit. (Mark 3:28,29.)

Here, the specific meaning of "blaspheming" seems to be falsely claiming to be God and seizing his privileges for oneself. The ironic thing is that Jesus simply is God, so they are accusing God of claiming to be God, instead of opening their eyes and realizing what he is doing.

8. Go ahead! Answer Jesus' question. Which is easier, "To say to this paralyzed man, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?"

Both of these tasks are something that can only be completed by God or through his power and authority. It's visibly easier to verify whether someone has been healed than if he/she has been forgiven. So anybody could really say, "Your sins are forgiven" and no one would be able to prove them wrong.

"Forgiving sins" is certainly the harder task of the two since it cost God his life in order to accomplish it. He created the world and everything in simply by speaking, but to redeem the world, he poured the blood of his Son.

9. The title "Son of Man" appears 81 times in the four gospels. This was Jesus' favorite way of referring to himself. How did this title allow him to fly under the radar of the Jewish teachers of the law?

This title appears in Psalm 8:4 where it is Messianic. But it also appears throughout the book of Ezekiel (2:1), where it just seems to address a prophet. This was Jesus' cryptic way of referring to himself to avoid the condemnation of the Jewish teachers until the appointed time. Jesus knows the time line for his death, and speaks in a way so that he doesn't bring their fury upon him too early. It was also a way to steer clear of the people's concept of earthly messiah, who was a political leader of an earthly kingdom.