

## The King Forgives

**Text:** Mark 2:1-12

**Big Idea:** Jesus shows he has God's power by fixing the man's biggest problem – his sin.

**Aim:** To teach that we all have the same big problem (sin), that only Jesus can fix.

### The Story So Far

#### **Lesson 1:**

- John the Baptist announces that the Lord (Jesus), is coming.
- He tells the people that Jesus is greater than he is because Jesus will baptise with the Holy Spirit, not just water.
- He tells the people to prepare their hearts for the Lord by turning to God. They show this by being baptised.

#### **Lesson 2:**

- Jesus allows John to baptise him to show that he identifies with those he came to rescue.
- The Holy Spirit resting on Jesus in the form of a dove confirms that he will baptise with the Spirit.
- God's voice from heaven confirms that Jesus is the Son of God.
- Jesus overcomes the devil's temptation in the desert to prove that he has come to "crush the serpent's head".

#### **Lesson 3:**

- Jesus tells the people that God's kingdom is near.
- To get into the kingdom, people need to repent and believe – this is modelled by the fishermen who immediately leave their old lives to follow Jesus.

#### **Lesson 4:**

- Jesus' popularity as a healer increases massively.
- Jesus prays and then makes the decision to not heal some people in favour of telling others the good news.



**Read Mark 2:1-12 noticing the authority Jesus claims for himself and the response of the religious leaders.**

**Mark 1:40-45 forms a bridge between the previous lesson and this one. It's worth reading as well.**

**Use the following notes to help you think about the passage in more detail.**

In the previous lesson, Jesus chose to preach the good news to people rather than heal them physically. Immediately after this Jesus heals a man with leprosy (1:40-45). This seems to be a contradiction, but consider the reason why he heals this man: he does it out of compassion (1:41), but also as a testimony to the priests (1:44) – a form of preaching.

Jesus tells the man not to tell others, but he ignores Jesus and speaks freely. This emphasis on physical healing results in Jesus not being able to enter towns to preach the good news because the crowds wanted healing.

2:2 — When Jesus again enters a town, the crowds gather, but Jesus sticks to his plan to preach "the word" to them. This word is about the 'nearness' of the kingdom of God and how to get into it (1:15).

2:3-4 — Note the eye-witness detail that draws the reader into the action.

2:5 — Jesus sees just how desperate the friends of this paralysed man are to get their friend healed – he sees "their faith".

And the first thing he says to this man who has come for physical healing is, "Son, your sins are forgiven." Surely these are some of the most unexpected words ever to have been spoken!

Jesus is not linking the man's particular sins to his illness. Instead, Jesus is dealing with the man's greatest problem first – his sin. His sin is a spiritual disease that will prevent him from entering the eternal kingdom of God, but his paralysis lasts only until the grave.

2:7 — The teachers of the law were correct; only God can forgive sin because all sin is ultimately against God. When we sin against our neighbour then we break God's law to love our neighbour first. The teachers understood that when Jesus forgave the man's sin, he was claiming to have the authority to do what only God can do. He was claiming equality with God. If Jesus was merely a man this would be blasphemy. But they failed to consider that if Jesus is 'God in the flesh' then his words are not blasphemy, but the truth.

2:9 — Jesus' question assumes that he can do both. Forgiving sins and healing are marks of the Messiah. Jeremiah prophesied that "The time is coming when I will make a new covenant...I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more." (Jeremiah 31:31-34). Isaiah wrote that "your God will come...then will the lame leap like deer," (Isaiah 35:4-6). It is easier to say, "Your sins are forgiven" because there is no way of proving if it's been done, but it is harder to actually do because only God can forgive sin.

2:10 — Jesus claims to prove his authority to forgive by doing the thing that requires physical proof – commanding physical healing.

He describes himself as "the Son of Man". This term is used in Daniel 7:13-14 to describe the man to whom God will give all authority and an everlasting kingdom. Jesus is claiming to be this king!

2:12 — The shock is that Jesus is not just a preacher, or a healer, but that he has God's own authority. In this encounter everyone sees that and is amazed.

## Reflect

- If you were to write a list of the five biggest problems in our world today, what would they be? Where does sin feature and how does it relate to the others?
- How many of those problems are you able to resolve or at least contribute towards resolving? How will you choose which to give yourself to?
- Give thanks to God that Jesus came to deal with our greatest problem and that forgiveness is possible.



## Review

Review the previous lesson using the following questions:

- How many people came to Jesus? [*The whole town* (Mark 1:33)]
- What were they coming to Jesus for? [*To be healed* (Mark 1:32)]
- What did Jesus choose to do instead? [*Tell everyone the good news* (Mark 1:38)]



## Introductory Idea - Option 1

**What's the problem?** Either using pictures, charades or drama, get the children to work out the cause of the big problem in a variety of situations, e.g. a flooded house (too much water); a drought (not enough water); a broken leg (broken bones); broken down car (flat tyre), etc.

In each case, ask what the cause of the problem is and how it can be fixed. Today's true story from the Bible is about a man who had two very big problems that Jesus fixed for him. [Use the Bridge Questions below to make a link with the lesson.]



## Introductory Idea - Option 2

**Make me better.** Dress up a child as a doctor and draft a list of illnesses. Write these on pieces of paper and place them in a hat. Get each child to take an illness out of the hat. The doctor has to tell the child how the illness should be treated. Examples might include a broken leg, flu, chicken pox, mosquito bite, cut knee, verruca, lice. Perhaps finish with paralysis.

Today's true story from the Bible is about a man who had a very big problem, but Jesus gave him a cure for another, much more serious problem. [Use the Bridge Questions below to make a link with the lesson.]

**Older children** could play a more advanced version of this. One child is the 'patient' and could be secretly told what their illness/disease/problem is. The patient then has to visit the 'doctor' and act out their symptoms, explaining where the problem is and what it feels like – but they may not tell the doctor what the problem is. The doctor then has to guess the problem and tell them what they can do to help (medicine/rest/ a cast on a broken bone, etc).



### Introductory Idea - Option 3

**Who is in charge?** Prepare six pairs of picture cards to match up, one of each pair having authority over the other e.g. teacher and pupil; general and soldier; ship's captain and sailor; king and subjects; football referee and player; plane's captain and steward/stewardess.

Number the cards randomly on the back and pin them onto a board facedown. The children take it in turns to pick two cards by number. These are turned over and, if they make a pair, are left faceup. If they do not match, replace these cards facedown. Each time a pair is made, ask the children who is in charge of whom? This activity can also be done by forming two teams with each team taking turns to choose the numbers.

Discuss what it means to have authority over someone. Today's true story from the Bible is about something Jesus did for a man to show that he had authority on earth. [Use the Bridge Questions below to make a link with the lesson.]

### Bridge Questions

- Why was the man brought to Jesus? [*He was paralysed* (Mark 2:3)]
- What did Jesus say to him? [*Your sins are forgiven* (Mark 2:5)]
- What else did Jesus do for him? [*Healed him* (Mark 2:12)]



## Teaching Plan

This story contains a great deal of drama, both in action and in conversation. There is excitement, tension, anger, joy, love, friendship, a broken roof and two miracles! There are many ways to tell this story – choose one that will help your children to grasp the drama and tension.

Talk about how awful it would be to be paralysed. If the children don't understand this Jesus' words in 2:5 lose their shock. You need to create a sense of expectation that Jesus is able to heal the man of his terrible condition. The shock comes when you tell the children that Jesus fixed the man's sin problem first! Wasn't Jesus supposed to fix his legs? Help the children to see how serious the problem of sin is – not having their sin forgiven would be worse than being paralysed.

**For younger children** – tell the story using a model house and some card tube or yogurt pot people. Directions for making these are in the Visual Aid document in the Media section of this webpage.

Use a plastic margarine tub lid with a small piece of fabric for a mat and four lengths of string tied to the corners of the lid.

Lie the man on the mat on the lid and lower him through the roof as you tell the story. Roll up the mat once Jesus has healed him and let him walk out the door with it.

Help the children get into the drama of the story and understand the desperation of the paralysed man's friends to have him healed. What must it have been like to carry their friend around with them all the time? Wouldn't it be wonderful if their friend could walk? What would they have thought when Jesus said, "Your sins are forgiven", instead of first healing him?

**For older children** – active boys would love the opportunity to lower a child down from a height. Use a duvet or a large sheet and take all necessary precautions to ensure that no-one gets hurt, but have some fun with this one!

How can you build up the tension and therefore, the surprise of Jesus' words in 2:5?

The story can be effectively told from the paralysed man's point of view:

- Why was he taken to see Jesus? How much did it matter to him?
- If he had not been paralysed he might never have met Jesus.
- If he had not been brought to Jesus for his paralysis, he might never have had his sins forgiven.
- As he enjoys heaven now, thinking about that day, which miracle is he most grateful for?



## Game Idea - Option 1

**A sin game!** There are a number of options:

- Build a wall out of boxes or building blocks, with individual sinful acts written on them like lying, stealing, being rude, not being thankful, etc. Have one super large box/brick with "ignoring God" written on it and use this as the foundation to show this as the primary sin and the cause of all others. Explain that sin is like a wall we build that stands between us and God. It is impossible for us to break the wall down – only Jesus can knock the wall down for us. The game can be made more physical by having a relay race or hide-and-seek for the bricks/blocks.
- Build an obstacle course and divide the group into two teams. Have various obstacles for the children to climb under and over. Include a large gap made with two lengths of rope. The gap must be big enough to ensure that no child will be able to jump across. Explain that if any team member touches the floor between the lengths of rope then their entire team is disqualified. After the first round, explain that this gap is like sin – an unbridgeable gap that we have made between us and God. Nothing we can do can ever cross that gap. You could then give them a plank or some other equipment to cross the divide. You could simply label this new piece of equipment 'Jesus'. Remind the children that in today's story only Jesus could fix the man's biggest problem.



#### Game Idea - Option 2

**Memory Verse game.** As with the previous lessons, the memory verse is helpful in understanding today's lesson. Jesus calls us all to "repent and believe the good news". The good news is that our sins can be forgiven and we can be brought into God's kingdom forever. You could do one of the following to help the children learn the verse:

- Cut out an outline of a large pair of legs. Write the memory verse on them and cut them up to make a simple puzzle for the children to put together. Remind the children that sin is a bigger problem than legs that don't work.
- Write the memory verse on some boxes and create a memory verse wall similar to the 'sin wall' in Game Option 1. Remove the boxes one at a time while the children recite the verse over and over until all the boxes are removed.
- Put a child on a duvet cover (with a duvet inside), and bounce them up and down while they recite the memory verse. Ensure they are not dropped on the floor! The duvet will cushion the bouncing from a low height. The man was lowered on something similar to a duvet cover!



#### Discuss and Apply

Having thought through the reflection questions in your own study, think carefully about how to apply this lesson to the children you teach. There are two key parts to the Big Idea that we are aiming to explain to the children from this miracle:

1. **Every person's biggest problem is sin.** In this story, the man's sin was a greater problem than his paralysis.
2. **Only Jesus can fix that problem.** In this story, the man left Jesus with his sins forgiven – something only God can do.

**For younger children** – it may be enough just to state and simply explain these truths from the story, as you tell it. It is good to affirm in younger children their faith in Jesus. We want to assure them that their love for Jesus is a sign that he has forgiven them – their greatest problem has been fixed.

Sin is an abstract concept and younger children will need it explained in concrete ways by giving them examples of what sin is. One of the Game Ideas should help, but it will still need a few sentences of explanation. Young children also do not readily admit the fact that they sin. Remind them that sin is a problem for everyone. We all need forgiveness.

Can the children remember the key elements of the story? Go around in a circle and get them to say one element at a time. You could also ask the children to replay the story using your props.

**For older children** – start by recalling the events of the story, asking particular questions to focus their attention on the shock that Jesus saw the man's greatest need as his sin.

You could emphasise the difference between the two miracles by 'interviewing' the paralysed man before these events and then again 100 years later in heaven. On each occasion, what might he say to the following questions?

- What problem do you have?
- What will/did Jesus do for you?
- Why is/was that so good?
- What are you looking forward to?
- What is the best thing about Jesus?
- What do you think of Jesus?

Finish by reflecting with the children on why this miracle matters to them. Try to focus on them, rather than their friends and evangelism.

What questions could you ask to help them think about the difference these truths make to the way they live, talk, enjoy, worry and pray? If you find it hard to think of good questions, it is always helpful to start by wondering what difference these truths make to you in these areas.



### Prayer Idea

It would be good for the children to spend some time thinking about the past week and

sins they may be guilty of. **For younger children**, this might be expressed as the things they said or did that got them into trouble.

Remind the children that our sin is our biggest problem because God punishes sin. Assure the children that Jesus is able to forgive our sin because he is the son of God who died to take our punishment.

- What would they like to say to Jesus in response?
- Do they see their need to ask forgiveness?
- Are they grateful for what Jesus has done?

Encourage them to say something to God that reflects how they feel. They may choose to do this quietly. Close off the prayer time by giving thanks that Jesus is able to take away our biggest problem.



### Activity A

**For younger children** choose either this activity or Activity B.

From the Media section of this webpage print Activity A onto paper or card for each child.

**Before the lesson** fold along all the dashed lines and then cut the four solid lines.

**The children** colour the picture. Help them to assemble the house by applying glue as marked. Fold the crowds inwards first and then the top and bottom sections one after the other. This will produce a box which is placed on its side. The children can peer from side to side to see the crowds and upwards to see the man's friends.



### Activity B

**For younger children** choose either this activity or Activity A.

From the Media section of this webpage print Activity B onto paper for each child.

**Before the lesson** cut the page in half as marked. Use a craft blade to cut along the three dotted lines on the paralysed man's chest. This will be folded up once the picture is complete. Paste the top half of the page behind the bottom half, ensuring that the word, 'sin' is visible through the opening in the man's chest.

**The children** colour in the picture. They lift the flap to see the man's biggest problem that only Jesus could fix.





## Worksheets

**For older children** choose either Worksheet C or Worksheet D from the Media section of this webpage. Print whichever is appropriate onto paper for each child and use it to reinforce the lesson or as a discussion starter.



## Memory Verse

Use one of the memory verse ideas in the Series Introduction to help the children memorise the following verse:

**Mark 1:15** – *"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"* [NIV]

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