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# Knowing Jesus

## **The Power of Christ**

**Luke 5:17-26**

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**2/3/2019**

**Main Idea: Jesus' power can meet people's spiritual and physical needs.**

**Lesson Objective: Believe in the Power of Jesus Christ.**

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## Introduction

*As your class time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.*

Richard Selzer, MD, writes in his book *Mortal Lessons*,

“I stand by the bed where a young woman lies, her face postoperative, her mouth twisted in palsy, clownish. A tiny twig of the facial nerve, the one to the muscles of her mouth, has been severed. She will be like this from now on. The surgeon had followed with religious fervor the curve of her flesh; I promise you that. Nevertheless, to remove the tumor in her cheek, I had to cut the little nerve.

Her young husband is in the room. He stands on the opposite side of the bed, and together they seem to dwell in the evening lamplight, isolated from me, private. Who are they, I ask myself, he and this wry mouth I have made, who gaze at and touch each other so generously, greedily? The young woman speaks. ‘Will my mouth always be like this?’ she asks.

‘Yes,’ I say, ‘it will. It is because the nerve was cut.’ She nods and is silent. But the young man smiles. ‘I like it,’ he says, ‘It is kind of cute.’

All at once I know who he is. I understand, and I lower my gaze. Unmindful, he bends to kiss her crooked mouth and I am so close I can see how he twists his own lips to accommodate hers, to show her that their kiss still works.”

Every day, we encounter people who are feeling helpless, people with needs to be met. In the miracle from Luke 5 that we examine this week, we read about a group of friends who took their friend to meet Jesus, believing His power could help their friend in need.

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## Removes Barriers

### Luke 5:17-19

*<sup>17</sup> On one of those days, as he was teaching, Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there, who had come from every village of Galilee and Judea and from Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with him to heal.*

*<sup>18</sup> And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, <sup>19</sup> but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#).*

Picture the anticipation that everyone must have felt as Jesus was in town. They had heard the good news of His healing power and were now hearing from Him personally about the good news of the Kingdom of God. There is no doubt that many people were excited about Jesus' presence and desired to see Him do some of the amazing miracles that they had heard about. Even the Pharisees (see commentary at the end of this section for a better understanding of the Pharisees) and teachers of the law had come from every tiny village of Galilee and Judea, perhaps even as far as Jerusalem! There is no doubt that they were there to investigate all of the claims that were being made about Jesus. Everyone wanted to get close, which caused the crowded house to overflow. People were even standing near the windows and doors several rows deep just to hear words from this great teacher.

The Scripture adds to this environment by letting us know that the people could sense the power of the Lord was upon Jesus, so they were bringing Him everyone they knew who needed a healing touch from the Savior. The people who were fortunate to sit close to Him were the religious leaders, but it doesn't

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seem that they were filled with compassion for the sick because they were not utilizing Jesus' ability like the crowd. Within our passage we see there's another story running within this story. It is of a man who needed to be healed, so his friends brought him to meet Jesus. However, there was no way they could jump ahead in the line to meet Him or ask others to move aside in order to get closer to Jesus. So they went up on the roof and began to tear a hole in the mud thatched barrier in order to gain access. Imagine everyone desperately listening and reaching out to Jesus when all of a sudden little drops of dirt and straw begin to fall. Soon larger clods of dirt and dust are falling as a blast of sunlight bursts through the dark room. As a side note, most traditions hold that this was Simon Peter's home. Regardless, the home owner must not have been too happy to see these intruders making themselves at home at his expense.

The paralytic's friends offer us a simple but profound insight about faith that we would do well to take seriously. They underscore for us the vital necessity of putting our faith to work in concrete ways. The intersection of our faith in the power of Christ and our concern for people must prompt us to do something tangible that helps them. We should express our faith by taking action that will bring people in our lives to Him. In that way, our faith can be expressed in real-time action. Most importantly is our intercession on behalf of people who cannot help themselves.

Here is a very good description of the Pharisees:

“For the most part the Pharisees play a negative role in the Gospels. They are portrayed as self-righteous, legalistic, hypocritical, power-hungry, money-lovers. While there were certainly many who fell into one or more of these categories, we should be careful about forcing all Pharisees into this mold.

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The essence of Pharisaism had to do with their perspective on the Law. Every Pharisee devoted himself to the keeping of the Law of Moses, no matter what the cost. And where the Law of Moses was not clear, they had the “oral law”, a memorized code which attempted to speak to every possible situation. For example, the Sabbath law was very vague, simply commanding that the Israelites not work. The question quickly arose regarding what constituted work, to which hundreds and hundreds of rules were given to deal with every imaginable situation. These oral traditions not only interpreted the Law, but they also built a “fence” around the Law. That is, the Pharisees created rules which would keep a person from even coming close to breaking the Law. A good example is the oral law forbidding giving more than 39 stripes (with the whip) as punishment, even though the Law of Moses allowed 40. This fence around the Law kept them from breaking Moses’ Law if they accidentally miscounted by one. In addition to the Law, the Pharisees were great students of the remainder of the Old Testament (unlike the Sadducees, who accepted only the Pentateuch). This was probably one of the reasons they accepted the spirit world and the doctrine of the resurrection, teachings more prominent in the latter writings of the Old Testament.

Of the three major Jewish sects, the Pharisees were the most influential. Even though they were a relatively small group, they were generally respected because they were most concerned with keeping the commands of God. Their desire for purity led them to accept for themselves the ritual purity laws designed for the priests. Another way they sought to remain pure was to separate themselves from anything unclean, including people who were likely to be unclean in any sense. Therefore, they refused to associate and especially

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eat with “sinners.” They, unlike the Sadducees, believed in the spirit world and therefore in angels and in the resurrection.

Interestingly, it is Luke who gives the most favorable impression of the Pharisees (although he normally speaks very negatively of them; see 7:30; 11:39–44; 12:1; 16:14). Only in Luke does Jesus eat with Pharisees (on three occasions in chapters 7, 11, and 14). Also it is Luke who narrates that some Pharisees warned Jesus to leave the area at one point because Herod wanted to kill him (13:31). Most importantly, Luke shows the reader some good Pharisees. In the book of Acts there are Pharisees who have become Christians in 15:5, and the apostle Paul apparently still claims to be a Pharisee in 23:6 and 26:5.”<sup>1</sup>

**What evidence do you see in this passage that the friends of the paralytic man were concerned for him?**

**What might Jesus have thought about the friends’ efforts to get the paralytic to Him?**

**What can we learn about faith from these men?**

**How do the obstacles confronting the friends compare and contrast with obstacles that hinder believers today from bringing others to Jesus?**

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<sup>1</sup> Mark C. Black, [Luke](#), College Press NIV Commentary (Joplin, MO: College Press Pub., 1995), Lk 5:17–26.

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## Removes Sins

### Luke 5:20-24

*20 And when he saw their faith, he said, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."  
21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone?" 22 When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, "Why do you question in your hearts? 23 Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? 24 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he said to the man who was paralyzed—"I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home." [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#)*

Here is an important point that we must consider. Notice that the text recorded that Jesus saw their faith. As noted above, a paralyzed man had been brought to Jesus by his friends. They had tried to take him through the sea of people to Jesus, but apparently they couldn't get the stretcher through the press of the crowd that surrounded Him. The paralytic and his companions portrayed more than just a deep friendship. They also demonstrated the depth of their faith in Jesus, which of course He noticed immediately. The stubborn resolve of the paralytic's friends provided vivid proof that they trusted Jesus to do something about their friend's disabled body. They believed without any doubt that He had the power to cure their friend's paralysis, and they put their faith to work by not allowing anything to discourage them from bringing him to Jesus. Likewise, the paralytic himself showed that he trusted Jesus just as much as his friends. Otherwise, he wouldn't have allowed them to take such extreme measures for his sake. Obviously, he was confident that Jesus could help him to get up from his stretcher and walk.

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The plural pronoun identifies the four friends that brought the paralytic. Jesus' attention to the faith of the men demonstrates the important fact that God responds to the intercession of others regarding a person in need. These men believed that if they could only get their friend before the Lord, He would have compassion and heal him. This belief pushed these men to go beyond what was normal into an extreme exercise of their faith. This does not teach us that our faith and prayers will "save" another person. However, our prayers can place our friends in the presence of the Lord where He would speak to them, and they could respond in faith.

Along with observing with satisfaction their faith in action, Jesus expressed His sincere interest in the paralyzed man. He called the nameless man in the stretcher His friend. In so doing, Jesus registered His compassion for the disabled man who had been laid before him. What He did next has to be interpreted in light of the faith registered by the paralytic and his friends. Jesus looked at His disabled friend and forgave him of his sins. Notice that Jesus didn't call attention to His sins in order to shame or condemn him. Instead, He addressed the man's sins in order to help him. In forgiving the paralytic's sins, Jesus already had in mind the healing of his body. This teaches us an important point that Jesus has the power to heal and forgive.

The phrase, "man, your sins are forgiven you" would be better translated as "friend, your sins are forgiven." The perfect verb tense in this sentence gives us the picture that of a completed action that has an ongoing implication. In other words, Jesus just saved him! How is that possible? The man didn't walk the aisle of the church, repeat a prayer, or stand before the church (not that those things are bad!), but simply based on what Jesus saw in the man's heart and faith, He ultimately healed the poor man for eternity. With Jesus' proclamation of

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salvation, everyone in the room heard the implication- Jesus was claiming to be equal to God. Who else can forgive sins? The Pharisees could do nothing else but grapple with the situation in which they had found themselves. Their questioning of blasphemy shows us the weight of Jesus' proclamation, and they were struggling to process it. Not only did they not believe He was God, but they also viewed His claims as blasphemies. Jesus was perceiving their thoughts because He knew what is in man (John 2:25).

Everyone within earshot of the situation was totally amazed. Could this be the proclamation the crowds were desiring to hear? The religious leaders, no doubt had come to judge the validity of Jesus' ministry, and His statement about forgiving sins shocked them and led them to be suspicious of Him. In their hearts they resented the way that Jesus claimed to be more than a self-appointed preacher or teacher. For them, Jesus' statement was much worse than just the brash pronouncement of a self-proclaimed teacher. They considered it to be sheer blasphemy, nothing less than arrogant profanity that defiled God's good name.

Jesus could see their theological concepts under attack, so He sought to help them seek the truth of His words. He asked them, "Which is easier, to make a claim (even if the religious leaders thought it was heretical) or change the physical reality of this man before them?" No one in the room (except Jesus) could see what was going on in this man's heart. How could they tell that he had been forgiven? So Jesus brought the physical reality, this man's paralysis, into focus. If Jesus had the authority to forgive sins, then healing would be the evidence of His forgiveness. Accordingly, Jesus' power to forgive sins would be proven if the disabled man lying on the stretcher before Him got up and walked away. Remember this man couldn't walk. This man had no hope of a future, but

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Jesus saw something different in him. Now Jesus is about to do something outside of the norm in religious practices. These experts are about to be thoroughly confused. These guys who were all about the letter of the law were about to meet the amazing grace of a Savior.

Indeed, the way Jesus healed the disabled man was quite unique. By His actions, Jesus connected the disabled man's need to be healed with his need to be forgiven. Up to this point, Jesus had healed people without bringing up forgiveness at all (Luke 4:38-40, 5:12-14). Obviously, He knew that the greatest problem in the paralytic's life had to do with his sins. Therefore, thoroughly healing him involved forgiving him. The religious leaders felt compelled to respond to Jesus' statement because of what they perceived their role to be in protecting Judaism from heresy. They considered themselves to be responsible for exposing blasphemy wherever they found it. Likewise, they took seriously the responsibility for holding the blasphemers accountable for their heinous statements.

**What part of the scribes' musings was correct? What part was wrong?**

**In this story, do you identify more with the paralytic, his friends, or the teachers? Why?**

**How might we, like the Pharisees, paralyze ourselves by determining what Jesus can and cannot do? What's the cure for that paralysis?**

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## Removes Doubt

### Luke 5: 25-26

*25 And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God. 26 And amazement seized them all, and they glorified God and were filled with awe, saying, "We have seen extraordinary things today." [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#)*

We are not sure of how long he had been this way, but we all know that when you are confined to a bed for a period of time, the muscles begin to lose strength and functionality. All of us have been through some type of physical therapy after a medical procedure in order to help strengthen the muscles and bring full motion back to our movements. Notice how Luke described the paralyzed man's reaction to being able to walk. In fact, Luke also told us about the reaction of the people in the crowd who witnessed the miracle. All of them praised God for what they saw! They registered complete awe and gave glory to God at the miracle. It provided an unquestionable demonstration of Jesus' power to heal and forgive. By giving glory to God, they rejoiced over the reality that He had been at work in the miracle that Jesus performed.

Jesus performed the visible miracle of healing the paralytic in order to demonstrate that He had power to do the invisible miracle of forgiving sins. The man got up immediately and went home glorifying God. Without his friends' help, the paralyzed man wouldn't have experienced Jesus' physical healing, but even more tragically, he would've missed out on Jesus' forgiveness of sins and eternity with Him. With the healing of the paralytic, two certainties emerge for us to embrace. First, we can be certain that Jesus alone can forgive sins. Only Christ has the power and authority to remove our sin from us. Second, we can

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be certain about our responsibility to help people in Jesus' name. We have been called to meet the needs of others. Jesus was never satisfied with just the "know" part of faith. He pushed His followers toward the "go" stage.

**Why is it such a struggle for us to look beyond ourselves to the hurting and helpless? How does a better understanding of Jesus' forgiveness in your life move you to action on behalf of the hurting and helpless?**

**The four carried their friend and placed him before Jesus. How can people today bring their spiritually needy friends to Jesus?**

**How can we as believers help hurting people see Jesus in their everyday lives?**