

Life Group Questions

Kingdom Power – a sermon series in Matthew 8-10

What do I do if I can't get up? / Pastor Ray Harms-Wiebe / Matthew 9:1-8 / Oct. 9/10, 2021

To the Life Group leader: thank you for your ministry leading this Life Group. **Take time to review the questions selecting those that you believe will be most helpful for your group study.** You will not have time to use all the questions. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you lead, as you select questions and as you guide the discussion. As a team we're praying for the Holy Spirit to guide you, lead you and speak through you.

Today's story is about a paralyzed man and Jesus. Some of us are physically paralyzed and cry out for God's healing hand. Even though most of us do not deal with physical paralysis we might experience spiritual, mental or emotional paralysis.

Today's text addresses the question, what would Jesus say to us who suffer from paralysis in so many ways?

Reconnect

Come together with these preliminary questions:

- Have you ever had friends or family advocate for you in a situation?
- What did they do?
- How did their advocacy on your behalf make you feel?

Open in Prayer

Message Recap

Review the message using these questions

1. What stood out to you most in this week's message?
2. What was the most meaningful thing you heard in the message? Why?
3. What questions are still lingering?

Choose discussion and application questions

1) Jesus sees and responds to our faith.

- a) Pastor Ray said, if we are spiritually, mentally, emotionally, or physically paralyzed, the first question we should ask ourselves is this: do we have faith in Jesus or do we suffer from unbelief?
- b) Matthew 9:2 (ESV) And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven."
 - i) Why does Jesus begin his comments to the paralytic by telling him to "take heart?"
 - ii) What does Jesus' approach teach us about relating to people in need?

2) Jesus sees our pain and speaks with compassion.

Matthew 9:2b (ESV) "...your sins are forgiven."

- a) Why would the first words Jesus speaks to the paralytic focus on the forgiveness of sin?
- b) Do you think the man's physical condition had any connection to this spiritual condition?

Note: In John 9:2-3, Jesus encounters a man born blind. The disciples' first question is, "Who sinned, this man or his parents?" Jesus says no one. Personal sin is usually not the direct cause of illness, but it can be. In Jn. 5:14, Jesus tells a man who had been lame for 38 years to stop sinning. A connection is implied. Paul connects sin and illness in 1 Cor. 11:29-30. James does the same in James 5:14-16. When Jesus says, "Your sins are forgiven," he seems to imply a connection between the man's sin and his paralysis.

i) What is the biggest problem facing the paralytic?

3) Jesus sees our root problem (sin) and speaks to it.

a) What has the pandemic exposed in your life?

i) Has the pandemic caused any relational tension with your friends and/or family?

(1) How have you handled those tensions?

b) How have you invited Jesus to speak into these problems or tensions?

c) What has Jesus taught you through these pandemic challenges?

Pastor Ray said, if we want healing for our paralysis, whether it be spiritual, mental, emotional, or physical, we will have to let Jesus speak to our root problem. We quickly ask Jesus for the alleviation of physical suffering, but do we want Jesus to speak to our heart issues? We quickly ask for relational healing, but do we want Jesus to speak to our relational sin?

i) How do you deal with "paralysis" in your life?

ii) Do you ask God to deal with the symptoms of the problem or the source of the problem?

iii) Do you:

(1) ignore sin, as if it does not exist

(2) blame it on something or someone else

(3) pretend it does not matter

(4) deal with your sin with Jesus

4) Jesus sees the root problem (sin) and deals with it (on the cross).

Pastor Ray told the story of his friend Rick, who suffers from ALS, a debilitating disease, until now medically incurable. One night he had a dream. In his dream, he was physically whole. He could walk. He woke up elated, full of joy. In the days following, Jesus began to speak to him about forgiveness of sin. The question he asked himself was, "Am I as elated about the forgiveness of my sin, my being declared righteous before God, the restoration of my relationship with God, as I was elated over my physical healing in my dream?"

a) What do you want most from Jesus? Why?

b) Why is Jesus' work on the cross the solution to your root problem?

5) Jesus comes to minister ultimate healing.

a) Jesus undermined the worldview of the Jewish religious leaders.

i) How has or does Jesus undermined your worldview?

ii) How does following Jesus challenge the prevailing worldview of Vancouver?

6) Jesus sees unbelief (the most basic of sins) and challenges it.

Pastor Ray said, Jesus asks a rhetorical question. Vs. 5 "For which is easier, to say 'Your sins are forgiven' or to say 'Rise and walk'?" The question implies that if the harder of the two can be demonstrated, the easier of the two may be assumed to be possible.

a) Have you or do you struggle with unbelief?

b) Do you have questions you would like the group to discuss?

7) Jesus can only cure unbelief when there is a turning.

Pastor Ray said, Jesus is more than able to reveal himself to us. The question is this: Do we want him to show himself to us? Would we be willing to change our worldview, the way we think, what we value, what we do? Would we be willing to walk the path of healing – spiritual, mental, emotional, relational?

- a) Are there areas of your life that you struggle to give to Jesus? Why?
- b) Are their teachings of Jesus that you struggle to believe?
- c) What did Jesus say about that issue?

Sermon Questions for Reflection:

1. If you are suffering from spiritual, mental, emotional, relational or physical paralysis, do you believe Jesus sees you? What would he say to you today?
2. Does forgiveness of sin, the eradication of your root problem by Jesus, excite you as much as a story of physical healing? Why or why not?
3. With whom do you identify in the story: the paralytic, the crowds, the friends, or the scribes? Why?
4. What would it look like for you to rise up and walk today? Place your faith in Jesus. Pray for his healing touch. Ask him for his healing word.

Choose Your Next Step

What next step will you commit to for the upcoming week (and beyond)?

Individual

- Do you have behaviors or attitudes that are stopping you from following Jesus into “danger?” If yes, confess those to God.
- If you are unsure if you have any areas of your life that are not submitted to Jesus, ask the Holy Spirit to show them to you.
- Ask Jesus to forgive you for not trusting him in the “danger.”
- Commit each area of your life that you have held back from Jesus to him. Ask God to fill you with the Holy Spirit to walk in trust of Jesus rule every day.

Christian Community

- Tell a trusted friend where you sense God calling you to step into “danger” and ask them to pray for you as you seek to trust and follow God in these areas.
- Reach out to your Christian community to talk through the things that pull you away from God and his ways. Ask for the group to pray for you and tell them how they can support you in your walk with Jesus.

The world

- Ask God to guide you as you bring his kingdom wherever you go.
- Ask God for discernment to see where this earthly kingdom is in conflict with God’s kingdom and how you can live out God’s priorities in your world.

Closing Prayer

A closing prayer is an effective way to point people back to our Loving Father as they seek to apply their new learnings throughout the week. If we remain connected to the power of the Holy Spirit, He will remind us of His call for us and give us the strength to follow through. Ask group members to share what they sense God calling them to. Pray for each other and commit to continue to do so during the week as people step out in obedience to God’s leading.