

## For those paralyzed in body or soul

During this session of prayer, we will consider how the story of a paralyzed person brought to Jesus by His friends might help us pray for people who may be immobilized in their relationship with God or other people. Find the story in Mark 2:1-12. Read the entire story aloud, if possible, with other prayer companions. Ask God to give you faith, like the four friends in the story, to bring someone to Jesus. The person(s) that you pray for may not be paralyzed physically. But you will find that the story will enable you to express your faith in Christ with confidence that He deals powerfully with every dimension of sin and brokenness. As then, so now. Jesus delights in your faith to bring people before Him.

### **Mark 2:3-5**

*<sup>3</sup> And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men. <sup>4</sup> Being unable to get to Him because of the crowd, they removed the roof above Him; and when they had dug an opening, they let down the pallet on which the paralytic was lying. <sup>5</sup> And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."*

### **1. To be brought to Jesus (vss 4-5)**

Pray now for a particular person who has yet to follow Christ. Even though that person is probably not physically paralyzed, your friend may be frozen in spiritual ways, or hypnotized in spiritual deception or broken by sin that renders her/him motionless with respect to Christ. What obstacles, people, traditions or frustrating experiences with Christians may be getting in the way? If they are ever going to meet Jesus, someone will need to help them. Pray for people who will help your friend push through these kinds of things and actually encounter Jesus. With sanctified imagination, carry your friend to Jesus. If you are praying with others, why not act out the motions of bringing this person to Jesus as a form of prayer? Can you picture Jesus' face as you approach Him? What does verse five say that Jesus saw? How can you express your faith that Jesus can and will touch the life of your friend in powerful ways?

### **2. To belong to God and to be free (vs 5)**

- **To belong.** Jesus calls the man "Son." Has your friend ever heard God's fatherly heart expressed personally? Pray that God's voice will break through, assuring them of His desire for them as a son or a daughter.
- **To be free.** Jesus knows that the heart of the man's problem is not physical, but the spiritual paralysis brought on by sin. Pray that God's readiness and power to forgive sin would be communicated clearly.

### **Mark 2:12**

*<sup>11</sup> "I say to you, get up, pick up your pallet and go home."  
<sup>12</sup> And he got up and immediately picked up the pallet and went out in the sight of everyone, so that they were all amazed and were glorifying God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this."*

### **3. To go home and to glorify God (vss 11-12)**

- **To go home.** Jesus' command is the beginning of a new life. Pray that your friend will find God's way to step into a new way of living. Pray that they would be welcomed to a spiritual home.
- **To glorify God.** Be sure to ask God to be openly honored by the changed life of your friend. Why not give Him glory even now for what He is likely to do?

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Some have pointed out that it may be difficult to find a single person in all of history who became a follower of Christ who was not prayed for by others in some way. Salvation always seems to involve others. This session will help focus on the all-important personal encounter with Jesus Himself. It will also dramatize the reality that God values the faith of others who help lift their friends to Jesus.

### **Biblical stories as a template for prayer.**

Use stories of Jesus to springboard into confident, life-giving prayer. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and forever (Hebrew 13:8). We can count on Him to act in the same ways, to display the same heart, to exert the same power and to show the same wisdom and compassion. With a little creativity, many stories are easy to pray as vivid, encouraging prayer helps.

Without getting silly or mystical, here are two ways to use biblical stories about Jesus to shape your prayers:

- **Imagine.** Somehow imagine the person you are praying for entering the biblical story. What does Jesus do? What does he say? What is His attitude? Or reverse the scenario: Imagine Jesus entering the life and situation of the person you are praying for. What might Jesus do or say that is in keeping with what we see in scriptural accounts?
- **Dramatize.** Sometimes you can stimulate imagination by physically dramatizing part of what takes place in the story. The story in Mark 2 has a few features that a small group can easily do. If you have four people (because Mark happens to mention that particular number), why not stand and lift an imaginary stretcher with a paralyzed friend aboard? Any number of people can pray as you bring the imaginary stretcher and place your friend before an invisible Christ. You may be surprised how many adult groups will find this a practical and valuable gesture, and not at all a silly exercise. If this particular format doesn't appeal to you, then keep watching for ways to give prayers a physical dimension. There is no extra power in such gestures. All they do is help call forth the utmost faith from those who pray.

### **Pray for healing on the inside.**

Many people are bogged down in depression and habits of the heart that make them perpetually miserable. They are functionally paralyzed by sin. Pray for Jesus to deal with the deep issues of their heart. Pray that a declaration of God's forgiveness will come to them. As an act of faith that God will make that message clear, why not call out Jesus' very words, but instead, add the name of the person you are praying for?

### **Faith may be more than just praying.**

The story of the paralyzed man illustrates the heart issues that are the core of the matter, but it also helps those who pray to see the crucial value of exerting their own faith before Christ. Jesus acted in response to the faith of all five people. How can we demonstrate our faith that Christ can and will touch the lives of others in redemptive ways? One of the best ways is by praying for those people. But there may be other practical ways to demonstrate your faith that Christ desires to transform their lives. Give the prayer group you are leading an opportunity for a moment's reflection on these questions. Is God giving any ideas for taking specific action to help bring that person closer to Jesus?