



HG259: Sharing Our Faith Like Jesus ***Up On The Roof***

Luke 5:17-26

Home Group Study Notes

11 June 2023 - Revd Paul A. Carr



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN
ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION
BEFORE THE MEETING!

*Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group
with you, along with any previous notes and other
resources which might be helpful for your discussions.*



Welcome (10 mins) *Ice Breaker*

Share one experience/event (whether on holiday; or at home; or in a newspaper, magazine or on TV) which has had an impact on your Christian life since your Home Group last met.



Looking Upwards (10 mins) *Worship*

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



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Home Group Sermon Notes

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Introduction

As we continue our series on sharing our faith the way Jesus did, this story is quite different compared to the others in this series. This isn't a case of Jesus sitting down and talking directly with someone – although he does – it's a situation which proves the value of friendship. The man in our text has such a friend – in fact he had more than one. He was paralysed and confined to a mat every day of his life. He couldn't walk. He has to beg for help just to meet his daily needs. He's broken and the religious leaders of his day would have said: *"Either he or his parents must have been terrible sinners for this to happen. He's being punished by God."* That's the way many looked at sickness and disease during Jesus' time. There's no rehab, no special hospitals, no course of treatment, just removal from the community where they had to beg for help from the same people who held those views.

If anyone needed a friend, it was this man. I often wonder how or why his friends stuck with him, given he was ostracised by the religious leaders who had huge influence in that time. But this man did have a small group he could call friends and they would make all the difference in his life. In fact, if it wasn't for his friends, we'd have never heard of him. We don't know anything about these friends, except they were compassionate, courageous and committed.

1. Compassionate Friends

Jesus is teaching one day - the crowd is made up of Pharisees and teachers of the law - and people had come from every village in Galilee and the surrounding areas. No wonder, because "... the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick." The paralysed man's friends heard that Jesus was in town. They'd have heard something of Jesus' reputation as a healer and were desperate for their sick friend to be healed. So, these friends carried their sick friend through the streets to see Jesus. Why? One word comes to mind is 'compassion.' The dictionary defines it as "The desire to fix another person's distress." Compassion is more than pity. Pity hurts your heart; compassion moves your feet. Pity says to the hungry person "I'm so sorry. I hope you find a meal." Compassion heads to the kitchen.

These men carried their friend to see Jesus, but when they get there, it's packed. (I bet the Pharisees had the best seats!) They can't find a way into the house because of the crowd. If only they could get near to Jesus, their friend would be healed. However, because it was so congested and because of the sheer volume of people there was no way they were going to get anywhere near Jesus.

I bet they thought about giving up. *Well, I guess we just can't get in we'd better go home, or I guess we'll just have to try some other time, or maybe we can come back tomorrow.* Some people have a lot of faith but little determination and perseverance. As soon as faith becomes difficult and challenging, they quit. If that had been the attitude of those friends, then I know one man who would not have been healed! This is when they became:

2. Courageous Friends

I wonder if one of the friends said something like: “Listen, I’ve got a great idea. Why don’t we go up to the roof, make a hole, a big hole, and lower him right in front of Jesus.” Really!! But the more they thought about it, the more it didn’t seem like a bad idea after all. What would you do? Would you consider embarking on their course of action? The writer John Ortberg writes: *If you want to walk on water, you’ve got to get out of the boat.* What about this one: *“If you want your friend to be healed, you’ve got to go through the roof*

Just picture the scene in your mind's eye if you can. Houses in Jesus' time had flat roofs - they are still built like this in much of the Middle East today – and they have a staircase on the outside wall for easy access to the roof. These four men had to fight their way through the crowd just to get to the stairs to get up to the roof. The roof would have been made up of wooden beams, that would have been covered with tiles set with a bed of mortar or mud. They were often used as a place of storage, a place to keep animals (they were often grassed) and, of course, a place to sunbathe.

And so, having gone this far, they set about making a hole big enough to get their friend through, using whatever tools were available and, no doubt, demolishing the majority of the roof in the process. Once they'd broken through, they would see the astonished faces of the people below. When you stand at the door of courageous ministry, you'll find all sorts of reasons why it's an inconvenient thing to do.

Some of you will know I founded Billericay Street Pastors in 2013. What many of you won't know is that it took nearly three years to do so. Street Pastors has to be a partnership between Police, local authorities and churches for it to work. It's called the Urban Trinity! The Police were on board straightaway. Did you know I'd been meeting with the local superintendent for a coffee every two weeks for a couple of years? Anyway, he didn't take much persuading. Essex County Council came on board pretty quickly because they had seen the value of similar projects around the County. I spoke at a meeting of the Town Council, and they didn't believe Billericay had an issue in the night-time community – I wondered if they'd ever been on the High Street on a Friday and Saturday night! They declined to support it and the deadline in the Billericay Gazette was something like Billericay vicar accuses the night-time community of drunkenness. I asked them not to print it so as not to set the project back. But they did and they did!

When I approached Churches Together but they just didn't get it. They didn't understand how we could serve the night-time community as part of a Christian witness. To cut a long story short, I didn't give up. I started this in early 2011, but it took three years before CTB, and the town council were on board. We launched on Saturday 4 November 2013 and supported the Firework display at Lake Meadows. It's now one of the most effective activities CTB have ever done to serve the community of Billericay. It would have been so easy to give up but it was on my heart that God was in this and so he was. I had to persevere to make it happen and enable people to catch the vision along the way.

What these friends did was to break with convention (and tradition?). They weren't prepared to waste time by hanging around and so they took it upon themselves to do something. You could say these friends did what they did out of desperation - such was their desire for their friend to be healed - what better friends could you ask for? What they did was unorthodox. It took courage. However, the result of the faith of these friends gave the paralysed man new life - both physically and spiritually. Yes, it came about because of Jesus' healing touch, but it was also the result of their faith and actions.

A good friend is hard to find. These men really put themselves out to take their friend to Jesus, didn't they? And they ask us some hard questions about how willing we are to change our schedule and realign our priorities, in order to introduce our friends to Jesus. A living faith, such as these men had, should have such an impact on our life that we'd willing to rearrange our diary, our life, in order to introduce a someone to Jesus.

I have to say, that nothing thrills me more in ministry than to see people finding Jesus for themselves (whether through Alpha or through an awakening of faith in their pilgrimage of faith or?).

Being a part of the hole in the roof gang involved courage and trust all the way around. Because the paralyzed man had to ask: “You’re going to do what?” What if Jesus rejects me? What about the owner of the house?” Courageous ministry will either be stopped by fear or accomplished by our faith and commitment.

3. Committed Friends

The teachings of Jesus were disrupted by a thrashing noise, and then mud and straw falling into the crowd. As they look up through the hole some friends began to lower a man down. Imagine what the owner must have been thinking? “What are you doing to my house?” I wonder whether the cost of repairing that roof an issue that concerned them. Even if it did, it wasn't going to stop them. I bet they stayed to help fix it, don't you.

And Jesus saw their faith, not just the paralyzed man. But is this faith? Or was it sheer desperation? Is there a difference? Faith is the powerful understanding that human solutions alone will not alter any situation in which we find ourselves. Remember that a miracle is something that cannot happen by natural means and faith is an unshakeable trust and belief in God's ability to do the impossible - because he's God!

Philip Yancey, in his book: ‘The Jesus I never knew,’ writes that Jesus’ first concern was to forgive the man's sins, suggesting that He had different priorities than we do, and that physical healing was secondary to spiritual healing. Jesus always deals with the most important issue first - our sin. So, he says to the paralyzed man “Friend” (because there's no better friend than Jesus!) “Your sins are forgiven.” And the Pharisees grumble and say who does he think he is “Only God can forgive sins!” And then Jesus does something really amazing He asks a question. Which is easier to say, “Your sins are forgiven” or ask a paralyzed man to “get up and walk?”

One is easier to say than the other “Because you can't see forgiveness of sins, but you can see if a paralyzed man gets up and walks ...” So, Jesus says, “So you know the Son of Man has the authority to forgive sins” And then He turns to the paralyzed man and his friends and says, “Get up, take your mat go on home.”

This man had to show his own faith by his willingness to get up. Sometimes, healing takes an action on the recipient's behalf, rather than taking it lying down - literally. Luke 5:25-26: *Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.”*

Conclusion

A good friend is hard to find. How many of you found Jesus through a friend? This story paints a wonderful picture of the faith; determination and perseverance of four friends to enable their friend to meet Jesus. We see that Jesus recognised their faith and responded in the way they knew He would. What kind of friend are you to those around you? Are you as interested in their spiritual wellbeing as you should be? What would it take for you to bring a friend to Jesus?

I pray that you will have the compassion to see the needs of others, courage to do something about it and commitment to see it through in order to allow Jesus to touch the life of a friend. Friendships are essential to our lives, and we should treasure the friendships we have and do all we can to keep them in good shape. There's no doubt that good friendships enhance our lives and each of us, in the frenzied culture in which we live desperately need life enhancing friendships. I've loved, and lost, a few over the years and I probably haven't worked as hard as I could have done to keep them strong.

YOU can bring a friend to Jesus (Reflection)

You can bring a friend to Jesus: By praying for them regularly and seeking opportunities to share your faith with them. Remember the series on BLESS and the five simple things you can put in place. Do you need to revisit this series?

You can bring a friend to Jesus: You have friends who are spiritually paralyzed and can't get to Jesus. They are paralyzed by fear, guilt, doubt, pain. They can't get to Jesus on their own. It's easy to underestimate how much of an important role you have to play. Name them before the Lord in the quietness of your own heart.

You can bring a friend to Jesus: But not without compassion. It may take years and numerous attempts. Pray that God will give you a renewed compassion for that friend you've just named in your heart.

You can bring a friend to Jesus: But you might need to be willing to break with convention. You will need to be courageous. Ask God to give you the courage to be willing to do what it takes to bring your friend to Jesus.

You can bring a friend to Jesus: But it takes commitment. The friends in our story were willing to do what they did, almost on the spur of the moment, because they never knew if they would get a second chance. Pray that you God will give you an inner strength so you can commit yourself to bring a friend to Jesus.

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Emmanuel Church Text 2023



*The LORD bless you and keep you: the LORD make his face shine on you
and be gracious to you: the LORD turn his face toward you
and give you peace. Numbers 6:24-26*

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Looking Upwards (40 mins)

Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1: The friends were willing to break with convention (and tradition?) to see their friend healed. In what ways might we be ‘held back’ in enabling healing (body; soul and spirit) to take place in the lives of others?

2: Reflecting on the action of the friends, Paul asked the question: “Is this faith or sheer desperation?” Discuss whether there is a difference and how this might affect the outworking of our faith on a daily basis. Share an experience with your group/someone when you have greatly appreciated the support and friendship of your Christian friends.

3: Paul suggested that the friends showed ‘Compassion. Courage and Commitment’ to get their friend closer to Jesus. What could you put into action in your own life to enable those who are ‘not yet Christian’s’ to find Jesus’ healing touch on their lives?

4: In James 2:14-17 we are challenged about striking a balance between a faith that saves us and a faith we express in the way we live (our works, deeds or actions). Discuss what God might be saying to you through these verses and how this could affect your future Christian life.

5: Philip Yancey suggested that Jesus' first concern was to forgive the man's sins, suggesting that physical healing was secondary to spiritual healing. Are we as interested in the state of our spiritual health as we are with our physical health? Does unrepented sin affect our capacity to receive healing?

6: Did someone else's faith play a part in how you became a Christian? Share your story with your group/someone so they can be encouraged. Pray for each other's friends and ways in which you could help draw them closer to Jesus.



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Inwards (15 mins) *Caring For Each Other*

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins) *Concern For Others*

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

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