

Jesus has power over sin
Luke 5 v 17-26 – Leaders version

Check in – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including the leaders, how they are and how they're feeling about studying the Bible today.

What does the passage say and mean?

30 minutes

Read Luke 5 v 17-26

1. What is Jesus doing in Galilee and who else is there that day? (v17)

Jesus is teaching. We also read that 'the power of the Lord was present for him to heal the sick' so we can assume that Jesus has already healed people that day. (Don't get hung up on this sentence! Jesus has innate power to heal the sick on any day, this is just telling us that He was performing healing miracles that day). Pharisees are there, some are local, some have come all the way from Jerusalem – are they there to check Him out??

2. What prompts another group of men to come and why do they have to come in through the roof?

They want to lay their paralysed friend before Jesus. There are so many people already there that they can't get in through the door, so they pull the roof apart to lower the paralysed man in, landing right in front of Jesus.

3. What faith do you think this group of men have? What is Jesus' response to their faith?

They have faith that Jesus can do something for their friend and this drives them to take action. We don't know if they had a deeper faith than this, but they must have heard about Jesus before, so maybe they did have a more informed understanding of who He is. Jesus' response is to forgive the paralysed man's sins.

4. Does Jesus' response surprise you? Why?

The man didn't come for forgiveness, as far as we can tell. He has not assaulted Jesus or stolen from Him as far as we know, and we are not told that he is a prolific local criminal. Jesus' forgives all the man's sins, even though they are not the man's perceived problem.

Jesus forgives his sin, not his 'offenses' or his 'wrongdoing'. Sin is, by definition, an offence against God.

Jesus is claiming to have the power to forgive sin – this is a direct claim to divinity.

The man, however, is still laying on his mat on the floor. Nothing visible has happened. Only Jesus (and presumably the man) know if the man's sin has really been forgiven.

Note: this episode shows us that sickness is not a punishment for a specific sin, although it may have been a consequence of sin (e.g. jumping of the roof of the house you are burgling could cause paralysis). If it was a punishment for sin, forgiveness would have healed his legs.

5. Why do you think Jesus did this instead of healing the man's legs?

Jesus knows that the man's biggest problem is his sin, not his sickness.

On a practical level, if Jesus healed his legs first, the man would probably have jumped up and the crowd would have responded, with the moment for forgiveness being lost.

6. Read v21. Are the Pharisees and teachers of the law right?

Yes – only God can forgive sins (because, as above, sin is an offence against God).

No – Jesus is not blaspheming. They are wrong because they do not recognise Jesus as God.

7. Read v22-23. Which is easier?!

Neither is possible unless you are God!

8. Why did Jesus heal the man's legs? (v24)

So that they would know He had authority to forgive sins. The visible miracle shows that Jesus has power and authority over sickness, validating the invisible miracle to the doubter.

'Son of Man' was a title that Jesus used to refer to Himself. It comes from Daniel 7 v 13 and is itself a claim to divinity, but was safe enough for Jesus to use without being charged with blasphemy, unlike 'Son of God'!

9. What was the response of the man, the crowd and the religious authorities to what they had seen?

They praised God – they gave credit to God for the miracles they had seen. We don't know whether they understood Jesus' identity properly yet, but they had seen enough to have the information to do so.

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What is your response to these two miracles? Who do you think Jesus is?

Consider what people's response is to someone who can forgive all their sin.

Check out – with the group sitting in a semi-circle go round and ask everyone, including leaders, how they found the study and if they are safe to go back to the cell.

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