

Group discussion *Each number below includes questions that relate to the scripture. I offer a few answers, but your perspective may be better. The point is to discuss, not to get 100% agreement. Rule of thumb: the fewer questions you ask, the better. Save time for “the big question.”*

Read Luke 5:17-26 aloud. As always, reading this passage a few times is a helpful way to get familiar with the flow of the story.

1. This episode in Luke creates a definite conflict between Jesus and the Pharisees. How does Jesus challenge these leaders? What does he say and do that is so difficult for them to grasp? (20b-24a)
See Bible Notes for help.

Why do you think forgiveness is so challenging for them as religious leaders?

Do you think forgiveness is as challenging for religious people today? Why or why not?

Give an example of a time when you have seen forgiveness as a challenging thing (in your life or the life of another).

Give an example of when you have seen forgiveness as a powerful and liberating thing (in your life or the life of another).

2. This center of the conflict begins by the action of a few people coming through a roof to get their friend to Jesus (18-19). What do you think this series of events must have been like for them? Imagine it out loud from their perspective.

What do you think motivated them to do such a bold thing as come through a roof?

Have you ever seen a time in your life when people took such a bold leap of faith to help someone they know encounter Jesus? Tell the story.

How can we find similar motivation today to get people to Jesus?

3. Jesus responds to this paralyzed man, but the text says he saw “their faith” (20). What, then, do we learn about what it means to have faith based on this detail in the story?

In other words, how does our faith impact those around us, according to this encounter with Jesus?

Can you share a time where the faith of another sustained you through a challenging season of life?

4. Another group present in this story are the crowds, who ultimately get in the way of these men getting to Jesus (19). How does the same kind of thing happen today?

Hint: Consider Kevin’s sermon.

In other words, how do those who follow Jesus today often get in the way of others who might be trying to get to Jesus?

What can we do to help make room for others to get to Jesus? How can we “get out of the way” so to speak?

5. One of the most central characters to this story is the paralyzed man. Take a few minutes to describe what this whole experience would have been like for him.

What do you think he learns about faith from this encounter?

What do you think he learns about Jesus from this encounter?

How can this lesson give us hope and motivation today?

† **The million-dollar question** *If you ask only one question, let this be it. Allow at least 20 minutes. Go around the circle and give each person an opportunity to answer. It’s okay if they pass, but at least they get a chance to respond.*

If you were to identify with one person in the story who would it be?

- The crowds: I feel like I am in the way of another person getting to Jesus.
- The paralyzed man: I need help getting to Jesus.
- The friends of the man: I have someone I need to (or am trying) to help get to Jesus.

After picking one of the three options take some time explaining what you mean. In other words, why do you identify with them?

Resources

Bible notes

The Pharisee's concern about Jesus' claim to have the authority to forgive was understandable. They knew their Scriptures and it was clear that only God could forgive sins (Ex 34:6-7; Isaiah 43:25; 44:22). Consider how challenging this would have been for their understanding of God to have Jesus standing in front of them declaring he had such power.

Jesus calls himself the Son of Man in this encounter with the Pharisees (5:24). This title had various meanings in the time of Jesus. At times it referred to prophets (Ez 2:1, 3). Other times it referred to a judge-like figure that would come on the clouds at the end of time (Dan 7:13-14). It even could refer to being a human being. What is significant about Jesus' usage of the term is how he ties it to authority. Jesus is claiming that he has unusual authority tied directly to God. A bold claim, indeed.

Kid-friendly activity. *An activity designed to help kids and adults grow in faith together. Do this first, then dismiss the kids so the adults can talk.*

The "Carried to Jesus" Activity

Prep: Get a blanket and some space to walk around.

Intro: Today we are going to talk about what it means to have faith. To illustrate I am going to need 5 volunteers. (Have one kid lay on the blanket and the other four pick up the corners. For a little fun have them carry the child around.) After they set them down *gently*, then ask: what does this activity have to do with faith? How is being carried by your friends important to how we understand faith?

Read Luke 5:17-26, then say: In Luke, some friends of a paralyzed man carry him into the presence of Jesus. The text says that when Jesus saw "their faith" that he forgave the man of his sins. In other words, the faith of those carrying the man impacted the faith of the man in need of healing. It is important for us to remember that we need each other as we try to be faithful to Jesus.

Close by brainstorming with them: What do you think it looks like to help our friends when they are struggling with faith? How can we help carry them to Jesus? What kinds of things might we do for them?

Close in prayer: God, help us to share our faith with others.



October 2, 2011

LIFE Group Guide

Luke 5:17-26 – Faith Next Door (Part 2):

A Little Help From My Friends

By Wilson McCoy (wmccoy@colleghills.org)

The theme: Faith is never simply an individual act. True faith takes the support and nurture of others around us. For some we are at a place where we need the assistance of others to help our faith through some rocky times. For others we need to open our eyes to see the people around us who need our help in sustaining their faith. Either way we must see that faith always implies a community journeying with us towards Jesus.

This week Kevin continued his "Faith Next Door" series. More specifically, he pointed to Luke's account of a group of men helping their friend get to Jesus. The challenge posed to us through this story and Kevin's sermon is a powerful one: Are we getting in the way of helping our friends get to Jesus or are we helping to carry them into his presence? The answer is left for each of us to decide.

Leadership Announcement: Mark your calendars for October 5th OR 12th. On these Wednesday nights at 6 pm and 7 pm Wilson and John want to meet with all the group leaders to talk about LIFE Groups in 2011 and share some ideas for 2012. You only need to be there for one of the four meeting offerings. It will last no longer than an hour. Please contact Wilson to let him know which meeting you will be attending. Thanks.

Relate *Use a few to introduce the theme, check everyone's spiritual pulse, and "break the ice." No right or wrong answers – maybe goofy but not wrong! Look for opportunities to affirm and encourage through these questions.*

- ❖ What is your favorite room where you live? Why?
- ❖ If you had one more meal to eat in your life what would it be?
- ❖ What is one thing that you can share with the group that you think would surprise them to learn about you?