

Our new mission statement is: Building Bridges to Connect Everyone to the Dynamic Life in Christ. But what does being connected and living that life look like and feel like? This spring we will be going through the Book of Mark to discover what it means to live the Dynamic Life in Christ. These discussion guides will follow along with the sermon series by using passages from the book of Mark.

These guides will be organized using the acronym HEAR as a way to teach people to read the Bible. HEAR stands for **H**ighlight the passage, **E**xplain the passage, **A**pply the passage, and **R**espond to the passage.

Each week, there will be a page to print off for each member of your group. The printed sheet will have the Bible passage you'll discuss and some questions in the margins to guide them in examining those verses.

Additionally, there will be a leader's guide that will give you helpful notes on the passage (i.e. background information and definitions) as well as discussion questions to lead your group. These don't need to be printed for each member of your group.

These guides are designed to be discussed BEFORE the sermon, so the group can discuss the passage before the pastor shares his insights. However, they can just as easily be used after the weekend message.

Our hope is these tools will (a) help your group members learn to study/read their Bibles outside of the group and (b) give you a helpful outline for facilitating the group discussion. If you have comments or questions about the discussion guides, we'd love to hear your constructive feedback. Send your feedback to us at groups@foresthill.org.

How to Use This Discussion Guide

- Print off the "Life Group Member Guide" for each member of your group – or email it to them in advance.
- Use the summary statement for each week to quickly understand the text's theme. You can use that as a reference point to help guide your discussion or bring it back if your group begins to get off topic.
- Use the prayer prompt at the end of each guide to help you close in prayer.

Additionally, here are some tips and guidelines to help you lead these discussions:

1. **Choose the questions that best fit your group and your time constraints.** There are a lot of questions in this guide and your group may not be able to discuss them all. That's okay! You don't have to ask all of them. Before your group begins, choose the questions that are most likely to help your group understand what God is saying in the text and how to apply it to their lives.
2. **Prepare for your group time by reading the passages and the notes in a study Bible.** A good study Bible can give you some insights into the passages and how they connect to the whole book or the whole story of the Bible.
3. **Begin every group meeting with prayer.** We can only understand and apply God's Word with the help of the Holy Spirit. So, invite the Spirit to open your hearts and minds to what He says to His people.
4. **Keep the conversation focused on Scripture as much as possible.** Some people may want to bring in their opinions or continually refer to what the teaching pastor said during his message. This is helpful in small doses, but the goal of this discussion guide is to help you determine what God is saying in His Word. Encourage the group to continue to return to the Scripture. One way to do that is by saying, "That's a great insight! Where do you see that in the Scripture we're studying?"
5. **Encourage participation, but don't let anyone dominate.** Encourage everyone to share insights, ask questions, and read aloud. But don't allow any one person – even yourself, the leader – to monopolize the time. Some people can be socially unaware of themselves or how much they speak, so gently encourage them to listen and make space for others to talk.
6. **Help your group members to be specific in the application of Scripture.** It is easy to generalize when we talk about the Bible and how to apply it. So ask your group members specific questions – for example, "What part of the world do you sense God wants you to pray for? How will you do that? How will you make that a habit?"

We pray that you will hear God speak through Scripture and that His Spirit will move you to obey Him. The Word of God – the Bible – lets us know the God who loves us and saves us. May this discussion guide help you and your Life Group to become more immersed in His Word.

Date of Sermon: March 21-22

Topic of Sermon: Ministry of Healing

Main Passage: Mark 2:1-12

BEFORE your group meeting:

- Look up the main passage in a study Bible and read the study notes
- Print off or send the “Group Member Guide” (page 4) for your group members
- Review the “Group Member Guide” for yourself
- Have enough pens for each group member.

Topic of Life Group Meeting: We are called to tear down barriers to help people heal physical and spiritual disabilities.

Icebreakers (optional)

- Describe a situation in your life where if it wouldn't have been for the help you received, you wouldn't have been able to solve it. Who provided the help? What consequences would there have been if you hadn't gotten that help?

Leader's Note: Introduce the next part of the group meeting. You can read this introduction or put it in your own words:

“Today, we’re going to spend a few minutes studying the focal passage on our own before we discuss it as a group. I’ve printed out a copy of the Bible passage for you. There are some questions in the margins to help you. Spend most of your time on the Highlight and Explain questions. Feel free to mark up, underline or highlight the passage. I’m going to give us about 5 minutes to do this. Let me begin by praying that God will open our minds and hearts to His Word.”

When you come back together, use the questions below to guide the discussion.

HIGHLIGHT the Passage

- What key ideas, words or phrases stood out to you from the passage today? What is the significance of those?
- Did this passage raise any questions for you?
- How would you summarize this passage in your own words? Would anyone else add or emphasize something to that summary?

EXPLAIN the Passage

- What are some things this passage revealed about people?
- Why do you think so many people gathered to see Jesus? How does that compare with the reasons people search for God these days?
- What word was Jesus preaching in v2?
- Why were these men trying to reach Jesus and what barriers did they face? What does this say about their determination?
- What did Jesus see, according to v5, that prompted Him to respond? Was it the effort of these men?
- What kind of need did Jesus address first and why was that? How does this change your mindset, when trying to help heal the physical needs of people?
- What kind of life do you think the paralytic had after his encounter with Jesus? Was it only because of the physical healing?
- What are some things this passage revealed about God? His nature, His work, or His character?

APPLY the Passage

- What truth from this passage do you need to cling to? What makes that truth significant to you?
- If you already received Jesus as your savior, who were the people that saw your need of spiritual healing and how did they help you reach Him? Could you have done this by yourself?
- Can you identify someone with physical or spiritual disabilities that needs a community to help him or her get closer to Christ? Who would that person or people be?
- What barriers would you have to tear down in order to build a bridge to be healed? How much determination will you need?
- By God's power, what is God calling you to change in how you think, speak, or act?

RESPOND to the Passage

- Finish your time in prayer, thanking God for being part of this community. Pray that you may respond to the call to go out together, tearing down barriers and building bridges to connect people to a dynamic life in Christ.

COMMENTARY NOTES ON THE MAIN PASSAGE

v2. Mark is largely a record of Christ's actions, but what Jesus said is not neglected. Here he describes how Jesus **preached the word**, the message of the coming kingdom.

v4. Many in the crowd may have come expecting to see healings and miracles. The throng blocked entrance into the already packed room. The determination of the men is seen in the fact that **they made an opening in the roof** over the room where Jesus was preaching.

Most homes in Palestine had flat roofs used for relaxation in the cool of the day and for sleeping on hot nights, and there was usually an external stairway that extended to the roof. Often, as here, the roof was made of slabs of burnt or dried clay that were placed on supporting beams which stretched from wall to wall. The builder then spread a uniform coat of fresh, wet clay over those slabs of hardened clay to serve as a seal against the rain. The paralytic's friends took him up to the top of such a house and dug out the top coat of clay, removing several of the slabs until they made enough room to lower him down into Jesus' presence.

v5. When Jesus saw their faith. The aggressive, persistent effort of the paralytic's friends was visible evidence of their faith in Christ to heal.

Son, your sins are forgiven you. Many Jews in that day believed that all disease and affliction was a direct result of one's sins. This paralytic may have believed that as well; thus, he would have welcomed forgiveness of his sins before healing. The Greek verb for "are forgiven" refers to sending or driving away (cf. Psa 103:12; Jer 31:34; Mic 7:19). Thus, Jesus dismissed the man's sin and freed him from its guilt.

v7. this fellow ... blaspheming. The scribes were correct in saying that only God can forgive sins (cf. Isa 43:25), but incorrect in saying Jesus blasphemes. They refused to recognize Jesus' power as coming from God, much less that He Himself was God.

v 8-11. Jesus asked the **which is easier** question to demonstrate the truth of His claim to forgive the man's sins—something only God can accomplish. Anyone could assert the ability to forgive sins, since there was no earthly way of confirming the statement. But to say **arise, take up your bed and walk** to a paralytic could be tested immediately by whether he walked or not. By healing the paralytic, Jesus made His pronouncement of forgiveness far more credible. **Son of Man** is a term regularly used for the Messiah (Mar 8:31; Dan 7:13; Mar 8:31).

Commentaries taken from Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary and The MacArthur Bible Commentary.