

Series: Born Among Us

Lesson 2: Through the Roof (A Paralytic Man)

Lesson Objectives:

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to...

- Identify that Jesus prioritized spiritual healing over physical healing
- Identify what the paralytic man's encounter with Jesus says about Jesus' identity
- Continue to build a biblical image of Jesus

Materials Needed:

- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Copies of page A-24
- ☐ pens
- ☐ Bible-time costumes like robes and sandals (optional)
- ☐ Foams plates
- ☐ Markers, some washable and some permanent
- ☐ Damp wash cloth
- ☐ Jesus image from last week
- ☐ Slips of paper

Lead In:

Tell the students that you are going to read them a story and then ask them to make a judgement about one of the characters. Read this story:

Imagine that one day you are out at a restaurant with a group of your friends. You've been having a great time when you suddenly noticed that it is getting near the curfew of one of your friends. You know her parents are very strict and that if she is not home, she will get in a lot of trouble. Your driver says not to worry; he knows a short cut and there's still lots of time. A few minutes pass and you all remind your driver again that it's time to get going. He agrees to get moving but still drags behind talking to different people and making conversation. Ten more minutes pass. Finally you insist that you all have to go *now*! When you get in the car it is 10:55 and your friend has to be home by 11:00 – and she lives 20 minutes away!

Your driver, once again, says not to worry. He begins to drive *fast*. He is going *way* faster than you feel comfortable with, but he just laughs and says it will be fine. Suddenly, without warning, a car pulls out of a hidden driveway. He doesn't have time to stop and your friend slams into the car. Several of you are hurt – one friend breaks an arm and another needs surgery. The driver, however, was hurt the worst of all: he is paralyzed for life. He will live the rest of his life in a wheelchair.

When he gets out of hospital, your friend is barely recognizable. He is depressed and guilty. He was a great athlete and always dreamed of playing sports in university. He is no longer able to drive and has trouble getting around. Because of all the extra expenses, his parents have to take out a second mortgage on their home and they have to hold a series of fundraisers to get him the wheelchair and the special supports he needs. His life is totally changed. Once independent, he now has to depend on his friends and family for everything.

Now imagine that one day you learn that there is a doctor who has developed a surgery able to treat the exact type of injury your friend acquired. He is in town visiting for a special conference and you've heard that he's agreed to do surgery on some of the cases who have been to see him. You and your friends decide that your friend *has* to meet this doctor. You convince him to come with you to the conference centre where you've learned the doctor is. When you get there, however, you see that others have had the same idea. The lobby is blocked with people in wheelchairs and crutches just like your friend. But you decide it won't stop you! You discover that there is a back door into the conference centre and between the few of you, you are able to carry your friend in and right to where the doctor is seated.

As you place your friend before the doctor, you are so eager to hear that he will be able to fix this mess. Now imagine that this is all the doctor says:

“Son, I know that you are so guilty for causing the accident that caused this and hurt your friends. But I want you to know that you are forgiven. I want you to know that that is in the past. I hope you will feel better.”

Ask the students to remain seated if they think the doctor did a good thing or to stand up if they think going to the doctor was a waste of time. Ask some people to share why they stood or why they remained seated.

Say something like, *Today we will be looking at another story about Jesus that in many ways is like this one. As we look at this story, we will see that Jesus has priorities very much like the fictitious doctor in this story.*

Task One:

Divide the students into four groups and give each group a copy of page A-24 and a pen. Tell them to read Mark 2:1-12 and to fill in the blanks on the cheat sheet.

When they are done, solicit the blanks. They are as follows: shut/closed, dependent, flat, sin, forgive, Jesus.

Task Two:

Appoint one character to each of the four groups. If you have fewer students, assign more than one character per group. The characters are the paralytic man, the friends, the scribes, and Jesus. Tell each group to re-read March 2:1-12 and to prepare a short monologue to present before the other groups. The monologues should describe the incident from the perspective of the character that they were assigned and should be no more than two minutes in length. Invite the students to be creative. If possible, bring in some costumes like a robe, a head covering, a pair of sandals, and so on. Let the students use these to do their monologues.

As the actors perform their monologues, have the audience (the listening groups) decide if they interpreted the character accurately. Give lots of positive encouragement too. The key thing to come up here is the contrast between the physical healing and the spiritual one. If it doesn't really surface in the presentations and discussion, ask the students this: what was more important for Jesus, healing the man physically or spiritually? Why do you think that is? What does that say about Jesus? Guide some discussion around this. It isn't an easy question to answer but Jesus did prioritize the man's spiritual healing, and only then healed his body to make a point about his authority. Jesus demonstrated that our spiritual health is more important than our physical health and in our culture, obsessed with anti-oxidants and detoxifying diets and cardiovascular activity, this is pretty strange.

Task Three:

Jesus communicated in very symbolic ways and here is your chance to do so too. Complete the following task to illustrate why Jesus thought that the man's spiritual forgiveness was as important as his physical wholeness. Test your markers ahead of time to make sure that the washable ones wash and that the permanent ones stay put.

Give each student a foam plate and two markers, one washable and one permanent. On the concave part of the plate, invite the students to draw a heart in permanent marker. They should then change markers to the washable one and write something that has kept them from feeling spiritually whole inside the heart. Let them know that they will not have to share this with the group. Do an example and talk them through it as they go to make sure that they use the right markers.

As the students are writing, place a damp wash cloth in the middle of the room. At the far end of the room, place a Bible. When each student is finished writing, ask for a volunteer. Explain that the Bible at the end of the room represents God and the washcloth represents Jesus. Invite the other students to stand in front of the Bible and link arms. Then invite the student volunteer to take their plate and walk towards God. If they get to the group and they still have writing on their heart, then the group should form a wall, and keep the person away from God. Invite the student to then take the washcloth and wipe away the sin, representing Jesus' wiping away our sin. When the person is done, invite them to walk towards God again. This time the group should separate and allow the individual through. Share with the students that God works in the same way. When there is a sin in our lives, we are separate from God.

Allow each student to then one by one take their washcloth and wash away their sin. Remind them that this is what Jesus has done for them.

When each student is done, allow them to write on their plate in permanent marker, “Your sins are forgiven.” See if it works to wipe them away. Explain that this is how Jesus’ forgiveness works; it is permanent!

Task Four:

Finally, revisit the image of Jesus that you started last week. Ask the students what new things they want to say about Jesus or whether there are any they need to change or take away. Again, guide the students to articulate deeper and newer insights about Jesus and to record these on the image using more slips of paper and the markers.

Closing:

Close in prayer, thanking Jesus for who he is and asking God to reveal to each of the students a fresh understanding of his character.