

Called in Authority

When Evie came out of the bathroom, she noticed her roommate was still in the bed—facedown. Evie was growing more concerned with Chanita’s mental state. Her roommate had suffered a terrible ordeal last year, and her life had been turned upside down.

Chanita had left school for a semester and returned. She had been getting mental health counseling, but she was still struggling. However, some of the things that Chanita shared were troubling to Evie and seemed to be expanding the problem.

“I may have ADHD,” Chanita had told Evie.

Evie had only known her roommate for about a year and a half, but Evie had not noticed any signs of ADHD. Evie knew that mental health counseling was important, but it was also crucial to seek out the good ones.

“Is your counselor certified? What kind of counselor is she?” Evie had asked. “Is she a Christian counselor?”

Chanita had been “around” church before, but had never accepted Christ. Evie had never been one to push her beliefs onto others, but she had been feeling convicted of not sharing Christ with her friend.

“Chanita, are you awake? Can you roll over?” Evie asked.

Evie began to share Christ with Chanita. She told her how the Lord could save, heal, and restore anyone.

“I’m taking you to church with me this morning,” said Evie. “Come on. Get up.”

1. *In what areas do we want to be made whole—areas where we sense that something is lacking and need help if we want to be complete?*

2. *What makes it hard sometimes to believe that Jesus wants to make us whole in these areas?*

3. *What would make it easier to believe that Jesus can and wants to make us whole?*

Jesus Heals the Sick

Mark 2:1-4, NIV

1 And again he entered into Capernaum after some days; and it was noised that he was in the house.

2 And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them, no, not so much as about the door: and he preached the word unto them.

3 And they come unto him, bringing one sick of the palsy, which was borne of four.

4 And when they could not come nigh unto him for the press, they uncovered the roof where he was: and when they had broken it up, they let down the bed wherein the sick of the palsy lay.

Mark 2:1-4, NIV

¹A few days later, when Jesus again entered Capernaum, the people heard that he had come home. ²They gathered in such large numbers that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. ³Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them. ⁴Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus by digging through it and then lowered the mat the man was lying on.

Early in His ministry, Jesus' frequently found Himself surrounded by those who seemed more enamored by what He could do than what He had to say. Many saw Him more as a miracle worker who could cast out demons and cure people than as One who could make them spiritually whole.

Jesus' reputation as a miracle worker began in Capernaum where He freed a man of demon possession and healed many who were sick, including Peter's mother-in-law (Mark 1:21-34). Jesus left Capernaum shortly afterward, perhaps hoping that He'd find some who were more interested in the message He wanted to share rather than the miracles He could perform (Mark 1:35-39). At one point, He instructed a leper He'd healed not to tell anyone about it (Mark 1:40-45), perhaps to avoid giving those following Him further justification to see Him primarily as a healer of bodies rather than a healer of souls. The leper told others about what happened anyway

and Jesus soon found it more difficult to enter villages without gaining the type of attention He didn't desire.

When Jesus returned to Capernaum, many heard that He'd arrived in town, and soon a crowd gathered both inside and outside of the home where He was staying. There were so many that four men who were intent on helping a paralyzed friend get healed couldn't get through the door. The four were determined not to abandon their friend, so they made their way to the roof of the house, dug a hole through it, and lowered the mat their friend was laying on.

4. *What may have prompted some to follow Jesus early in His ministry?*

5. *How did Jesus respond? Why do you think He responded this way?*

6. *How would you characterize the four who carried the paralytic to Jesus?*

Jesus Forgives Sin

Mark 2:5-7, KJV

5 When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, thy sins be forgiven thee.

6 But there was certain of the scribes sitting there, and reasoning in their hearts,

7 Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? who can forgive sins but God only?

Mark 2:5-7, NIV

⁵When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

⁶Now some teachers of the law were sitting there, thinking to themselves, ⁷"Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

Jesus used this incident to bring into focus His true nature. When He said, "Son, your sins are forgiven," those who had a good understating of Scripture knew that since only God can forgive sins. By saying that He had the authority to forgive sins, Jesus was in fact claiming that He was God. Under the laws given to Moses, this could have been considered blasphemous and would have been ample justification to

have Jesus executed (Lev. 24:15-16).

Caiaphas, the high priest at the time Jesus was crucified, made a similar charge against Jesus during His trial. At one point, Caiaphas asked Jesus, "Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?" (Mark 14:60-65). Jesus said He was, and then added that one day He would sit at the right hand of God. Hearing this, Caiaphas tore his clothes, accused Jesus of blasphemy, and asked the crowd what should be done. As Mark noted, "They all condemned him as worthy of death."

Jesus may have had a secondary purpose for declaring that the paralytic's sins were forgiven. Jesus knew that healing the man physically would not make Him whole spiritually. He wanted to do more than just perform a miracle that would result in the man being able to walk again. Jesus wanted to start the process of spiritual healing that begins when people recognize that they have been forgiven for their sins.

7. *What was Jesus' primary reason for saying He could forgive the man's sins?*

8. *How did those well-versed in Scripture respond?*

9. *What may have been a secondary purpose for what Jesus said?*

Jesus Reveals His Nature

Mark 2:8-12, KJV

8 And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them, Why reason ye these things in your hearts?

9 Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

10 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to

Mark 2:8-12, NIV

⁸Immediately Jesus knew in his spirit that this was what they were thinking in their hearts, and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? ⁹Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk'?" ¹⁰But I want you to know that the Son of Man has

KJV

forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)

11 I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy bed, and go thy way into thine house.

12 And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion.

NIV

authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man,

¹¹"I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." ¹²He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all.

This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

Jesus would have been guilty of blasphemy if He claimed to be God and wasn't. To show that their accusations of blasphemy were without merit, Jesus posed a question about what was easier to do: to forgive, or to heal. They knew that neither one was easy; both were things that only God can do. As they considered this, Jesus said that He would prove that He had the authority to forgive sins by healing the paralytic. He then did so to the amazement of those gathered in the house.

One of the reasons Jesus may have performed this miracle was to shift the focus of those who followed Him away from the physical healing they sought toward the spiritual healing they needed. He wanted to prove that He had the authority to make people spiritually whole.

Jesus also wanted to provide tangible evidence of His true nature. Rather than just asking people to trust His claim to be the Son of God, Jesus provided physical evidence of who He is. He then told those following Him to look at His actions and use this to guide their conclusions about Him.

The miracles Jesus performed, especially the one where He rose from the dead, give credibility to Jesus' claim that He is the Son of God and that He has the ability to forgive our sins and heal us spiritually.

10. *Why did Jesus perform this miracle?*

11. *Why were the accusations of blasphemy without merit?*

12. *What implication does this incident have for us?*

How Jesus Makes Us Whole

There are many ways that Jesus makes us whole. First and perhaps foremost, Jesus makes us whole by forgiving our sins. In the process, He takes away the justification for us to carry a load of guilt about our past sins or beating ourselves up emotionally for what we've done wrong.

He makes us whole by giving guidance on what is good, right, and true, by calling us to act in faith that this is so, and by promising that the outcome will be far better than what would occur if we followed our own idea of right and wrong.

Jesus makes us whole by promising a future that is far better than anything we can experience in this life. Jesus says that there are better days ahead, even though the best will not happen until we enter eternity with Him.

Jesus makes us whole by giving our lives purpose and meaning. He emphasizes that we've been placed where we're at for a reason and that He wants to use us in ways that are fruitful for us, others, and Him.

Jesus makes us whole by encouraging us when we are down, by comforting us when we are grieving, and by giving us strength when we are weary. He is there when we feel lonely and promises to always be with us, no matter what.

Jesus makes us whole by changing us into His likeness, something that doesn't result from us working hard to be good, but happens when we surrender ourselves to the Holy Spirit, who dwells within us.

All of these things take time; they don't happen instantaneously. And they can and will result when we fully trust that Jesus has the desire and authority to make us whole.

13. *Have you already been made whole by Jesus? Explain your answer.*

14. *What are some additional areas where you still need Him to make you whole?*

15. *What can you do so that you are contributing to the process of being made whole by Jesus?*

Jesus Can Make You Whole

We know that Jesus has the desire and the authority to make us whole. And most of us have undoubtedly already experienced some ways that Jesus has done so. What remains is understanding the additional ways He wants to make us whole and trusting in both His desire and authority to do so.

► *In what area do you need to experience the “wholeness” that Jesus provides? What can you do this week to assist in the process of experiencing this?*

KEY VERSE

Whether is it easier to say to the sick of the palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and take up thy bed, and walk?

—Mark 2:9, KJV

“Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up, take your mat and walk?’”

—Mark 2:9, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK’S LESSON

Week of January 18 through January 24

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. Acts 12:5-11—Prayer for Peter in Prison.

Tues. Romans 15:22-33—Pray for a Successful Ministry.

Wed. Ephesians 3:14-21—Pray for Inner Strength and Power.

Thurs. Matthew 6:7-13—Pray the Prayer of Our Lord.

Fri. Luke 6:22-33—Pray for Your Abusers.

Sat. Luke 22:39-46—Pray to Avoid Trials.

Sun. John 17:13-24—Jesus Prays for His Disciples.