

THE GOSPEL PROJECT

# UNIT 23

# THE WAY OF JESUS



MATTHEW; MARK; LUKE



MEMORY VERSES

“But I say to you who listen: Love your enemies,  
do what is good to those who hate you, bless those  
who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.”

—Luke 6:27-28



# FAITH AND FORGIVENESS

CORE PASSAGE: MARK 2:1-12

## CONTEXT

In his account of the life of Jesus, Mark wasted no time getting to the action. Jesus came on the scene proclaiming that the kingdom of God had come near to God's people through Him, and it was time for people to respond. Jesus immediately began backing up His claim with power, performing miracles. In today's passage, Jesus revealed something deeper about who He is and what He came to do. Even greater than miraculous healings, Jesus came to do something about humanity's greatest problem—sin.

## KEY CONCEPT

**Jesus has the power to forgive, especially when He sees committed faith.**

As you examine Mark 2:1-12:

- Note that because of the faith demonstrated, Jesus forgave the man who was paralyzed.
- Contemplate the significance of Jesus's declaration of forgiveness followed by His miraculous healing of the paralyzed man.



## TIMELINE

Jesus Demonstrates His Authority  
in Capernaum (Mark 1:21-34)

Jesus Heals a Leprous Man  
(Mark 1:35-45)

**SESSION STUDY:**  
Jesus Forgives and Heals a  
Paralyzed Man (Mark 2:1-12)

Jesus Teaches About and Heals on  
the Sabbath (Mark 2:23-3:6)

Jesus Appoints His Twelve  
Disciples (Mark 3:7-19)

### Daily Readings

- Day 1:** Mark 2:1-12
- Day 2:** Mark 2:13-17
- Day 3:** Mark 2:18-22
- Day 4:** Matthew 9:1-8
- Day 5:** Matthew 9:9-17
- Day 6:** Psalm 121



Scan this QR code to access  
this session's Scripture passages.

**COMMITTED FAITH LEADS TO FORGIVENESS** (MARK 2:1-5).

**As you read, underline details that demonstrated people's faith.**

**1** When he entered Capernaum again after some days, it was reported that he was at home. **2** So many people gathered together that there was no more room, not even in the doorway, and he was speaking the word to them. **3** They came to him bringing a paralytic, carried by four of them. **4** Since they were not able to bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and after digging through it, they lowered the mat on which the paralytic was lying. **5** Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Today's passage gives an example of faith. A man who was paralyzed was trying to get to Jesus. He and his friends had perhaps heard about this Man who works miracles, and they hoped for one of their own. When the man who was paralyzed came face to face with the One who could heal him, Jesus was moved by "their faith," the faith of the friends and the man. This man and his friends believed in the reality of what they hoped for, and they pressed on to see proof of what they had not yet seen, as seen in the definition of faith in Hebrews 11:1-2. Because of this faith, they were approved.

**LEADER NOTE:** When the Bible tells of miracles, it's more focused on the who rather than the what. It's about the object of faith, not the results. When your faith is in the right place, you can always trust that the result will be good, even if it's not what you expected. The main point of the faith seen in Mark 2 is not that it led to healing but that it led to Jesus Himself. And Jesus is the source of our healing, both physical and spiritual.

**If someone who knew nothing about Christianity asked you to define "faith," what would you say?**

**WORD STUDY**

**FAITH:** The Greek word for "faith" used in this passage comes from the same root as the verb translated "to believe." The word does not just mean head knowledge or intellectual ascent as we sometimes describe faith. Faith carries the nuance of absolute confidence that leads to obedience.

**Key Concept:** Jesus has the power to forgive, especially when He sees committed faith.

Notes

So what is faith? Faith is confidence and trust, but it's a vehicle. It's the thing that connects us to the One who can save us. In faith, we acknowledge that we need saving and that Jesus is the One who does the saving. This is why faith and salvation go together in the Bible. Faith is not some magic trick. If the paralyzed man had come to someone other than Jesus, his faith wouldn't have mattered. What made the difference was to whom he directed his faith. Faith by itself cannot save us. Only Jesus can save us. Therefore, when we put our faith in Christ, we find ourselves in the presence of the One who can heal our hurts and forgive our sins.

**LEADER NOTE:** Often when we discuss the importance of our faith, we can be tempted to place the focus on ourselves rather than on Christ. It is important to note that in this passage, a small amount of focus is placed on the faith of the man and his friends. A large amount of focus is placed on the identity and authority of Jesus that was revealed in response to their faith. When studying the Bible, we should strive to make our main focus the same as the passage's main focus.

Jesus came to heal souls and forgive sins. Though He healed physical ailments, His main purpose was to bring salvation to the world, and salvation comes through forgiveness. Jesus always knows our deeper and greater need, even when we don't. That's why we need to trust and have faith in the One who is able to do it all. He has the power and authority to do so because He is God.

**What deeper need do you want Christ to satisfy in your life right now?**

#### THEOLOGY CONNECTION

**GOD IS GRACIOUS:** God's nature is to delight in giving unmerited favor to those who are undeserving (Eph. 2:8-9). His grace toward sinners is found most clearly in the salvation He has provided through Christ. Because of sin, humanity is undeserving of salvation—all of us have turned our backs on God, and as a result, we deserve death (Rom. 6:23). Instead of leaving people in their sins, God demonstrated His graciousness by providing atonement and forgiveness for our sins through the death and resurrection of Jesus (2 Cor. 5:21).

## JESUS HAS THE POWER TO HEAL AND TO FORGIVE BECAUSE HE IS GOD (MARK 2:6-12).

**Underline the events in this passage that show Jesus's authority.**

**6** But some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts:

**7** "Why does he speak like this? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins

but God alone?" **8** Right away Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were

thinking like this within themselves and said to them, "Why are you thinking

these things in your hearts? **9** Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your

sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat, and walk'? **10** But so that

you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—

he told the paralytic— **11** "I tell you: get up, take your mat, and go home."

**12** Immediately he got up, took the mat, and went out in front of everyone.

As a result, they were all astounded and gave glory to God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

The Jews had heard of prophets and men of God who could work miracles before, but they had not seen a man who claimed the authority to forgive sin. They questioned in their hearts Jesus's authority and called Him blasphemous, knowing rightly that only God "can forgive sins" (v. 7). If they could only believe that Jesus is God, they wouldn't have called it blasphemy.

But to prove to the skeptics that He could both forgive sin and heal a paralytic, Jesus told the man to get up and go home. We also see Jesus's divinity in the fact that Jesus could perceive in His spirit what the scribes were thinking. All these things point to Jesus as God; His power and authority revealed it all. And the response? "They were all astounded and gave glory to God" (v. 12).

**What has Christ done recently that causes you to be astounded and give Him glory?**

### VOICES FROM CHURCH HISTORY

"When Jesus called Himself the Son of Man, He was not practicing humility. . . . That title was pregnant with theological significance concerning Jesus' deity and office. That was why Jesus used it here; He wanted to show His divine authority to forgive sin."<sup>1</sup>

—R. C. Sproul (1939–2017)

**Key Concept:** Jesus has the power to forgive, especially when He sees committed faith.

**LEADER NOTE:** We need to be able to take the practical implications of this passage and make them personal. The passage teaches that Jesus is God, and therefore, He can forgive sins. Jesus didn't just have the authority to forgive the man who was paralyzed and other people He encountered in the New Testament. Jesus has the authority to forgive you personally. You can study the Bible and appreciate it as a good story but never be changed by it. God intends for His Word to change our lives, and few things have the potential to be as transformational as the truth that Jesus is able to deal with your sins.

The main point of this passage is not that a man who was paralyzed went away walking and forgiven. The point is that God healed and forgave this man, or more precisely, Jesus as God healed and forgave this man. This passage is a key moment in the story of the Bible because, ever since Genesis 3, we've been waiting for someone to arrive in the story who could actually do something about humanity's sin. Mark 2:1-12 declares Jesus to be that someone!

**LEADER NOTE:** Many people in the Bible got upset or offended when Jesus didn't act or speak the way they expected Him to. They liked Jesus as long as He agreed with them, but when He stepped outside of their box, they were done with Him. People are still like that today. We need to ask ourselves if we are accepting Jesus for who He has shown Himself to be or if we are chasing a false Jesus of our own making who just does whatever we want Him to.

**What is better—to be healed of a physical ailment or a spiritual one—and why?**

#### GOSPEL CONNECTION

Jesus, as God, has the power to heal a person spiritually and physically. This is ultimately seen through His resurrection that gives us salvation and forgiveness of sin through our faith and trust in Him. One day our bodies also will be gloriously resurrected.

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ARRIVAL

**ENGAGE:** As your group arrives, give each person a blank piece of paper and ask them to write in two columns: (1) “Those Whose Authority I Am Under,” and (2) “Those Whom I Have Authority Over.” After people have completed their lists, invite some volunteers to share a few roles and/or people under each list. Ask: “Why do you submit to some authorities over you, and why might you struggle to submit to other authorities?”

**TRANSITION:** It seems that authority depends on the circumstances, with one exception that we will examine today.

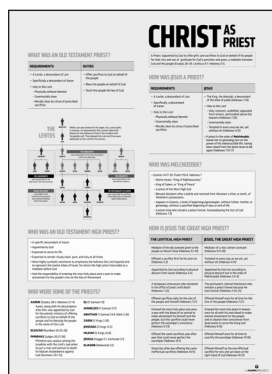
CONTEXT

**SAY:** In Mark 1:22, the crowds marveled at Jesus’s teaching “because he was teaching them as one who had authority.” This was an observation the people made in response to Jesus’s mastery of His subject matter. In today’s study, however, the authority that Jesus spoke of was not something He could have developed through dedicated study; rather, it was His by divine right. The scribes had a problem with Jesus forgiving sins because they did not recognize His authority, but they were wrong. Jesus, as our faithful, perfect, and divine High Priest, has the authority to forgive sins. *(Display Pacl’ Item 7: Christ as Priest and briefly review how Jesus serves as our Great High Priest.)*

RECAP

**ASK:** As you prepared this week, what did you notice about Jesus’s authority? How did others respond to Jesus’s authority?

**TRANSITION:** Today we will witness Jesus’s authority to reverse the eternal consequences of sin. This gift of forgiveness continues to be offered to all humanity through faith in Jesus Christ.



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**Key Concept:** Jesus has the power to forgive, especially when He sees committed faith.

Notes

### GROUP ACTIVITY

**CHART:** Direct your group to page 56 in their Personal Study Guide (PSG), where they will find the chart “Jesus’s Power over All.” Recreate the chart on a board in your room so you can record the group’s findings as they interact with Scripture.

Jesus’s Power over All		
Read the passages below. Write down what Jesus did to show His authority and how people responded.		
AUTHORITY OVER	JESUS’S ACTIONS	PEOPLE’S RESPONSE
<b>EVIL SPIRITS</b> (Mark 1:23-28)		
<b>SIN</b> (Mark 2:1-7)		
<b>PHYSICAL AILMENTS</b> (Mark 2:8-12)		
<b>RELIGION/TRADITION</b> (Mark 3:1-6)		
<b>NATURE</b> (Mark 4:35-41)		
<b>DEATH</b> (Mark 5:35-43)		

**READ:** Invite a volunteer to read aloud Mark 2:1-12.

**DISCUSS:** From the passage, fill in the chart about Jesus’s authority over sin and over physical ailments. Then divide your group into four smaller groups and give each group a passage from Mark from the chart. Instruct them to record Jesus’s action in that passage that showed His authority and also to write down how people responded.

**ASK:** As you look at the chart, what do you think is the hardest aspect of authority to believe Jesus has control over? Why?

**DISCUSS:** Why do you think the scribes pushed back against belief in Jesus’s authority? What might have drawn the man who was paralyzed and his friends to believe in Jesus’s authority?

**CONSIDER:** Jesus doesn’t always do what we expect or what we hope for. In today’s passage, the obvious thing for Jesus to do would have been to heal the

man first. But Jesus addressed his deeper need first. Ask: “If people had a prayer need for sickness, for financial help, or for marriage or relationship problems, what are some possible deeper needs there?”

**SAY:** Jesus is our ultimate authority, yet He is never authoritarian. He is compassionate, loving, and gracious and always wants the best for us. But He knows what “the best” is better than we know for ourselves.

### DEBRIEF

**When is it difficult for you to receive the forgiveness Jesus has the authority to give you?**

**Even with having faith in God’s forgiveness, when is it difficult for you to forgive others?**

### SUMMARIZE

Jesus’s authority to forgive sin was not developed through study, practice, or posturing. It is His because He is God. When we put our faith in Jesus, this removes the barrier of disbelief and frees us to desire God’s will above our own and to receive the forgiveness we need through Jesus’s sacrifice for us.

### HEAD, HEART, HANDS

Walk the group through the Head, Heart, Hands section in the PSG (p. 57). If running short on time, specifically highlight the **Hands** section in this week’s study, inviting volunteers to share their responses to the question in this section.



**HEAD:** It is vital that we let God’s Word define what we believe about Him. We don’t get to just pick and choose our theology. The Word of God reveals God to us, and we must decide to believe it or not. Scripture declares that Jesus is God in the flesh and that He forgives sins. Our preferences and preconceived notions do not affect who He is. If the Bible makes a claim that seems hard to believe, then we must be the ones to bend, not the Bible.

**How does God’s Word challenge your preferences and preconceptions?**



**HEART:** The Gospels don’t just reveal the person of Jesus to us so that we can know more facts about Him. God has shown His Son to us in the Gospels so that we might know Him personally. Our takeaway must be more than just a set of doctrines to ascribe to. God’s special revelation in His Word should fill us with awe and wonder! Jesus, God in the flesh, is ready and able to deal with your sin. We should stand amazed at the wonder of this truth.

**Where in your life do you need to believe that Jesus is able to deal with sin, whether yours or someone else’s?**

**Key Concept:** Jesus has the power to forgive, especially when He sees committed faith.



**HANDS:** Many people in our world today respect and even revere Jesus.

They like some of the things He had to say. They think He was a kind, loving, and wise teacher. They don't, however, believe He is God in the flesh. Disbelief in the deity and identity of Jesus is not an option Jesus intended to leave us with. (*Display Paclr Item 8: Jesus Forgives Sins and reread the passage aloud.*) Many people need to be lovingly confronted with the reality of who Jesus claimed to be, and then they need to decide if they will accept or reject His claims.

**With whom can you share that Jesus clearly claimed to be God?**

### NEXT STEPS

Challenge the group to consider these actions as responses to this session.

- Read Matthew 8:5-13 about the faith of the centurion, paying close attention to verses 8-10. Pray that God will reveal to you any area(s) of your life that you are withholding from His absolute authority.
- Recall the last thing you knew for certain that God led you to do. If you have not obeyed, then take steps to do so this week.
- If you can recall when God healed you of a physical ailment, write that out as a testimony and share it with others, including posting it on social media.

Invite volunteers to share prayer needs for this week. Encourage them to record these in the space on page 57 in their PSG so they can pray for others throughout the week.

### PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES

### PRAYING SCRIPTURE

**CLOSE:** Pray through Psalm 121:1-4 with your group, thanking God for His help and protection from all things in the physical and spiritual realms.

#### References

1. R. C. Sproul, Mark, First Edition, St. Andrew's Expository Commentary (Orlando, FL: Reformation Trust, 2011), 41.

Notes

