

July 25, 2021

7. True Neighbors — Mark 2:1-12

I'm confused by some of the intersections in this text: forgiveness and physical healing; the friendship between the paralytic—who does not request healing—and his friends; the theological debate between the scribes and Jesus. As I write, commentaries are open on my desk. I'm still unable to make conclusive links between the above polarities. When this occurs, I tend to read the text at face value, considering the facts, bare words and sentences, outlining conundrums.

What a mess! A first-century house roof consisted of flat beams laid crossways, wall to wall, approximately three feet apart. Space between beams was filled with brush wood packed tight with clay and marled over. Digging through the roof? Think of the dirt, sticks, and dust raining down on inhabitants of the house.

Was permission given to open the roof? Maybe this was Simon and Andrew's home. Maybe the four who lowered the paralytic were Jesus' original four disciples. If that's true, then Simon and Andrew would have had the right to deconstruct their house's roof.¹

What a ride, being carried up an outside stairway on a flat stretcher and lowered through the roof. Did the paralytic ask for this? Did the disciples take it upon themselves to present him to Jesus in a highly unusual way?

Verse 5 indicates that Jesus was so impressed with their faith that he healed the paralytic. *The NIV Study Bible* notes that Jesus was impressed by the faith of the man *and* his friends, and therefore healed and *forgave* the paralytic (who didn't ask for that either). And I wonder about a converse personal reality in which I have led healing services for friends with strong faith, but healing did not happen.

Jesus asks if it is easier to heal or forgive sins. In this text, Jesus did both. For first-century Jews, sin and suffering were related. In his actions, then, what was Jesus attempting to communicate to them?

If I were teaching, I might note these things and ask participants to name their questions related to healing, moving toward personal and biblical rejoinders.

—Ruben Chupp
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¹. Timothy J. Geddert, *Mark*, Believer's Church Bible Commentary (Scottsdale: Herald Press, 2001), 62.



Ruben Chupp of Nappanee, Indiana, is a spiritual director, chaplain, and retired pastor. His personal goals: “love God and the person in front of me at any given time; read some, write some, think some, pray some, and take a nap every day; love my wife, Idella, my children, and their children with all the grace I possess; and finally, get home before dark.”

Resources for this session

A video, “The Power of Coming to the Table,” <https://youtu.be/zTpH3jbniog>. For additional information on Coming to the Table, see <https://comingtothetable.org/>

Salt & Light Videos

Jaye Lindo is the presenter for unit 2, Neighbors. These teaching videos are great for leader preparation or introducing each session. They are available on [MennoMedia’s YouTube channel](#). Jaye is the pastor of 7 Ways Home Fellowship, Bowie, Maryland.

Additional commentary for this session is available at:
<https://www.mennomedia.org/salt-light-supplements/>