

Neither the one
who plants
or the one
who waters is
anything, but only
God, who makes
things grow.
1 Corinthians 3:7

GR O W T H I N C H R I S T

Church of the Resurrection

Session 2 Wholeness

Key Bible passage. Mark 2:1-12

The healing of the paralysed man.

(Choose a way to read or listen to this).

1 Getting to

know one another

If you were asked to identify yourself with an animal, what would it be? If you choose a cat or a dog, try and be specific with breed, colour and temperament!

2. Looking at the Bible together

Begin this session by sharing the thoughts you have prepared during the week about what life in all its fullness means.

Basic Summary

In this passage everyone is trying to get near Jesus. Mark tells us they heard he was at home - so it may have been his own house that had its roof destroyed! 'The story is a tiny version of the whole gospel' We see Jesus teaching and healing. We see growing opposition to Him and an accusation of blasphemy because Jesus seems to claim to be able to forgive sins. We see Him vindicated when the man 'rises' from his mat. Above all we see him bringing new life to the paralysed man as a result of his friends faith and his response to Jesus' command. The result of this restoration to wholeness is praise to God..

The root of the man's problem.

Life in its fullness means being integrated not fragmented. To experience this well-being, healing needs to be holistic, involving all aspects of our lives. Jesus sees that the man's deepest need is for forgiveness not simply to be healed physically. The Physical healing is seen as a sign that Jesus is also able to forgive the man's sins.

Health - a dynamic state of well-being of the individual and society, of physical, mental, spiritual, economic, political and social well-being - of being in harmony with each other, with the material environment and with God (WCC definition)

- *What is stopping the paralysed man from experiencing the kind of full life you discussed earlier?*
- *How does Jesus seem to see the root of his problem differently from the crowd ?*
- *Share some examples from your life from situations in our world today where lack of forgiveness might be the root of the problem*

To find a safe place in which to be able to say once in a while 'This is the real me warts and all' is itself an immediately beneficial thing. But then to be told, with absolute authority, that this real me really is forgiven, accepted, loved and wanted by God himself - that is perhaps the most healing thing a human being can hear.

Jeffrey John 'The Meaning in the Miracles' p 41 (Canterbury Press)

Is there a link between sin and sickness or suffering?

The fact that the physical healing and forgiveness are linked in this passage can result in some making the assumption that the paralysed man had committed some specific sin that resulted in his sickness. Elsewhere Jesus is careful to deny a direct link between the two. Examples are in Luke 13:2-6 when there was a disaster and people died and in John 9:2-3 with the man who was born blind. Suffering is not to be linked with the individuals sin (compare also with the story of Job) but it is a result of the sinfulness of the world in general and its separation from God the creator. Jesus miracles are signs of the Kingdom, of God's reclamation of his world through the coming of Jesus.

Both sin and disease are harmful to and destructive of human life, and Christians are called to oppose everything which threatens full humanity, and do so in the name of the kingdom of God.

Donald English 'The Message of Mark' p68 (IVP)

The friends' faith

The group of friends are the ones who initially had faith for the man. They have the faith to bring their friend to Jesus to find healing. They had to carry him; they had to overcome obstacles; they had to make an opening for him to actually get to Jesus. They met the obstacles and found practical solutions, deciding to go through the roof, find the tools that would have been necessary etc. The man was already in community and they 'carried' him to Jesus. Being a community of wholeness will involve us having faith but also doing some hard work if we want to see people find fullness of life in Jesus.

- *Who has the faith that the man can be made whole?*
 - *What are the obstacles in their way and how do they overcome them?*
 - *What are the obstacles you are facing that prevent you experiencing wholeness?*
 - *What obstacles do you need to overcome to help others find wholeness?*
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- *Where and how could you show signs of God's Kingdom overcoming the sinfulness and alienation in the communities you are part of?*

The man's response

We are not told whether Jesus sees the faith of the man as well as his friends but presumably he had enough faith to agree to be taken to see Jesus.

When the man is actually before Jesus then he needs to interact with Him for himself, take responsibility and be obedient to what Jesus is asking him to do.

- *What steps bring the man to a greater sense of wholeness in his life?*
- *Does a disability of some kind make you less whole?*
- *How might disability make a community more whole?*
- *Do you see fullness of life in anyway differently than you did at the beginning of the study?*

3. Prayer and reflection

Read James 5:13-16.(Notice the responsibility of the individual to pray for their difficulties but also to ask others to pray.)

Get the group to quietly think of an area where they are not experiencing fullness of life at the moment. Think back to the aspects of wholeness and fullness of life you have discussed tonight. Prepare a cross out of cardboard before the meeting and cut it into enough pieces for the group to have one each. Ask them to write down on their piece one area where they need to experience wholeness. Put the pieces of the cross together again.

Choose a way that suits your tradition to pray for wholeness for one another. You could silently pray while the leader anoints each person with healing oil. You could pray in pairs for need the other has shared. The group could lay hands on each person in turn and pray for what has been shared.

If you have time you could pray for others in your communities you want to bring to the feet of Jesus to find wholeness.

4. Preparation for next session

In preparation for week 3 (Communities) find out as much as possible about the people who formed the community around Jesus. Passages like Luke 6:12-16, 8:1-3, 10:38-39, John 1:35f., 11:1-3, Matthew 4:18-22, 9:9, 10:1-4, will get you started. You could also look up the names in a Bible dictionary - or go on line!