



SESSION

1

Jesus forgives and heals



MEETING AIM

To explore how it feels to have friends fight for your spiritual and physical needs.



BIBLE PASSAGE

Luke 5:17-26



BACKGROUND

Often this passage focuses on the healing, but Jesus does something far more radical here - he forgives the man. The healing is the physical outworking of that forgiveness and a 'proof' of Jesus' power to those who think Jesus is claiming things for himself (divinity) that he isn't entitled to. There is a thread here of Jesus seeing the deeper needs of people. Yes, the man can't walk and needs to be healed, but Jesus also sees that he needs to be released from his sinful nature.

+ GATHERING TIME



As the young people arrive, gather them in a circle with refreshments. Try to get something that shows the young people they are valued, such as home-made cake, platters of fruit or pizza. Discuss together: What was the last film that made you want to be one of the characters? What was it that grabbed you so much?

+ INTRODUCTION



Lift one person up high on everyone's arms - a bit like crowd surfing - risk assess this idea and if it feels too unsafe then a tamer version would be to get the young people in two lines facing each other and have them cross their arms and hold each other's hands forming a 'hammock' for one person to lie on so they are completely supported by the others. Give each young person a turn to be held up by the others for a minute or two each. The idea is that every young person will have an experience of being lifted up and supported by the rest of the group.

+ BIBLE EXPLORATION



You will need: high-up location to tell the story

Before the session, find a place in your church building (or the site where you meet) that is high up, where you can read or retell the story. This could be a church bell tower, a flat roof or even everyone standing on chairs. This will give the story a sense of drama, excitement and realism. Do a quick risk assessment and pre-plan what is safe and acceptable behaviour in that context from your young people - communicate this to them but don't be afraid to take a sensible small risk!

Read or retell the story, with the young people acting out what happens if they are keen. At various points stop the story and action and ask the group what they think is happening (not just the details of the story, but the wider context of Jesus' ministry, the attitudes of the Pharisees and the power of Jesus to forgive sins). Wonder together about what various characters in (or on top of) the house might have been thinking. Then try to guess what the man who had been forgiven and healed might have done next.

Ask the group why they think Jesus forgave the man first, before healing him. Then wonder about the reason Luke gives for Jesus forgiving the man in verse 20. Who do they think the word 'their' in verse 20 refers to? What do they make of the actions of the man's friends?

+ CHATTING TOGETHER



Ask the group these questions, making sure everyone has the chance to contribute:

- How much risk is there in your relationship with Jesus?
- Have you ever put yourself out there in terms of what you ask of God or what you are willing to sacrifice for him? What about taking risks when you are unsure how others will respond to your acts of faith?
- How does others' opinions of your faith affect what you do or don't do for Jesus?
- How does Jesus feel about your willingness to risk your reputation for him?
- If you were at Jesus' feet what one thing would you ask him for?

+ CREATIVE RESPONSE



You will need: scissors; coloured paper; white paper; felt-tip pens; PVA glue or glue sticks

Stick several layers of coloured paper on top of each other by gluing around the edges of

the paper but not the centre area. When you have several layers, cut a small horizontal incision in the middle through all the layers.

Encourage the young people to prayerfully choose a word (prophetically, even, if you would like to encourage them in that) to write in bold capitals (but not too large) in the centre of a sheet of white paper. They could write words such as FORGIVEN, LOVED, HEALING or FUTURE. They should write this word without others in the group seeing it.

The young people should then stick their coloured layers on top of the sheet of white paper (again putting the glue around the edges of the paper, not in the middle) to create a sort of treasure hunt to 'dig' down for the special word.

Gather all their creations and ask the young people to take one that they did not make. They must then rip away the coloured paper from the centre until they uncover the word that hopefully should bless them and leave a rainbow effect of torn coloured paper around it.

+ PRAYER



You will need: words from 'Creative response'; reflective music and the means to play it (optional)

Ask the young people to think about the word they have uncovered. Is God trying to speak to them about what they need to 'dig' for to get from him? What are the things they need that they would go to extreme lengths to get from Jesus? If you're using it, play music and encourage the group to spend a minute or two reflecting on these questions.

Next, prompt them to share this thing / these things in groups of three and take it in turns to pray for each other to receive them and perhaps even talk about practical ways to help each other gain those things, like the friends in the story helped the their friend who couldn't walk.

JOEL TOOMBS

has an MA in Christian mentoring and wrote the Grove booklet *Mentoring and young people*. He is a volunteer youth worker.