**Live in Community**

Small Group Study

**Volume Overview**

**Believe Boldly**

Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. And do everything with love. ([1 Corinthians 16:13–14](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.1Co16.13-14))

*The gospel message is shocking to many, shocking because of its implications. God has made himself known to us and promised to place His Spirit into our heart. We have been given direct access to Him. The Bible encourages us to come to Him with boldness. Our boldness in approaching Him is not from our words or our achievements. Instead, it’s based on God’s promises. So we ask, remembering His power and faithfulness. And we encourage those around us to do the same. Believe boldly.*

**Session Overview**

**Encourage Others**

**Biblical Encounter:** Four Friends’ Enormous Faith Moves Jesus to Heal Their Friend
([Mark 2:1–12](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk2.1-12))

**Outcome:** Actively be a part of God’s work in the lives of others.

*In this session, we'll see a powerful example of how our pointing others to Jesus can be a part of God’s work in their lives. We are not meant to live life alone. We need others, especially when our faith is weak or when we go through crises. In the same way, we want to be there for others in their time of need. The story of the paralyzed man’s four friends who lowered him through a roof to see Jesus is an unforgettable example of sacrificial friendship and enormous faith.*

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| First time leading *Live* for Adults? Check out the [Facilitator Guide](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf). |

To access session content and videos from a computer, visit: [BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

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| **QUESTION**What’s the greatest act of friendship you’ve ever experienced? |

In a world full of selfishness and isolation, stories of truly sacrificial friendship are heartwarming and inspiring. We were created by God for fellowship and friendship. The help and encouragement we receive from others like the friendship we just described teaches us how to be a good friend ourself and inspires us to pay it forward.

In [John 15:13](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn15.13), Jesus told us there is no greater way to show love than to lay down our life for our friends. Jesus is our ultimate example of love and friendship. He was never a surface-level or social media-type friend. He engaged in our world and laid down His life, so we could have a closer relationship with God the Father. How can we learn from God’s Word to be a true friend to others, to go beyond the surface, and show love to our friends?

**Watch**

As we watch this video, think about your answer to this question: How have you been an encouragement for someone when they were facing something difficult?



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**Consider What the Bible Says**

The Book of Mark tells us that Jesus had been traveling throughout the region of Galilee, teaching God’s Word, healing the sick, and casting out demons. As [Mark 2](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk2) begins, we see that Jesus had returned to His “headquarters” of Capernaum, but this time His popularity had grown and many people were seeking Him out. Word had spread about a Teacher who could heal the sick, and hope and curiosity was rising among the crowds that gathered.

As a rabbi, a Jewish teacher, Jesus taught in a variety of locations. This time, He was in someone’s home. It was probably just a typical day, but people had gathered to hear Him teach. So many had gathered that no space was available in the home or even at the door for more people to crowd in and listen to Him speak.

**Did You Know?**

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| *In the area where Jesus was ministering, a house roof was typically constructed by taking branches and laying them across the top of the building. Then, the builders would slowly pack layers of mud and clay on top of the branches. When enough layers were applied, and while the material was still moist, the builders would then take stone rollers and go over the roof. They packed mud into the roof while making sure it could support enough weight to also serve as an exterior living area. Although the roof could be broken through in a short amount of time, breaking open a roof enough to pass someone through it would be a backbreaking job!* |

**Friends Confronted a Big Obstacle**

Read [Mark 2:1–4](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk2.1-4).

As Jesus was teaching and the crowds pressed in closely, others were pushed out. But four friends of a paralyzed man decided to act with enormous faith! They knew their friend had a desperate need. Their hearts were hopeful that maybe this Teacher could help.

In their compassion, they determined to somehow overcome the obstacle of the crowd. With no way in through the front door, they were curious and began exploring how else they might get their needy friend before Jesus. Maybe they argued back and forth about their different ideas. Maybe one friend got creative and looked up toward the roof as a possibility. Whatever the path, their desperation overcame any hesitation. They made their way to the roof of the house where Jesus was teaching, hoping this would allow their friend to see Him.

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| **QUESTION**How do you think the paralyzed man’s friends felt when they arrived to see such a crowd around Jesus? |

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think they decided to go through the roof? |

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| **QUESTION**Would you have come to the same conclusion? If so, would you have been willing to try what they did for their friend? |

**Jesus Responded to the Friends’ Faith**

Read [Mark 2:5](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk2.5).

Imagine Jesus’ emotions as particles, debris, and dust from the roof began falling on His head as He taught. Maybe Jesus had to rub His eyes from the dust or shield His head from things falling—or even get out of the way! Jesus must have recognized immediately as He watched the man being lowered that here was a man with a huge need to be met.

Notice that the Scripture says, “Seeing their faith”. Jesus was responding to “their” faith, meaning the man’s friends. Though it’s likely the paralyzed man had faith of his own, the Bible writer here is directing us to think about the faith of those who helped the man. Their faith mattered! They had enough hope and determination that they went to great lengths to get their friend to Jesus, and Jesus responded to that faith.

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| **QUESTION**Why do you think Jesus was so impressed by the actions of the paralyzed man’s friends? |

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| **QUESTION**If you were Jesus, do you think you would have felt more compassion toward the paralyzed man or toward his friends who worked so hard to get him there? |

**Jesus Confronted the Teachers of the Law**

Read [Mark 2:6–9](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk2.6-9).

Jesus’ teaching took a different direction after He discerned the religious leaders’ reaction when He forgave the paralyzed man. Jesus began to question their thinking about the authority He had. He wanted them to know His power to forgive was of even greater importance than His power to heal. Jesus seemed more concerned with immediately handling the condition of the man’s heart and soul than the physical condition he was in.

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| **QUESTION**How would you compare the reaction of the teachers of the Law with the faith of the paralyzed man’s friends? |

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| **QUESTION**How do you think the paralyzed man’s friends felt during this exchange? Do you think they were frustrated or confused that Jesus was more concerned about forgiveness than healing their friend? |

**Jesus Answered the Friends’ Request**

Read [Mark 2:10–12](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk2.10-12).

With a crowd of onlookers wondering what would happen next, Jesus demonstrated His power and authority with a miraculous sign. He commanded the paralyzed man to stand, pick up his mat, and walk! Imagine the man’s joy and relief as his legs straightened and strength poured into his body, enabling him to stand, jump, and do what he had been unable to do for so long! Think about the surge of emotions the man’s friends felt, watching from above as their friend walked out the door instead of needing to be carried out again. The crowd and even the religious teachers must have been blown away by what they saw!

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| **QUESTION**How do you think the four friends responded after they likely came down from the roof and reconnected with their healed friend? |

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| **QUESTION**How do you think this experience impacted the now-healed man? How do you think it affected his friendships with the men who selflessly made the encounter with Jesus possible? |

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| **QUESTION**In what ways do these men’s faith and actions inspire you to be a better friend as you consider how to point others to Jesus? |

**Reflect**

**Actively be a part of God’s work in the lives of others.**

One of the greatest acts of friendship we can ever give to others is to bring our friends to Jesus. Like the paralyzed man’s friends in this story, we need to search for ways to help meet the needs of people in our life. We can allow the Holy Spirit to make us aware of needs we can help to meet. But more importantly, we need to purposefully point our friends to the only One who can forgive and heal.

How aware are you of the spiritual needs of your friends? Have you spoken with them about your faith in Jesus? When they have a need, have you ever suggested Jesus as the solution to help meet that need? Be inspired and challenged today by the determination and love these friends demonstrated on behalf of their needy friend. Allow God to sacrificially love others through you as you point them to Him and the forgiveness and healing He offers.

**Listen to God**

Let’s pause and listen to what God might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Be silent for a few moments and reflect on the following questions. Respond to the one that most resonates with what God is saying to you now. Then complete the others during Day 1 of your devotion time this week.

**Personal Reflection Questions**

*Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.*

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| **QUESTION**What can you learn about friendship from this example of the paralyzed man’s friends? |

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| **QUESTION**How are you engaging with the people God has placed in your life? How aware are you of their spiritual needs? |

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| **QUESTION**How can you point your friends to Jesus when they share a need with you |

**Activate**

Like the paralyzed man’s friends finding a way around the crowd, sometimes we face obstacles that make it difficult to bring people to Jesus too. We sometimes fear rejection, we doubt whether we have answers to their questions, and we lack faith to believe God can meet a specific need. These are all examples of obstacles we face. Allow the Holy Spirit to fill you with faith to overcome challenges. He can help us to show love for our friends by pointing them to the One who has the power and authority to meet any needs in their life.

**Challenge**

When a friend shares a need with you this week, take time in that moment to pray with them for that need. Ask the Holy Spirit what role you should play in encouraging them or helping to meet that need. Follow up with them later in the week to see how they are doing. Celebrate and thank God together if the need has been met or offer encouragement and more prayer if God has not yet met the need.

**Prayer Requests**

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| Note any requests from the group and pray together. Also remember to pray for them during the week. |

We want to always be willing to be used by God to be an encouragement to others. It’s important that we listen to God through His Word both in community and individually. Personal devotions have been provided as an extension of this discussion.

**Live on Your Own**

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| *Before you begin each devotion, pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.* |

**Day 1: Four Friends’ Enormous Faith Moves Jesus to Heal Their Friend**

Read [Mark 2:1–12](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Mk2.1-12).

Look back over Live in Community and complete your responses to the Personal Reflection Questions. Plan how to complete the Activate component if you haven’t already done so. If time permits, reread the Scripture too.

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| **QUESTION**What is God saying to you about actively being a part of His work in the lives of others? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 2: Do Life with Others**

Read [Acts 2:44–47](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac2.44-47).

In the Early Church, we see the example of believers gathering together, meeting each other’s physical needs, eating together, and worshipping God together. It’s obvious throughout Scripture that God never intended for us to walk out our faith alone. We need community!

You might have heard the phrase “do life together” when we speak about discipleship. We need examples of more mature believers walking out their faith around us, and we also need to learn to be an example to newer believers as we mature. When we live in community, God uses these relationships to help us point people to Jesus.

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| **QUESTION**How do you think God uses the community of believers to point others to Him? |

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| **QUESTION**Are you actively a part of a group of believers who meets together regularly to worship God and meet each other’s needs? Why or why not? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 3: Be the Church with Others**

Read [Romans 12:4–13](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ro12.4-13).

This passage teaches us how to be the Church. God never intended for us to live out our faith alone. As believers, we need each other, especially since we each bring something different to the group. God has graced each of us with certain gifts to help us serve with others. He desires for us to put these gifts into action, whether that be giving, encouraging, serving, teaching, or something else.

We should use our gifts in love and with excellence, enthusiasm, and in a spirit of honor. If we see a need, we should be ready to help that person. We should be eager to be hospitable to others. If each of us uses our gifts to love and serve others, together we can be the Church as we point others to Jesus through our example.

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| **QUESTION**What gifts do you think God has given you to bless others with? |

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| **QUESTION**How do you think combining your gift(s) with others in the Church could help point others to Jesus? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 4: Serve Others**

Read [Philippians 2:1–11](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Php2.1-11).

As we think about seeking to be part of God’s work in others, it’s important to consider Jesus’ example of servanthood. He was fully God and had access to all the riches of heaven, yet He humbly and willingly gave up His privileges to serve and die for us. If we want to become like Christ, our posture should be to serve others in the same way He did for us. When we serve others, we get to participate in God’s activity in their lives as we put their needs above our own, show compassion and love, and look out for their interests.

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| **QUESTION**How does serving others encourage them? |

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| **QUESTION**What do you think servanthood has to do with friendship? |

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| **QUESTION**In what ways do you struggle to serve others? Does thinking about Jesus’ example help put those struggles into perspective? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 5: Love Others**

Read [John 15:9–17](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn15.9-17).

It’s obvious that loving others is a huge part of us being actively involved in the work of God in others’ lives. Jesus clearly defined for us in [John 15](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Jn15) what kind of love He was talking about. It’s the kind of love with which He loved us: the kind that lays down our life for our friends.

It may not necessarily mean physically dying for someone, but it does mean sacrificially giving your time and your resources, being attentive to their needs and finding ways to meet those needs if possible, praying with and encouraging them. It’s choosing to treat them the way you would want to be treated if you were the one in need. When we love as Jesus does, He promised us overflowing joy!

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| **QUESTION**What might loving others with this kind of sacrificial love look like in your life? |

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| **QUESTION**In what ways have you found Jesus’ promise of overflowing joy to be true when you put this kind of love into practice? |