

## LESSON 6

April 7, 2024

# Unit II: The Measure of Faith Helping a Friend in Need

DEVOTIONAL READING: John 4:4-18

BACKGROUND SCRIPTURE: Luke 5:17-26

PRINT PASSAGE: Luke 5:17-26

### KEY VERSES

Behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him. And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. (Luke 5:18-19, KJV)

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Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. (Luke 5:18-19, NIV)

### Lesson Aims

As a result of experiencing this lesson, you should be able to do the following:

- Understand the importance of Christian friends in building up faith in Christ.
- Value the encouragement and support that you can offer to your friends in the faith.
- Seek to create habits of compassionate and faith-filled action.

### \*Key Terms

**Forgiven (verse 23)**—Greek: *aphiemi* (af-ee'-ay-mee): left (alone, be, go, have); put (sent) away; remitted; yielded up; imperfect.

**Heal (verse 17)**—Greek: *iaomai* (ee-ah'-om-ah-ee): to cure, make well, make whole.

**Paralyzed (verse 24)**—Greek: *paralutikos* (par-al-oo-tee-kos'): afflicted with paralysis; paralytic (i.e., suffering from the relaxing of the nerves of one side); "sick of the palsy" (KJV).

**Pharisees (verse 17)**—Greek: *phariseios* (far-is-ah'-yos): members of a Jewish religious sect.

\*(Word Study Supplement—Refer to page 2)

### Introduction

Friendship is a relationship marked by mutual affection, esteem, intimacy, and trust. Good friendships are a reliable indicator of an individual's overall health and happiness. For example,



### The Biblical Context

Luke, a physician and Paul's companion, authored the gospel of Luke and book of Acts. Although Luke dedicated both his writings to a Roman dignitary named Theophilus, details in the narrative suggest that he had a larger audience in mind—Gentiles. Luke's gospel includes several episodes from Jesus' life that the other gospels omit. Luke is the only account that provides a detailed report of Jesus' birth, John the Baptist's conception, and anything about Jesus' boyhood. Luke portrays Jesus as the compassionate Son of God. Hence, a consistent theme in Luke's gospel is Christ's compassion for those often branded as outcasts in Israel: Gentiles, Samaritans, women, children, sinners, and tax collectors. Luke shows that Jesus was indeed human and divine with a special love and concern for humanity. Primarily, Luke portrays Christ as the world's perfect Savior. The bulk of Luke's gospel is a meticulous account of Christ's ministry (see Luke 5–21). In His travels, Jesus taught, preached, healed the sick, and brought hope to the desperate and discouraged. He also confronted the Jewish religious establishment that followed, relentlessly opposed, attempted to trick, and plotted to kill Him. The setting of this lesson is one of these hostile encounters.

friends can help celebrate good times, provide support during bad times, prevent isolation and loneliness, and allow offering needed companionship in return. Medical research studies have found that adults with strong social connections have a reduced risk of many significant health problems. Much has been written, sung, and portrayed about the blessings and benefits of having friends. Depending on your generation, you may recall songs like "Lean on Me," "You've Got a Friend," or "What about Your Friends?" For all their virtue, friendships demand time, effort, and people who willingly put others first sometimes. However, the benefits of a genuine friendship make the effort worthwhile. One memorable example of friendship is the Gospel account of the four friends who refused to allow any obstacle to prevent getting their sick friend to Jesus to find healing and spiritual wholeness.

### ANALYSIS OF THE BIBLICAL TEXT

## Friendship Finds a Way

*(Luke 5:17-20)*

### KJV

**17 And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.**

**18 And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him.**

**19 And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus.**

**20 And when he saw their faith, he said unto him, Man, thy sins are forgiven thee.**

### NIV

**17 One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick.**

**18 Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus.**

**19 When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.**

**20 When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”**

Luke 5:17-26 records Jesus’ second miracle after the first call of His disciples, true to Luke’s emphasis on His compassionate role as the Son of man (see Luke 5:1-11). Jesus had already healed a man with leprosy (see Luke 5:12-15). At this point in His ministry, large crowds, including Pharisees and teachers of the Law, followed Jesus everywhere. Thus, while Jesus taught in Capernaum, many religious leaders from Galilee, Judea, and Jerusalem were present, looking for an occasion to oppose Him (**verse 17a**). Yet, while teaching, Jesus still possessed the spiritual ability to heal the sick (**verse 17b**). Among the assembled crowd were four men carrying a paralyzed friend, attempting to bring him in before Jesus for healing (**verse 18**). Unable to enter the room, these men took their friend to the roof, removed some tiles, and lowered him from the roof directly in front of Jesus (**verse 19**). Luke does not indicate whether there was a verbal exchange between Jesus and these extraordinary friends, but their unselfish display of friendship was an unspoken appeal for Jesus’ response. Jesus recognized that the men’s faith motivated them to act as they did. Consequently, but surprisingly, Jesus responded by first forgiving the man’s sins instead of healing him (**verse 20**). In this context, Luke intends to show that Jesus had the authority to forgive sins and heal physically. The four friends demonstrated how Christian friendship can be the very support system someone needs to overcome life’s obstacles. A relevant side theme here is that God honors the faith of those who seek to bring others to Christ. In this season of selfish individualism, demonstrating biblical friendship is vitally important. Life’s uncertainties and tragedies have “paralyzed” and traumatized humanity within and without the faith community. Everyone stands to benefit from good friendships, especially those that draw others closer to Christ for spiritual healing.

### **WHAT DO YOU THINK?**

**Which spiritual disciplines enable people to risk their own comfort and security to help others?**

### **Friendship’s Reward (Luke 5:21-26)**

#### **KJV**

**21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaketh blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?**

**22 But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said unto them, What reason ye in your hearts?**

**23 Whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Rise up and walk?**

**24 But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power upon earth to forgive sins, (he**

said unto the sick of the palsy,) I say unto thee, Arise, and take up thy couch, and go into thine house.

25 And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God.

26 And they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day.

### NIV

21 The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

22 Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts?”

23 “Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk?’

24 “But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.”

25 Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.

26 Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, “We have seen remarkable things today.”

Jesus’ declaration that the man’s sins were forgiven evoked a silent accusation of *blasphemy* (a claim to be God) against Him from the Pharisees and teachers of the Law (**verse 21**). Blasphemy was the core of charges this group lodged against Jesus and the motivation for their push to have Him crucified. In their spiritual blindness, Jesus’ enemies counted His claims of spiritual authority as groundless and worthy of capital punishment (death). Jesus discerned their thoughts and asked why they would think such a thing (**verse 22**). Proving His authority to forgive sins, Jesus contradicted their thinking by healing the man—something the Law, Prophets, and other teachings claimed only God had the power to do (**verses 23-24**). The paralytic’s healing was instantaneous, and he stood up before the crowd, picked up what he had been lying on, and rejoiced, giving glory to God (**verse 25**). This miracle amazed those who witnessed it, and they joined the man in praising and glorifying God, knowing that they had seen something incredible (**verse 26**)! Although the crowd may have failed to understand the full implications of who Jesus was (is), they did recognize the awesomeness of God’s presence and marveled at what He had done. This great miracle became a visible reality because of the caring determination of four friends on behalf of a mutual friend in need. Because of his friends, the man was able to have an encounter with Jesus that resulted in spiritual and physical healing. The miracle proved Jesus’ authority to forgive sin and heal, and silenced those who opposed Him. Christians must not overlook the positive spiritual, physical, and emotional impact of demonstrating agape love through genuine friendship. The capacity to display this love is related to an intimate and obedient relationship with Jesus Christ, the greatest Friend of all. As we mature in Christ, His values become ours. Among these values is love expressed through friendships filled with compassion, faith, and sacrifice.

## WHAT DO YOU THINK?

What are some ways to express gratitude for faithful friends who help us in our need?

### A Closing Thought

People in this generation need more Christian friendships to unify, encourage, and strengthen them in their faith. We are surrounded by lonely, hurting, needy people, in and beyond the church. This lesson challenges us to be intentional about developing high-quality friendships that let us use our gifts, skills, and talents to help others. The capacity for accomplishing this task begins with our relationship with Christ. As we submit to Him, His compassionate love and concern for others will impact how we relate to others.

### Your Life

You will not have to look far beyond your current environment to discover someone who needs the help of a friend. Ask God to give you opportunities to use your unique spiritual resources to be the kind of friend who will help, encourage, and strengthen someone in need.

### Your World!

Christian friendship is not a thought or a feeling—it is an action. As you reflect on this lesson, identify someone (at home, on the job, or in your church or community) who needs physical, emotional, or spiritual support. Brainstorm and select ways to demonstrate friendship by offering to meet a specific need with compassionate love.

### Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank You for giving us the greatest Friend of all to save and continually meet our every need. We pray that You will help us show His kind of friendship to those among us who need strength. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

### Conclusion

#### (Preparing for Next Week's Lesson)

Next week's lesson explores the answer to this question: "How should we respond when the enormity of our problems diminishes our capacity to move forward?" Read Luke 7:1-10.

### Home Daily Bible Readings

MONDAY, April 8	"Accept What God Has Made Clean"	(Acts 10:1-15)
TUESDAY, April 9	"God's Servant Enlightens the Nation"	(Isaiah 42:1-12)
WEDNESDAY, April 10	"God Is Praised among the Nations"	(Malachi 1:10-14)
THURSDAY, April 11	"Christ Is All and in All"	(Colossians 3:1-11)
FRIDAY, April 12	"Nations Shall Entreat God's Favor"	(Zechariah 8:18-23)
SATURDAY, April 13	"All Flesh Shall See God's Salvation"	(Luke 3:1-14)
SUNDAY, April 14	"Jesus Helps a Righteous Gentile"	(Luke 7:1-10)