



REAL MERCY

GROUP LEADER'S GUIDE

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This guide is to be used in conjunction with *Real Mercy: Where Bible and Life Meet* by Thaddeus Barnum (Indianapolis: Wesleyan Publishing House, 2015).

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ABOUT THIS STUDY

Real Mercy by Thaddeus Barnum is foundational to this interactive group study. In *Real Mercy*, the author combines biblical truth, inspiration, and practical application. As you and your group members study these seven sessions, you will find that our merciful God wants us, His people, to do acts of mercy, but first He wants to change us. As Barnum states on page 9 of his book, “The two together bring the kingdom of God to a world in need of Jesus Christ.” So pray for changed hearts and opportunities to show God’s mercy to hurting people.



WEEK 1

A BLIND BEGGAR

Luke 18:35–42

TO THE FACILITATOR



Welcome everyone to this first session, and ask each person to state his or her name and some interesting fact about him or her. Inform the group that each session will be informal, and you want everyone to feel comfortable about making comments and asking questions.

FOCUS ON GOD'S WORD



Luke 18:35 introduces us to a blind beggar near Jericho. He was sitting by the roadside, when he heard a crowd approaching. When he asked what was going on, some members of the crowd “told him that Jesus of Nazareth was passing by” (v. 37). Apparently, the blind beggar had heard about Jesus’ power to perform miracles, because he called out to Jesus as “Son of David” (v. 38), a term that identified Him as Israel’s messiah. Although Israel refused to believe Jesus was the Messiah, this blind beggar looked to Jesus with the eyes of faith and recognized Him as the Messiah.

Jericho was a popular vacation resort in the time of Jesus. People who journeyed there carried lots of money with them, so blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46) was well situated for begging. Whether he received many handouts or not, we do not know, but we do know what he wanted most was to be able to see, and only Jesus the Messiah could give him his sight.

Bartimaeus did not want Jesus to pass by without hearing him, so he called out loudly to Him, “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me” (Luke 18:38). However, his loud cry for help irritated the crowd and brought a stern rebuke (v. 39). Nevertheless, the beggar’s need for mercy prompted him to shout all the louder.

On pages 39 of *Real Mercy*, Thaddeus Barnum relates the story of how he was having coffee with Dana, a man whose self-esteem was very low, when the coffee time was interrupted by a highly successful pastor. Barnum told the pastor about people in his own church whose lives God had blessed. After the conversation, Barnum observed Dana in obvious depression; his low self-esteem had sagged even lower. Barnum writes, “In my view, I did exactly what the crowd did to the blind beggar. I pushed him [Dana] back so I could push myself forward. It makes me wonder, who’s really blind in Luke’s story? I’m thinking it’s the crowd in front of the beggar. Today, it feels like me.”

To his credit, Bartimaeus was not so intimidated by the crowd or concerned that he might not receive another handout that he stopped calling out to Jesus. As a result, Jesus showed him mercy. He ordered Bartimaeus to be brought to Him. When Bartimaeus was in Jesus’ presence, Jesus asked: “What do you want Me to do for you?” (v. 41).

“Lord, I want to regain my sight,” he replied (v. 41).

Jesus answered, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well” (v. 42).

From that moment, the healed blind man followed Jesus, praising Him. He had received mercy from Jesus. He could see, and he used the gift of sight to follow Jesus wherever Jesus led (vv. 41–43).

FOCUS ON LIFE



Use the following to lead group discussion.

1. How would you define “real mercy”?
2. What acts of real mercy have you observed?
3. Why do you agree or disagree that it is solely the government’s responsibility to care for the needy?
4. How do you think blind Bartimaeus knew Jesus was the Son of David, the Messiah?
5. What do you think spiritual blindness keeps people from seeing?
6. How might the modern-day crowd censure people who want to meet Jesus?
7. Why do you agree or disagree that Christians may be blind to the needs Jesus sees?
8. How do you think many people today would answer if Jesus asked them what He asked the blind man: “What do you want me to do for you?”
9. What did you see for the first time when Jesus healed your spiritual blindness?
10. How would you answer the question Thaddeus Barnum poses on page 51 of *Real Mercy*: “What can we do about our blindness—especially to the marginalized, forgotten, and needy?”
11. If someone asked to see Jesus, how would you respond?
12. What wonderful things do you see when you follow Jesus closely?

WRAP-UP



Lead the group in singing the first stanza of “Amazing Grace.” Have the group brainstorm opportunities to practice real mercy this week.



WEEK 2

YOU WICKED SLAVE

Matthew 18:23–35

TO THE FACILITATOR

Tell the group that it has been calculated that the average personal credit card debt in the United States is about eight thousand dollars. Each group member may owe far less or more than that amount, but wouldn't he or she be extremely grateful if the credit card company wiped out the entire debt? Explain that this session discusses debt forgiveness and also a refusal to forgive a debt.

FOCUS ON GOD'S WORD

In response to Peter's question about how many times he should forgive a brother who sinned against him, Jesus replied, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven" (Matt. 18:22). He followed His reply with a parable about a master, his slaves, and debt forgiveness. The parable helps us understand that the better we see the extent of our debt of sin, the more fully we appreciate God's forgiveness.

According to the parable, a king summoned his debtors-servants before him in order to settle accounts. One servant owed the king ten thousand talents, equal to several million dollars, but he was unable to pay the debt. When the king ordered that the servant, the servant's wife and children, and all his possessions be sold to repay the debt, the servant fell down in front of the king, and begged the king to be patient. He promised to repay everything (see vv. 23–26).

The king did far more than exercise patience; he canceled the debt and dismissed the servant (v. 27). However, the forgiven servant failed to emulate the king, his master. When he found his

own servant who owed him one hundred denari, an amount equal to one hundred days wages, he assaulted him and demanded payment (v. 28).

The assaulted servant begged for time to repay the debt, but his master refused the poor man's plea, and had him thrown into prison (vv. 29–30). On page 97 of *Real Mercy*, Barnum poses a searching question based on the wicked servant's unwillingness to extend mercy to his servant. He asks, "When, having received the gift of God's mercy in Christ, have you not shown mercy?"

When the king's other servants observed this heartless treatment, they reported it to the king. In response the king summoned his hardhearted servant and scolded him. He reminded his wicked servant that he had canceled all his debt because he had begged for patience. He told the man he should have shown similar mercy on his fellow servant. The angry king punished the wicked servant by turning him over to the jailers to be tortured (vv. 31–34).

This parable had followed Peter's question about forgiveness. It concluded with Jesus' teaching: "My heavenly Father will also do the same to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart" (v. 35).

FOCUS ON LIFE



Use the following to lead group discussion.

1. Read Ephesians 1:7. At what cost did God forgive our sins?
2. Why could we never settle the debt of sin we had accumulated?
3. Do you agree that forgiven people seem to truly forgive others? Defend your answer.
4. Why do you agree or disagree that God's forgiveness extends only to our past sins?
5. What word do you think most adequately describes God's forgiveness? Why?
6. Do you think a Christian who holds a grudge has an inadequate understanding of divine forgiveness? Why or why not?
7. How would you counsel a believer who tells you, "I cannot forgive my dad for abusing me when I was a child"?
8. What is your opinion of the bumper sticker that says, "Christians are not perfect, just forgiven"?
9. In the parable of the wicked slave, fellow servants observed how the forgiven servant treated the man who could not repay a debt. Why do you agree or disagree that people are watching our lives to see if they are consistent with the mercy God has shown to us?
10. How might a believer show true gratitude for the forgiveness God has shown him or her?
11. Is it simply impossible to forgive some people? Why or why not?
12. Should we forgive those who do not ask for our forgiveness? Why or why not?

WRAP-UP



Conclude this session with a prayer time in which volunteers thank God for His amazing forgiveness. Challenge the members of the group to practice forgiveness this week.



WEEK 3

SON OF MINE

Luke 15:11–31

TO THE FACILITATOR



Share with the group the fact that it is estimated that one in seven teenagers will run away from home and 1.3 million homeless youth live unsupervised on the streets of America's cities. Tell the group that this session focuses on a one youth who ran away from home, what happened to him after he left, and what happened when he returned home.

FOCUS ON GOD'S WORD



The Pharisees and the teachers of the law despised Jesus. One reason for their hatred of Him was the fact that He befriended sinners. So Jesus answered their objection by telling a story about two sons. One ran away from home, and the other stayed home.

One day the younger son requested his share of the father's estate. Normally, the estate would not be settled until the father could no longer manage it, but the obliging father gave the younger son half of the inheritance (Luke 15:11–12).

Not long after the transaction, the younger son took his inherited wealth and departed for a distant country, where he squandered everything on immoral living (v. 13). He probably spent much of the money on prostitutes, as his older brother later said (v. 30).

Life became extremely harsh for the foolish son when a famine struck the region (v. 14). Destitute and hungry, the young man accepted a job feeding pigs (v. 15). What a despicable situation for a Jew to be in! He was dependent on a Gentile employer, and he fed pigs—unclean animals. He was so hungry that he envied the pigs. At least they had something to eat (v. 16)!

While the wayward son's stomach rumbled, his mind traveled back to home. He recalled that his father's hired men had more than enough to eat, while he was starving (v. 17). And that's when he came to his senses. He decided to return home, confess his sin to his father, say he was no longer worthy to be called his son, and ask to become a hired hand.

His father was looking for him and met him as he approached. The reunion was highly emotional. The father "felt compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him" (v. 20). As planned, the runaway son confessed his sin against God and his father and his unworthiness to be called his father's son. However, the father ordered the best robe for his son, and told his servants to put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet, and prepare a fat calf for a celebration, because the son had returned (vv. 21–24).

Just as the Pharisees and teachers of the law objected to the mercy Jesus showed to sinners, so the stay-at-home son objected to what his father was doing for the wayward son. The father countered by telling him the celebration marked the recovery of his brother, who was dead and was now alive, lost but now was found (vv. 25–32).

FOCUS ON LIFE



Use the following to lead group discussion.

1. What repulses you more: the proud Pharisees and teachers of the law or the younger brother who demanded his inheritance? Why?
2. How do you explain the fact that even some godly parents see one of their teenagers rebel and run away from home?
3. How might you and your fellow believers help to restore runaway teens?
4. How might parents try to safeguard their teenagers from the attraction of sinful pleasure?
5. What emotions do you think the wayward son felt when he was destitute and hungry?
6. How does the merciful father in the parable picture your heavenly Father?
7. Why do you agree or disagree that God is waiting eagerly to welcome repentant sinners?
8. Read Isaiah 61:10. How does what the wayward son's father did for him symbolize what the heavenly Father does for sinners who come to Him?
9. Have you ever thought your testimony is not exciting because you did not live in deep sin before God saved you? What, if anything, is wrong with that thinking?
10. Why do you agree or disagree that churches give too much attention to those who have been saved from a very sinful lifestyle?

WRAP-UP



Brainstorm ways your group members might minister to homeless youth. Then put a plan into action.



WEEK 4

THE ROYAL FAMILY

Matthew 1:5–6; Ruth 1–4

TO THE FACILITATOR



Tell the group that this week’s session focuses on two women who experienced God’s real mercy, and one of them, a Gentile, became an ancestor of Jesus the Messiah.

FOCUS ON GOD’S WORD



Naomi, her husband Elimelech, and their two sons lived in Bethlehem in Judah until a famine struck the land. Subsequently, they moved to country of Moab for a better life, but death overtook Elimelech in Moab (Ruth 1:1–3). Conditions worsened, when ten years later the two sons died, leaving Naomi with her two Moabite daughters-in-law, Ruth and Orpah (vv. 4–5). At that time, Naomi heard that the famine had ended in Bethlehem, so she decided to return home (v. 6).

Showing mercy to her daughters-in-law, Naomi suggested they not accompany her to Bethlehem. She said they might find new husbands in Moab (v. 7). When they insisted on accompanying her, Naomi suggested again that they return home (vv. 10–13). But only Orpah went home; Ruth continued with Naomi (vv. 14–15).

In faith Ruth made a significant decision. She decided not only to stay with Naomi, but also to accept Naomi’s people and Naomi’s God as her own (vv. 16–17). On page 159 of *Real Mercy*, Barnum writes, “And there they were—just the two of them—on the road to Bethlehem. Poor, bereft, yet having the one thing in life that mattered most: They were bound to God and to each other in this *chesedh* mercy of God.”

When the two arrived in Bethlehem at the start of the barley harvest, the women of the town could hardly believe it was Naomi. Ten years in Moab, away from the people of God had aged her. She thought Mara (meaning “bitter”) was now an appropriate name for her because of the afflictions she attributed to the Lord (vv. 20–22).

Ruth volunteered to gather leftover grain (2:1–2). She chose a field owned by Boaz, a man of sterling reputation who was relative of her deceased father-in-law Elimelech (v. 3). Ruth caught Boaz’s eye and also his favor. He told her to stay in his field and promised her protection and water (vv. 4–10). He explained that he had heard about her willingness to leave her homeland and follow Naomi (v. 11). Further, he pronounced a blessing upon her and invited her to dinner (vv. 12–15). He also instructed his men to leave some stalks of grain behind intentionally for Ruth (vv. 16–17).

Ruth reported to Naomi all that had transpired, and in turn Naomi wished the Lord’s blessing on Boaz and told Ruth that Boaz was a close relative and Ruth should continue to glean in his field (vv. 18–22).

Would Boaz become Ruth’s husband? She followed Naomi’s instructions, and that night laid at Boaz’s feet as courtship custom indicated. However, Boaz said someone was more closely related to Elimelech than he was, and by law he should have first opportunity to marry Ruth. In the meantime, he sent Ruth home with a generous supply of barley (Ruth 3).

Ruth needed a redeemer, so Boaz took the matter to the town council. With the closer kinsman-redeemer alongside, he pointed out that Naomi was offering Elimelech’s property for sale to the next of kin. Of course, he explained, the purchaser would also be acquiring Naomi and Ruth. That was a deal breaker (4:1–6).

With clear opportunity to redeem Elimelech’s property, Boaz went forward with the purchase and the intention to marry Ruth. The elders witnessed the transaction and pronounced the Lord’s blessing on the union of Boaz and Ruth (vv. 7–12).

The Lord blessed the marriage with the birth of a son, Obed, who became King David’s grandfather and an ancestor in the lineage of Jesus (vv. 13–22; Matt. 1:5–6). God had showered His mercy on Naomi, and on Ruth and Boaz, even to the point He included a Moabite (a Gentile) in the line of His Son, Israel’s Messiah.

FOCUS ON LIFE



Use the following to lead group discussion.

1. How does Naomi’s life reflect mercy?
2. Why do you agree or disagree that Elimelech may have experienced a lapse of faith when he decided to leave Bethlehem and journey to Moab?
3. Do you think Elimelech died as a man who was outside God’s will? Defend your answer.
4. Do you think Naomi’s sons were wrong to marry Moabite women? Why or why not?
5. How would you compare Orpah and Ruth as daughters-in-law?
6. Read Ruth 1:20. Why do you agree or disagree that Naomi attributed the deaths of her husband and sons to divine judgment?

7. Do you think a lengthy absence from God's people can exact a physical toll on a believer? Defend your answer.

8. What evidence of Ruth's conversion to the true God do you find in the book of Ruth?

9. Why do you agree or disagree that love at first sight can be real and lasting?

10. How did God's mercy shine through in the life of Boaz?

11. How was Boaz a model employer? What might a Christian employer learn from Boaz?

12. How does the story of Ruth show God's love and mercy were never intended to be limited to Jews?

WRAP-UP



Ask the group members to consider ways they can demonstrate God's mercy to others.



WEEK 5

THE BRILLIANT LAWYER

Luke 10:25–38

TO THE FACILITATOR



Ask how many in the group remember a particularly hard test and whether they thought at least one question was a trick question. Explain that this session involves a trick question and a perfect answer.

FOCUS ON GOD'S WORD



The religious leaders opposed Jesus on numerous occasions. Luke 10:25 introduces us to one of those occasions. An expert in the law asked Jesus, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” It was a trick question intended to test Jesus. Would Jesus uphold the law or contradict it? Would He say a person must obey the law of Moses in order to go to heaven, or would He say a person must believe in Him? Answering wisely, Jesus returned the expert’s question with a question: “What is written in the Law? How does it read to you?” (v. 26).

The expert answered correctly by quoting the law’s instructions to love God supremely and to love one’s neighbor as himself, but in order to justify him- or herself he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” (vv. 27–29). The question led Jesus to relate the parable of the good Samaritan.

Jesus said a traveler was going from Jerusalem to Jericho, when robbers pounced on him, stripped his clothes off him, beat him, and left him half dead (v. 30). Along came a priest and later a Levite, but they rendered no assistance. They just glanced at the wounded traveler and kept on going (vv. 31–32). But then a Samaritan, a member of a race the Jews despised, came along. Not

only did he feel sorry for the wounded man, but he also treated his wounds, set him on his own donkey, took him to an inn, and took care of him (vv. 33–34). The next day the Samaritan gave the innkeeper money to take care of the wounded man, and he promised to reimburse him at his return for any extra expenses (v. 35).

After telling the story, Jesus asked the expert in the law which of the three men was a neighbor to the victim (v. 36). “The one who showed mercy toward him,” the expert replied (v. 37).

Jesus said simply, “Go and do the same” (v. 37).

We do not know whether the expert obeyed Jesus’ command. We simply transition to the comment in verse 38 that Jesus and His disciples continued on their way to the village where Martha lived.

Barnum offers a helpful comment about being a Good Samaritan. He states, “The secular world defines Good Samaritans as people who help those in need, without making any reference to God. And yet, the actual story of the Samaritan is impossible to understand without God at the center, without Him as the source of real love and real mercy. Our Lord makes the two commands inseparable, the second ever dependent on the first” (*Real Mercy*, p. 230).

FOCUS ON LIFE



Use the following to lead group discussion.

1. What do you think motivated Jesus’ opponents to try to trip Him up by asking Him trick questions?
2. Why do you agree or disagree that Jesus was the only one who could keep the whole law?
3. Read Galatians 3:19, 21–24. Why did God give the law?
4. In your opinion, what were the priest and the Levite concerned about?
5. How might Christians act like the priest and the Levite?
6. What kinds of people in your community need to be shown good-neighbor mercy?
7. What might a church or individual Christian do to show mercy to needy people?
8. Why do you agree or disagree that Jesus spoke of a Samaritan as a neighbor to the assaulted traveler? Explain your answer.
9. Do you think it is ever right to say of a needy person, “He (or she) got what he (or she) deserved”? Why or why not?
10. How should a Christian respond to a panhandler? Defend your answer.
11. Should a Christian couple ever open their home to a destitute person? If so, under what circumstances should they do so?
12. What would you do if you found an injured person lying at the side of a street? Why would you do that?

WRAP-UP



Conclude this session by having the group read or sing “Make Me a Blessing.”



WEEK 6

A SERVANT AND HIS TOWEL

Luke 22:24–30; John 13:1–17

TO THE FACILITATOR



Ask how group members show hospitality when they welcome people into their homes. In Jesus' day, it was customary to wash a visitor's feet. This session tells what happened when Jesus and His disciples were eating the Passover meal in an upper room, where a towel and basin were at hand.

FOCUS ON GOD'S WORD



In describing the scene in which Jesus was about to wash His disciples' feet, Barnum writes, "It was time. One simple act to show His love. Why hadn't it been done yet? It should've happened the moment they arrived. At the very latest, before they'd reclined at the table for the Passover meal. Why was no servant around? Who'd failed to make proper preparations? Did anyone notice or say something? Why didn't one of the Twelve offer to do it? Our Lord stopped eating His supper. He got up from the table and began to disrobe. One garment. Then the next. Until He stood in front of the Twelve wearing only a loincloth" (*Real Mercy*, p. 254).

Jesus poured water into a basin and started to wash the disciples' feet, a task usually performed by a slave. The action affirms Paul's words to the Philippians that Jesus assumed the nature of a servant (Phil. 2:7). Further, Jesus himself told His disciples He had come not to be served but to serve (Mark 10:45).

When He bent to wash Peter's feet, Peter strongly objected (John 13:6), probably feeling proud but not understanding the symbolism behind Jesus' act. So when Jesus told Peter he could have no part with Him without Jesus' washing him, Peter asked for a full-body wash (vv. 6–9).

Jesus replied that the disciples were all clean except one (v. 10). He knew Judas would betray Him (v. 11). Barnum makes an insightful comment about Jesus' words to Peter. He writes, "Peter was not like Judas—who was clean on the outside and unclean on the inside. No, Peter was different. Peter was why He came. This night, He would wash his feet with water. The next day, He would wash his soul with His cleansing blood. And that's why He could say it—and say it strongly, 'You are clean!'" (*Real Mercy*, p. 282).

After the foot washing, Jesus explained the lesson. It was a lesson about humility. If the disciples' Lord and teacher would stoop low to wash their feet, shouldn't they practice humility toward one another (vv. 12–16)? Jesus promised blessing for those who follow His example of humility (v. 17).

Unfortunately, the disciples failed to heed Jesus' teaching. Shortly after the Passover meal, they argued among themselves about which of them was the greatest. They received an answer from Jesus that they probably were not expecting. He said greatness in God's kingdom is a matter of humble service, whereas in the world greatness is measured by how much authority kings exercise over their subjects (Luke 22:24–30).

FOCUS ON LIFE



Use the following to lead group discussion.

1. Why was foot washing more than simply a ritual?
2. How might Christians perform a service to others that demonstrates true humility?
3. How would we impact our communities if we loved the way Jesus loved His disciples?
4. In your opinion, why was no slave present in the upper room? Explain.
5. Why do you agree or disagree with the opinion that many Christians are reaching for a crown but few are reaching for a towel?
6. Why do you agree or disagree that Peter was displaying false humility when he objected to having Jesus wash his feet?
7. How is false humility a form of pride?
8. How might false humility display itself in a church?
9. Why is the blood of Jesus absolutely necessary to wash away sin?
10. What would you say to someone who claims it is old-fashioned to speak of the blood of Jesus as the price of our redemption?
11. How might following Jesus' example of humility eliminate most, if not all, church squabbles?
12. In your opinion, which service role in your church portrays the most humble kind of service? Why?

WRAP-UP



Challenge each group member to humbly serve at least one other person this week. Brainstorm ideas to help people get started. Encourage people to journal how serving helped those being served, but also how it personally helped or changed them.



WEEK 7

FIVE FRIENDS

Mark 2:1–12; Luke 5:17–26

TO THE FACILITATOR



This session reveals how far four men were willing to go to get their paralyzed friend to Jesus. The session issues a challenge to expend whatever energy it takes to bring others to Jesus.

FOCUS ON GOD'S WORD



After a ministry tour of Galilee, Jesus returned to Capernaum (Mark 2:1). Because Capernaum was Peter and Andrew's hometown (1:29), Jesus may have been staying at their house. Hearing that He was "home," a crowd gathered where He was staying. The crowd spilled out of the house and heard Jesus preach the Word (2:2).

Four men wanted to get their paralyzed friend to Jesus, but they could not get past the crowd to carry him and the mat on which he lay to Jesus (vv. 3–4). So they climbed the outside stairway to the flat roof, made a hole in it, and lowered their paralyzed friend through the opening and down to Jesus (v. 4). Barnum comments, "They had eyes of faith. They saw the impossible possible and with a fierce determination, they got on the roof and started tearing it apart" (*Real Mercy*, p. 316).

Jesus noticed the four friends. He must have seen the roof come apart and the debris that fell around Him—perhaps on Him—but what caught His attention was the faith the four men showed by their determination to get their friend to Jesus (v. 5).

And what about the faith the paralyzed man showed? He certainly exhibited faith in the entire episode of being carried up the stairs to the roof and then lowered by ropes to Jesus. Jesus responded

by saying, “Son, your sins are forgiven” (v. 5). Perhaps the man’s paralysis had resulted from personal sin or Jesus simply recognized that sin generally had taken a toll on the human race.

Teachers of the law became infuriated when they heard Jesus forgive the paralyzed man’s sins (v. 6). They thought Jesus was blaspheming (v. 7). But Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked them whether it was easier to forgive sins or to command the paralytic to walk (vv. 8–9). Referring to himself as the Son of Man (a messianic term) with authority to forgive sins, Jesus commanded the man to get up. Take his mat, and go home (v. 11). Much to everyone’s amazement, the paralyzed man got up, lifted his mat, and walked out of the house (v. 12).

It is interesting that Luke, a doctor, recorded this miracle in his gospel (see Luke 5:17–26). Jesus, the Great Physician, was able to heal without using medicine. He merely spoke, and strength surged through the paralytic’s body. Furthermore, He spoke forgiveness to the man. Mercy marked this miracle.

FOCUS ON LIFE



Use the following to lead group discussion.

1. How does teamwork play an important role in bringing people to Jesus?
2. Why do you agree or disagree that it is harder to bring a friend to Jesus than it is to bring someone else to Him?
3. What obstacles might you encounter while trying to bring a friend to Jesus?
4. What acts of mercy do you find in the story of the healing of the paralytic?
5. Read John 9:1–3. Do you agree or disagree that all forms of physical infirmity result from personal sin? Why or why not?
6. What words do you think best describe the paralytic’s four friends?
7. How would you feel if some damage to your church occurred as fellow believers tried to bring others to Jesus (for example, scuffed walls during children’s activities)?
8. What evidences of Jesus’ deity do you see in the story of the five friends?
9. How have people responded to your testimony of forgiveness?
10. Do you think the twenty-first-century church emphasizes social needs more than spiritual needs or vice versa or strikes a good balance? Defend your answer.
11. How would you have reacted if you had been present in the house when the roof was coming apart? Why?
12. Jesus’ healing of the paralytic amazed everyone who witnessed it. Do you think very many people are amazed at what Jesus is doing in individual lives today? Defend your answer.

WRAP-UP



Challenge the members of the group to select one unsaved friend to share the gospel with this week.