Small Group Guide

Based on the Sermon: "The Authority and Willingness of Jesus to Forgive Sin"

Text: Luke 5:17-26

Middle School & High School | Session Length: 30–35 Minutes

Overview

Jesus healed a paralyzed man whose friends lowered him through a roof—but first, he addressed the man's need for forgiveness. This week's message reminds us that Jesus has both the authority and the willingness to forgive sin.

That matters when we feel guilty, pressured to prove ourselves, or unsure whether God would welcome us. We do not have to fix ourselves before coming to Jesus.

Bible Background: Luke is one of the four Gospels at the beginning of the New Testament. It tells about Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection. Luke, a physician and companion of Paul, also wrote Acts. This account takes place during Jesus' earthly ministry in the first century AD.

Leader Timing: Opening question: 3 minutes; Scripture, overview, and key takeaways: 5 minutes; Digging Into the Text: 12–14 minutes; Going Deeper: 4–5 minutes; Application: 3–4 minutes; Closing Prayer: 3–4 minutes. Ask the main questions first and use follow-up prompts only as time allows.

Key Takeaways

- Our need for forgiveness is deeper than the problems other people can see.
- Jesus has the authority to forgive sin and welcomes those who come to him in faith.
- Salvation is a gift of grace. We cannot earn it through good behavior, church attendance, or a Christian family.
- Knowing Jesus changes how we live at school, at home, online, and with friends.

Discussion Questions

Opening Question

3 minutes

1. Think of a time someone went out of their way to help or include you. What did their actions communicate about how much you mattered?

Digging Into the Text

12–14 minutes, after reading Luke 5:17–26 together

2. The friends brought the man to Jesus because he could not walk, but Jesus first addressed his sins. **What does that tell us about the man's deepest need—and ours?**

   Optional follow-up: What problems do teenagers want God to fix that might distract them from their need for a relationship with him?

   Bible Insight: Jesus cared about both the man's physical condition and his spiritual need. We should never assume someone's illness or disability is punishment for a particular sin. Jesus challenges that assumption in John 9:1–3.

3. The religious leaders asked, "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" **What did Jesus' healing of the man demonstrate about his authority?**

   Optional follow-up: How is knowing facts about Jesus different from trusting him personally?

   Bible Background: The Pharisees and teachers of the law studied the Scriptures and taught people how to live by them. They understood that forgiveness ultimately belongs to God, but they questioned Jesus' authority. The visible healing supported Jesus' claim to forgive sins.

4. Read Ephesians 2:8–10. **How would you explain the difference between doing good things to earn God's love and doing good things because you have received his love?**

   Optional follow-up: Imagine opening a Christmas gift and asking, "How much do I owe you?" How does that picture help explain grace?

   Bible Knowledge: Ephesians is a New Testament letter written by Paul. "Grace" means God's undeserved favor. Verses 8–9 explain that salvation is God's gift, received through faith. Verse 10 shows that good works grow out of our new life in Christ.

Going Deeper

4–5 minutes

5. The healed man went home glorifying God. **Where is it hardest for you to openly follow Jesus: at school, with friends, at home, or online? What would honoring him there look like?**

   Optional follow-up: How could your words or actions point to Jesus without putting other people down?

   Leader Guidance: Invite honest answers without pressuring students to share. Examples might include refusing to mock someone, admitting a mistake, including an outsider, or speaking honestly about faith.

Application and Reflection

3–4 minutes

6. The man's friends did not let the crowded doorway stop them from bringing him to Jesus. **What is one step you can take this week to draw closer to Jesus or help a friend learn about him?**

   Invite each student to finish one sentence:

   - "This week, I will make time for Jesus by _____."
   - "This week, I will show Jesus' love to _____ by _____."

   Bible Insight: Luke 5:20 says Jesus saw "their faith." Their actions expressed trust in him. We cannot believe for someone else, but we can help them hear about Jesus.

Practical Applications

Choose one as a take-home challenge; these do not require additional discussion time.

- **Talk honestly with Jesus.** Spend five minutes praying about something real—guilt, pressure, fear, anger, or a question. You do not need impressive words.
- **Read and notice.** Read Luke 5:17–26 again this week. Write down one thing it teaches you about Jesus.
- **Be a friend who helps.** Pray for one person by name, then listen, include them, encourage them, or invite them to youth group.
- **Remember grace.** When you feel you must earn God's acceptance, return to Ephesians 2:8–10. Let gratitude guide your obedience.
- **Pray for the mission.** Pray for Pastor Kurtis Rogers, his family, and Rabbit Town Community Church as they share Jesus in St. John's, Newfoundland.

Closing Prayer Focus

3–4 minutes

Close your group time by praying together over these three areas:

1. **Gratitude:** Thank Jesus for his willingness and authority to forgive our sins and for salvation through grace.
2. **Courage:** Ask for help honoring Jesus at school, at home, online, and with friends.
3. **Mission:** Pray for friends who do not know Jesus and for those sharing the gospel in Newfoundland and around the world.