

**WHAT ARE FRIENDS FOR?****Mark 2:1-12****(Read Mark 2:1-12)**

**INTRO:** Back in 2005 we sold our house in Bainbridge, PA and bought our wonderful house here in Ashland. We signed the papers for both houses on May 31 in Lancaster, PA and June 1 here in Ashland. And then we had to get packed. We had two weeks to finish up what we had already begun. The thing was Kathy worked right up until the day before we moved, and I had final things to care for at Conoy Church. Load up day was getting closer and we were feeling the pressure. And finally it arrived, and we weren't quite ready and we were definitely overwhelmed. That's when friends from church showed up and helped pack and clean and load the truck. My friend Jim, pressured washed. My sister Carolyn came and completely packed the kitchen. Janel and her husband Mike packed up the one section of the basement that had not been touched. All the while, family, church people, and neighbors; all dear friends, carefully loaded the 48 foot trailer provided by yet another friend. All on the hottest, most humid southeastern PA summer day you can imagine. We could not have done it without them. And then, on this end, the next day, our new friends, who have become just as dear, from ABC, helped unload that trailer here in Ashland.

What are friends for?

Little did I know I could just call on 250 Amish friends and they could have just moved my house here by hand. (Show Video)

Well, the passage from Mark I read a bit ago is another favorite that has thrilled me since I was a little kid. I mean, really, tearing something up is exciting for any little kid – and to dig through a roof? That was the best! Rarely did I think about it in terms of what really happened: like Jesus making it a teachable moment for the ever present, ever vigilant, and frequently critical teachers of the law. And how Jesus healed the man's sin first and then healed his body. I was just excited at the idea of a hole in a roof and a crippled man who was healed. Today's take away for this passage is the importance of friends - we can't live without them. We need friends and we need to be friends like these men. We don't know anything about them, really. We know they were persistent and daring and strong. We don't know how they were related to the paralyzed man, were they family? Were they good friends? We don't know. But we do know they knew where help could be found and they did something about it. And that is yet another thing we can learn from the familiar passage. What we see here is that friends make a huge difference for a number of reasons.

The first thing we see here is that these friends made a difference by . . .

**Caring enough**

- They knew Jesus could heal their friend and carried him to the house where he was teaching. Today, we'd just load him up in the car and motor down to where Jesus was. No doubt we'd have a wheelchair or could borrow one for him. In a public place there are ramps and special places for people with medical challenges. In most cases people would make room for the paralyzed person coming through the crowd.
- Not in the first century AD. There were no cars, of course, and definitely now special handicapped parking places. If you cape up on a crowded room with Jesus on the other side of a wall of people, you were out of luck. You had to wait and hope he walked past you later and you could yell out to him, "*Jesus, Master, have pity on us!*" Luke 17:13b like the lepers in our story two weeks ago.
- That's the way it was, unless you had four friends like these guys. They cared enough to get him there. They cared enough to carry him. They cared enough for him that a wall of people was not a barrier, but a challenge to be surmounted. They care enough for him that they took no care for their own safety or even the consequences of tearing up somebody else's roof. **THEIR FRIEND NEEDED TO GET TO JESUS!** They cared enough to get him there.
- Think about your friends. Who needs to get to Jesus? Who is so cripple spiritually they are almost certainly not going to get to him without major help? Friends care enough to get their friends to Jesus. That's what friends are for.
- And sometimes it takes a concerted effort. These men in Mark 2 were much more effective when they were

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**Working together**

- Carrying someone is not easy, carrying them onto a roof is REALLY not easy. Lest we think these men heaved their friend up onto the roof using each other as a human pyramid or stolen ladders, which they may have done. Probably, this was a fairly common Middle Eastern house which had a flat roof which stairs leading to it. This was helpful because it helped with space issues and also it was cooler to sleep there sometimes. They very well could have carried him up some steps to the roof, and maybe not. But they still needed to carry their friend up onto the roof. This took coordinated effort. They HAD to work together.
- A couple months ago Sheila and Andrew finally got some furniture for their house. One of the pieces was a very nice recliner sofa that was designated for the TV room on the second floor – in an old house – up an old, not quite, winding, staircase. Andrew had measured and calculated and determined the sofa would fit and could be successfully be transported up the steps. But the three delivery guys from Farm and Home were still concerned. They measured, and pondered, and looked at the steps, the hallway upstairs and then the doorway into the designated room. They were concerned. But then they designed a strategy and went to work, and two minutes later the sofa was in the room. It was a beautiful thing to watch – total coordinated effort with encouragement and advice all the way. I LOVED IT! And I told them so. Working together so beautiful. That’s what made that barn moving so awesome! 250 men, working in harmony, moving a barn in five minutes.
- I know it was that way for these men. They devised a plan, executed it and got their friend in front of Jesus. It’s that way for us in the Kingdom getting others into the Kingdom. I love those times when I get a call from someone telling me that someone is coming to town and they need a church or even an introduction to Jesus. They are calling on their team to work together. A number of years ago my friend John Bouquet told me he had run in Mike Davis. (Tell the story) It was a clear case of working together. That’s what friends are for. They are . . .

### **Doing what it takes**

- A friend needed to see Jesus. A roof needed to be accessed. A roof needed to be removed. A friend needed to be precisely in front of Jesus. These friends did what needed to be done. That’s what friends do. You know the story. You’ve loved it since the first time you heard it. You know these guys fearlessly went the extra mile.
- Bob Goff was the teacher in our first video series for Dinner Church. Remember how he told the story of how, when he was a teen, he went to his youth pastor’s home when he was carrying out his scheme to go work and climb in Yosemite? He stopped by the young man’s house, unannounced and shared his plan. Upon hearing it, the youth pastor packed his things and went with teenage Goff. Bob never shared how long they stayed at Yosemite, but after a time they returned to LA and that was when Bob discovered the youth pastor had left his brand new bride home alone to accompany an impulsive kid on a crazy jaunt. A jaunt that was spiritually life changing for Goff. He did what had to be done. That’s what friends are for. I hope that youth pastor NEVER did that to his bride again and I pray their marriage is still thriving. But friends do what they need to do to bring people to Jesus.
- A key component in all this is knowing Jesus. It takes a lot of . . .

### **Believing boldly**

- Our text says, *When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralyzed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”* (v 5). When Jesus saw **THEIR** faith. I’m thinking the paralyzed man had faith. After all, he was seeing miracle after miracle happen as his friend carried him to Jesus. But certainly his four friends did too considering the effort they put into this feat. They knew the pay-off was at the end.
- Peterson paraphrases verse 5 like this, *Impressed by their bold belief, Jesus said to the paraplegic, “Son, I forgive your sins* (v. 5 The Message). Bringing our friends to Jesus requires bold belief. It means we have to truly believe in our own hearts that Jesus is the answer for the world and he is the only way, the only truth and the only life. And when we believe that in our heart of hearts we have the boldness to be Jesus to people and tell them why.
- Who is it that you need to bring to Jesus? You need to boldly usher them into his presence. That’s what friends are for.

**Conclusion:** The results are amazing. The last verse of our text says, upon Jesus's command to get up, take up his mat and go home, the man . . . *got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"* Mark 2:12. Know why? IT WAS! It's amazing what God can do! And it's what he does all the time. He's in the sin forgiving, body healing business all the time. He wrote the book on it. It's as if the man's friends' efforts took a back seat when the teachers of the law argued that Jesus didn't have authority to forgive sins. But their amazing feat precipitated another God-ordained feat that showed the power of God revealed in God the Son. God does amazing things, and we can assist him in them. Bring your friends to Jesus. That's what friends are for. Amen.