



LESSON 6 // LOVE THAT LIFTS LIMITS

Newness is a great thing. We all need something fresh from the Lord, and encounters with Jesus always lead to newness. Every time we give Christ a new place in us or part of us, we can count on rich renewal. We see this in the man who met Jesus in the following story:

Mark 2:1-12 (NLT) *When Jesus returned to Capernaum several days later, the news spread quickly that he was back home. ² Soon the house where he was staying was so packed with visitors that there was no more room, even outside the door. While he was preaching God's word to them, ³ four men arrived carrying a paralyzed man on a mat. ⁴ They couldn't bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, so they dug a hole through the roof above his head. Then they lowered the man on his mat, right down in front of Jesus. ⁵ Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralyzed man, "My child, your sins are forgiven." ⁶ But some of the teachers of religious law who were sitting there thought to themselves, ⁷ "What is he saying? This is blasphemy! Only God can forgive sins!" ⁸ Jesus knew immediately what they were thinking, so he asked them, "Why do you question this in your hearts? ⁹ Is it easier to say to the paralyzed man 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk'? ¹⁰ So I will prove to you that the Son of Man has the authority on earth to forgive sins." Then Jesus turned to the paralyzed man and said, ¹¹ "Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home!" ¹² And the man jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, "We've never seen anything like this before!"*

Jesus wants to lift the limits of our lives, just as He did for this man. For this to happen, there are several things we must do:

1. Realistically look at the things that limit our lives.

It's important to recognize that even though the paralytic in this story was a limited, powerless and sinful man, he was apparently willing to have his friends bring him to Jesus. He was motivated to see his limitations lifted.

Before anything wonderful happens in our lives, or in the lives of those around us, we must take a hard look at our personal limitations and be motivated to do something about them. We must have a desire to bring them Jesus!

2. Recognize and receive the love that lifts limits.

While the main character in this story is a paralyzed man, the main point of the story is the power of love. It was love that secured this man's release from his limits.

Two expressions of love are evident in this passage: Jesus' love and the love of the four friends. Christ's love was demonstrated through His availability, practicality, sensitivity and authority.

These four friends were co-workers with Christ. They knew that if they brought their paralyzed friend to Jesus and He would heal him. “Soul winners” like these men are believers, learners, compassionate and cooperative, and patiently persistent!

The combination of Jesus’ love and the love of these four friends resulted in the lifting of the physical and spiritual paralysis from this man. How many others around us are similar candidates? All they need is us—a company of committed soul winners that will help them find their way to the Lord.

3. Reject the mindset that maintains limits.

In the midst of this great story of healing, we find the Lord digressing momentarily to deal with a group of disgruntled religious folks. They didn’t like the way Jesus was doing ministry. Instead of rejoicing in the results of His work, they were irritated with Jesus’ methods. It seems that these folks would have been happy if this man had remained paralyzed!

They exemplify thinking and attitudes that can afflict us and make us ineffective in the work of Christ’s kingdom. These religious men were stubborn, proud, judgmental and petty. They were actually more sick than the paralytic man, from a spiritual perspective, but they did not recognize their need. They remained spiritually paralyzed by their mindset.

What is the lesson for us? Be careful how you think. The wrong mindset will keep you in bondage. There are many Christians who have the wrong mindset, and therefore limit their effectiveness for the Kingdom.

4. Live freely without limits.

When we first met the main character of this story, he was severely limited—paralyzed, trapped by sin and bound to his circumstances. Through the love and efforts of four friends, this man was brought into Jesus’s presence, his sins were forgiven and Jesus pronounced these words to him: “Stand up, pick up your mat, and go home” (Mark 2:11).

The very next verse paints an astounding portrait of this man: he “jumped up, grabbed his mat, and walked out through the stunned onlookers. They were all amazed and praised God, exclaiming, ‘We’ve never seen anything like this before!’” (Mark 2:12). This man’s limits had been lifted!

When our limits are lifted by Christ’s love, we start a new upward journey, take hold of things that once held us, demonstrate capabilities that had previously been impossible and become an example that encourages faith in others. Let Jesus lift your limits today!

Discussion questions

1. What limits did Jesus lift for the paralyzed man in Mark 2:1-12? What limits do you think He wants to lift from your life?
2. How does Jesus use the faith and love of others to help lift limits? Who are some people He might use in your life to help lift limits?
3. What are some new opportunities that open up to you when Jesus lifts limits from your life?