

# THE FIRST 15

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God designed us to live in community. He knows healthy relationships will bless us. This week we study the healing miracles of Jesus in the Gospel of Luke. Not only does Jesus heal physical infirmity, He also frees people from places of isolation and restores them to community.

## OPENING PRAYER

*Blessed and holy Lord, as a new day dawns I seek Your gracious presence. I quiet the busy chatter of my mind, still my body and rest in the goodness of Your love. Help me hear the message You have for me today. Thank You for the blessings of a life lived in community with others. I am grateful for my relationship with You and my relationships with family and friends. May the cornerstone of my life and our life together be Christ and Christ alone. Amen.*

## SCRIPTURE

***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. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Friend, your sins are forgiven." So he said to the paralyzed man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God. Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today." Luke 5:18-20, 24b-26***

## REFLECTION

In today's Gospel account, Jesus heals a paralyzed man. Living with paralysis in ancient times is unimaginable. We don't know how the man became paralyzed, but we do know he lived his life lying on a mat. We don't know if the man suffered from this condition for days or decades, but we do know he was helpless. We don't know if the man had a family, but we do know he had a few good friends. Friends that cared. Friends that did not leave him isolated and alone. Friends that brought him to Jesus.

Everyday they likely grieved his condition and recalled the tragic accident that caused it. Someone must have brought him food, cleansed his body, comforted his loneliness. Was it them? For whatever reason, they bore the burden of his condition everyday. They carried his suffering in their hearts and they were the ones who carried him to Jesus. The person they hoped could help this man, their friend. I consider the people in my faith community, and the burdens they are bearing. I name those who struggle with illness, disease, chronic pain, grief, fear, hunger, loneliness, financial concerns, addictions or relationship problems.

As I reflect on Luke's account of the healing of a paralytic, I consider where I might be in the story. Am I the one paralyzed, lying on the mat brought to the feet of the Healer? Am I one of the friends, tasked with carrying the weight of another, figuring out how to get him help, climbing

to the roof, lifting his lifeless body, breaking down barriers to bring him to Jesus? Maybe I am one of the faceless crowd, witnessing an amazing miracle and praising God. Perhaps God is calling me to a place of bearing the burdens of someone in my church. Maybe God is inviting me to accept the help of others to carry my burden. Maybe I am the immobilized one, lying at the feet of Jesus waiting for the words that will heal and restore me.

**Ask:** How am I carrying the burdens of those in my church community? How are others helping me bear my burdens?

**Pause and Pray**

## **CLOSING PRAYER**

*Blessed Lord Jesus, thank you that I am not alone in this world. You are with me and you have given me a support system of faithful believers. Show me how to live life together with other Christians the way you want us to live - bearing one another's burdens in love. You have put us in each other's lives for mutual blessing. Give me eyes to see those in my faith community who are suffering and show me how I can help bear their burdens. Give me ears to hear the cries of others and teach me to patiently listen. Give me a heart of compassion and hands to support them in their struggles. Help me know how to bring them to you for hope and healing. Amen.*