

*Where we start . . .*

What does it take to learn a new skill (like riding a bike, or hitting a golf ball, or growing flowers or vegetables)? When do you feel like you have developed some “competency”?

*What we read . . .*

Many of the things we do in daily life actually came through a process of learning and developing. Driving a car, cooking meals, managing your business; none of these things are known intuitively and fully in one simple step. You might have a car, or the ingredients for the meal, or the office—but to do what needs to be done takes more than having the basics. Why bother to think about such things? Because it helps us appreciate more fully what Jesus did for one deaf and dumb man. Read about his experience with Jesus in Mark 7:31-37.

What was the man’s condition as he was brought to Jesus?

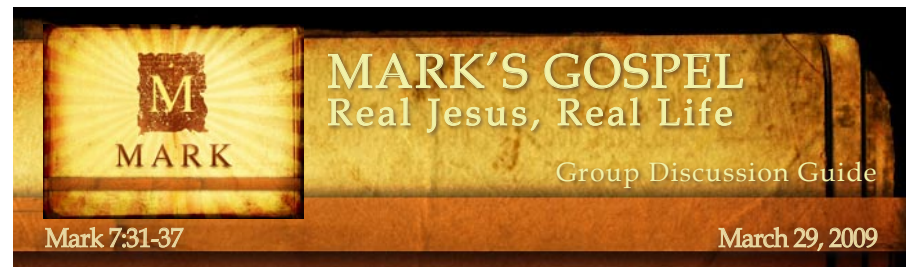
Move beyond the “labels” and try and describe what his life would have been like?

After Jesus ministers to him, the man is healed. But, something more than merely the resolution of the physical problem is in view. Where do you see evidence of that?

Look back at a few other healings that Jesus performed (in Mark 1:29-21 and 2:1-12). What indications do you see of Jesus doing the same kind of thing in those situations?

*Why this matters . . .*

It is right and proper to bring our needs to Jesus; He longs to minister to us and address such needs. But, typically, He intends to do much more than merely “fix the problem.” Why should this matter as you think about what He is doing in your own life?



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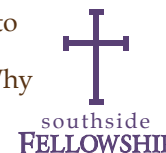
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*Diving in . . .*

Often when we read about the miracles that Jesus did, we end up reading in a shallow way. That is, we notice *that something happened*, and we end up duly impressed with Jesus. But we don't always pay close enough attention to what actually *did* happen. And when we miss that, we miss seeing Jesus for all that He is. He does so much more than merely "fix" things that are broken; that's what we see this week from Mark.

*Discussing . . .*

Having the "basic equipment" does not ensure that you will, in fact, be able to execute a task with anything like competency. You might have a car, but that does not assure you that you can, in fact, drive well. That you have all the ingredients for a wonderful meal does not imply that you will be able to prepare the meal well. Like communication between two people, simply having the "basic equipment" for speech doesn't promise that meaningful communication will be exchanged. There is, in a sense, a certain skill necessary to execute such tasks well.

Sometimes, when we look at the miracles of healing in Jesus' ministry, we can end up thinking of them as if they were simply about "fixing the problem." Jesus, in grace, restores someone's health so that he or she now has the "basic equipment." He has, in a sense, fixed the problem. But if we aren't careful in our reading, we will overlook the truth that Jesus is doing so much more than that.

This week we meet a deaf and dumb man, brought by friends to Jesus. The man was living in a Gentile region; a place Jesus had only visited once before (and that was for a very short stay; see Mark 5:1-20). We might say that the man had "heard" of Jesus, but we would have to think of some appropriate way to picture that. Given the man's condition, whatever communication carried on with him would have been startlingly minimal. He could not hear; he could make inarticulate sounds (that seems to be the sense of "speech impediment" in 7:32; ESV); he most likely could neither read nor write seeing as such skills were rare and the means of learning from others was something he most likely did not have.

And, so, he is brought to Jesus. And Jesus healed him. "His ears were opened" (7:35); he could now hear! And "his tongue was released" (7:35); he could now speak . . . or could he!?

If Jesus had only brought the man physical healing and given him whole

and appropriate "basic equipment" (now the ears worked properly and the impediment to speech was loosed), how would the man even know *what people were saying* or *how to make speech himself*? (You may have met someone who was deaf and saw the challenge they have of learning to make intelligible speech. With training and intervention, the deaf can speak; but it is something that must be learned and mastered.)

But what does Mark tell us? When the man was healed, "he spoke plainly" (7:35). This is, to put it bluntly, far more amazing than merely getting the "basic equipment" working properly! People could understand this formerly deaf man. Somehow, Jesus' grace not only brought physical restoration but poured into the man some sufficient grasp of what speech was all about (what it sounded like, how to make the sounds, what articulate words meant). The man is not merely healed, but wonderfully transformed.

If we are paying attention, it will be clear that other snapshots Mark has given us betray some of the same dimension of ministry in the work of Jesus. In Mark 1:29-31, we are told that He healed Simon's mother-in-law of a fever; the fever was now gone. But apparently she had been laid low with that fever for a period of time. How do you function, having had a fever, once the fever breaks and is gone? Are you ready to get "up and at them"? Typically not! But we are told that she rose and began to serve (1:31).

When Jesus healed the paralyzed man in 2:1-12, there was much more going on than just the restoration of the man's "basic equipment." Paralysis is typically complicated by atrophy; muscles become useless. The paralyzed, having no control of their bodies, cannot learn to balance or walk or sit up. They can be propped up and carried, but if a paralyzed person were to merely have full mobility instantaneously restored, he or she would not immediately or intuitively know how to walk. (Just think of a toddler who is first learning to walk. That child's progress would be typical of what we would expect of a paralyzed person's physical healing. Walking would need to be learned.) But the paralytic rose from his bed, picked up the bed, and walked out in the sight of all! There is so much more going on here beyond physical healing.

What do such episodes picture for us? They tell us something of the thoroughness of Jesus' ministry. He doesn't settle for simply "fixing the broken." He is ministering healing and wholeness and vitality and more. And as we bring our needs to Jesus and He extends to us grace to bring healing—whether emotional, or spiritual, or physical—it would be right for us to think that He will do more than give us the necessary "basic equipment." If we only look to Him for that, we may overlook the fullness of what He would like to do in our lives.

This parallels what happens in salvation. The problem (as we see it) is our sin and guilt. The "healing" comes in the forgiveness of our sins. But Jesus doesn't stop there. He not only gives us the "basic equipment" for life with God (forgiveness) but so much more (justification and positive holiness). He is extending us grace beyond our immediate need or our perceived problem. How will you embrace all He wants to do in your life?