KINGDOM of HEAVEN

A SERIES IN THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Community Group Material
Matthew 9:18-34
Week of 28 August - 2 September

The Touch That Leads To Life

Leader Preparation

Read through the passage so that you are familiar with it.

This passage begins the third (and last) cycle of accounts of Jesus's authority in Matthew 8 & 9. The passage therefore includes three/four more miracle stories:

1. The raising of a Synagogue leader's daughter to life, with an embedded miracle story of a woman healed.
2. The healing of two blind men.
3. The healing of a demon-possessed and mute man.

Read through the exegetical material on **pages 14-16** of the CG leader manual, familiarising yourself in particular with the parts that were not taught in the sermon.

Spend some time praying for the members of your group, and asking God to guide you as you lead your time together. Read through the questions, particularly looking for ways to share openly with your group. Perhaps send them a Whatsapp message or voicenote to remind them that you are praying through their needs.

The key focus of the message this week is on Jesus' compassion. We would really like people to recognise how his love applies to them personally. Try not to spend too much time focusing on the individual miracles. Rather consider what they tell us about Jesus (see the bold section on page 3). Allow time for people to seek and respond to his touch.

> There are some information boxes scattered through the notes. These are not items that must be covered, but information that may be useful if tricky topics come up, or you have extra time for a diversion.

Group time

a) **Icebreaker questions** (*5-10 minutes)*

We all need other people to help us sometimes. Which of the following situations would you find most difficult? Who could you ask to help you in that situation?

Asking for help with money for petrol to get to work this week.	Asking for help to deal with a conflict with your child / parent at home
Asking for help with an addiction.	Asking for help to move a big cabinet in your house
Asking for help with managing debts.	Asking for help with cooking or recipe advice.
Asking for help with a funny noise your car is making.	Asking for help from a colleague to do something you're unsure of.

Remind your group members that before anyone can help you, you need to recognize that there is something you can't do. This sometimes feels awkward and takes humility!

b. **Recap**

Last week we focused on how Jesus chose to spend time with those who needed his healing power.

Have you taken any time this week as someone who is 'sick' to spend time in God's healing presence.

What does that look like for you? *(try to emphasize ways that we build our relationship with Jesus, not just do religious things)*

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c. Exploring the Passage

i. READ Matthew 9:18-26

Each of these healings involved a situation where Jesus' contact made him ceremonially unclean. Touching a dead body or contact with a woman during menstrual bleeding were to be avoided. Yet instead of Jesus being contaminated, he spread his healing, saving grace to those he touched.

The Synagogue ruler's daughter

- What do you think is surprising about the fact that a Synagogue ruler approaches Jesus? Reflect back on Matthew 9:11, and other altercations with religious leaders for help (note that in Matthew it's not specific that it's a synagogue ruler, but Luke 8:41 includes this detail).
- The description of the ruler kneeling before Jesus in verse 18 has a connotation of worship to it. What would this imply about the ruler's view of Jesus?
- What do you think is the significance of Jesus's reference to the daughter only 'sleeping' (v24)?

> There is a clear comparison between the faith of this father, and the faith of the centurion (Matthew 8:5-10). Some have suggested that the request for Jesus to touch his daughter rather than just 'say the word' implies less faith. Others point out that he was showing faith that Jesus could raise his daughter from the dead – the team of mourners was already gathered at their house for the funeral!

The woman with a discharge of blood:

- What is the significance of Jesus calling the woman 'daughter'? (v22)
- The word Jesus uses to describe the woman's healing is the word normally used for 'saved' (see Matt 1:21). He could have used the normal word for 'healed' (see 8:16). Why do you think he uses this general term?

> Some people might find it awkward that Jesus did not allow the woman to just secretly receive healing and slip away. Some reasons that he made her healing public might be:
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> - He did it so she would know that she was healed, having heard an official declaration of it from Jesus.
> - He did it so others would know she was healed of this defiling disease.
> - He did it so she would know that she was healed by her faith and not because of a superstitious touch.
> - He did it so that she would not think she had stolen a blessing from Jesus.
> - He did it so that the ruler of the synagogue would see the power of Jesus at work and therefore have more faith himself for his daughter.
> - He did it so that He could bless her in a special way, giving her an honoured title that we never see Jesus give to any other: daughter.
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> *(from https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/matthew-9/)*

ii. READ Matthew 9:27-31

- When last did we hear about Jesus 'Son of David'? What significance is there in these blind men using this sacred title?
- Matthew deliberately sets us up to see an obvious irony here: the blind men 'see' Jesus for who he really is ('Son of David' ie Messiah), whereas the Pharisees are 'blind' to this (v34). Why do you think there are such different responses to Jesus here? How do you see these similar responses today?

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iii. READ Matthew 9:32-34

- What is different about this story, compared to the first two, when it comes to the theme of faith? See the corresponding third miracle story in cycle 1, Matthew 8:14-15.
- Through chapter 9, Jesus is accused of blasphemy, having low morals, ungodliness, and being from Satan. Have you ever felt mocked for holding on to your faith?

After reading all three miracle stories, list all the ways you see the compassion of Jesus specifically highlighted in these stories. What does this motivate you to do
a) in your personal spiritual life
b) in the way you live in the world

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d) Sharing & Prayer

Have you experienced God's compassion as he brings his saving power into your life? If anyone in your group would like to, take time to allow them to ask God to come and heal the sickness and sin of their lives.

As a group, pray for Jesus to awaken your compassion for those around you who need it. He doesn't ask us just to serve and heal, but to demonstrate his love. Is there someone you could reach out to with compassion this week.

Perhaps take time to meditate on this as you listen to this song:

https://youtu.be/HnXX8TbUX-E (Mighty to Save sung by Laura Story)