

RESCUED

God's Story. Your Invitation.

Session 3: Who Is This?

Mark 2:1-12 • about 55 minutes • Leader Guide for 6th Grade TRE

Part 1: Before You Begin

Read this before class. Tonight the question shifts from what Jesus does to who Jesus is. The students will watch him claim something only God can claim, and then prove it. Let them feel the shock the scribes felt before you explain it.

Where we are in the story

Session 1: Jesus invites. Session 2: Jesus goes looking for the lost. Tonight the students ask the question the crowd in Capernaum asked, and the answer is the foundation for everything after it: Jesus is God. Next week that answer is what makes the cross mean anything.

Tonight's aim

Students discover that Jesus claims the authority to forgive sins, which the scribes correctly say belongs to God alone, and that he proves the claim by healing the man in front of everyone. By the end of the hour every student should be able to say that Jesus does what only God can do, and that this is why the Church says Jesus is God.

The passage in plain terms

Jesus is teaching in a crowded house in Capernaum. Four men arrive carrying a paralyzed friend on a mat, cannot get through the door, and dig through the roof to lower him down in front of Jesus (2:3-4). Jesus sees their faith and says something no one expected: My son, your sins are forgiven (2:5).

The scribes, the religious experts, are silently outraged: Who can forgive sins but God alone? (2:7). They are right about the rule. Only God can forgive sins. Jesus knows what they are thinking and asks which is easier to say, your sins are forgiven or rise and walk. Then he says the second thing to prove he can do the first: that you may know that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins (2:10). The man gets up and walks out. The crowd says, We never saw anything like this! (2:12).

A detail for the students: Jesus does the invisible thing first, forgiveness, and the visible thing second, healing, as proof. He is telling them what the man needed most.

What the Church teaches

The Church teaches that only God can forgive sins, and that Jesus forgives sins because he is the Son of God (CCC 1441, which quotes tonight's verse). The scribes' logic was sound; their conclusion was wrong only because they could not accept who was standing in front of them.

The Church also teaches that Jesus is true God and true man, not part of each, but fully both (CCC 464). That is why he can be tired and hungry and also forgive sins. Tonight does not need the word Incarnation; it needs the students to see a man who does what only God can do.

Saints who said yes

St. Thomas the Apostle

He refused to believe Jesus had risen until he could see the wounds himself. When Jesus stood in front of him a week later, Thomas said the clearest confession in the Gospels: My Lord and my God! (John 20:28). The doubter became the one who said it plainest. Tonight's scribes asked the right question; Thomas eventually gave the right answer.

St. Teresa of Calcutta

Mother Teresa spent her life caring for the poorest and sickest people in Calcutta, India, and she said she was serving Jesus himself in each of them. She won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979 and was declared a saint in 2016. She is remembered for treating every suffering person as if Jesus were lying on that mat. The four friends in tonight's story would have understood her.

Questions students may ask

- Why did Jesus forgive his sins instead of healing him? Because forgiveness was the deeper need, and because Jesus wanted everyone to see that he could do what only God can do. The healing came second, as proof.
- Were the scribes bad guys? Not in this scene. They knew the rule: only God forgives sins. Their mistake was refusing to consider that God might be standing in the room.
- How do we know Jesus is God and not just a great teacher? Because of nights like this one. A great teacher does not forgive sins against God and then heal a paralyzed man to prove it. Jesus does. Either he is God or he is something much worse than a teacher.
- Can I get my sins forgiven like that man? Yes. Jesus gave that authority to his Church, and it happens in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. We will spend a whole night on that in Session 6.

Materials

Catholic Bibles with page numbers ready for Mark 2, Isaiah 43, and Psalm 103, pencils, name tents, reflection cards.

Timed plan

Welcome and opening prayer, 5 minutes. Opening situation, 6. Reading Mark 2:1-12 in segments, 5. Discovery questions, 18. Flashback to Isaiah and the Psalms, 6. Personal question, 4. Catholic connection, 6. Prayer, one step, and closing, 5.

If you are running long: briefly summarize how the friends lowered the man through the roof, then begin the discussion with question 2. Never cut questions 3 or 4; they are the point of the night.

Part 2: Discussion Guide

OPENING PRAYER

Leader prays, everyone answers Amen. Jesus, four friends carried a man to you and you gave him more than he asked for. Tonight, help us see who you really are. Amen.

WHERE WE ARE IN THE STORY

Read aloud: *So far we have met Jesus, and we have watched him go looking for someone who was lost. Tonight we ask the question everyone in the room was asking: who is this?*

OPENING SITUATION

Read aloud: *Imagine someone takes your things. Then a third person, who had nothing to do with it, walks up and announces: I forgive you. Everything is settled. What is wrong with that? Who was actually wronged, and who has the right to forgive?*

Leader: *Let them work out that only the person wronged can forgive the wrong. Then say: Tonight Jesus forgives sins, and the experts in the room ask exactly your question.*

READ MARK 2:1-12

Read the passage in segments, in parts: a narrator, Jesus, the scribes, and the crowd. Read verses 1 to 5, then questions 1 and 2. Read verses 6 to 9, then question 3. Read verses 10 to 12, then questions 4 and 5. Anyone may pass on reading aloud. Give the page number for Mark 2 before you start.

Leader: *Pallet means a mat or stretcher. Scribes means the religious experts of the day, the people who knew the law best.*

DISCOVERY QUESTIONS

Read verses 1 to 5

1. In verses 3 and 4, what do the four friends do to get their friend to Jesus? What does that tell you about them?

Answer • share after the discussion

They carry him, they cannot get through the door, so they climb up, dig through the roof, and lower him down. They are not giving up. They believe Jesus can help their friend, and they will wreck a roof to get him there. Verse 5 says Jesus saw their faith, the friends' faith, not just the sick man's.

2. What is the first thing Jesus says to the paralyzed man in verse 5? Is that what anyone expected?

Answer • share after the discussion

He says, My son, your sins are forgiven. Nobody expected that. Everyone expected a healing. Jesus deals with the deeper problem first. He is telling the whole room that this man's biggest need was not his legs.

Read verses 6 to 9

3. What do the scribes think in verse 7? Are they right about the rule?

Answer • share after the discussion

They think: this is blasphemy; who can forgive sins but God alone? And they are right about the rule. Only God can forgive sins, because every sin is against God. The scribes knew the law. What they could not accept was who was standing in front of them.

Leader: Do not rush past this. The students need to see that the scribes' logic is sound; that is what makes verse 10 so big.

Read verses 10 to 12

4. Jesus mentions two statements in verse 9. Which one could the crowd check with their own eyes? What does he do next, and why does that prove the other one?

Answer • share after the discussion

Rise, take up your pallet and walk is the one anyone can check. Your sins are forgiven cannot be seen. So Jesus tells the man to rise and walk, and the man gets up. The healing everyone can see confirms his authority to forgive, which no one can see.

5. Verse 10 says the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins. Put the pieces together: if only God can forgive sins, and Jesus forgives sins, who is Jesus?

Answer • share after the discussion

Jesus is God. That is the conclusion the whole scene is built to force. He does not say it in so many words here; he does what only God can do and lets the room work it out. The Church says it plainly: Jesus is true God and true man (CCC 464). And the crowd's reaction in verse 12 is the honest one: We never saw anything like this!

FLASHBACK: ONLY GOD FORGIVES

Read aloud: *The scribes' question reflects something Israel's Scriptures teach: forgiveness comes from God. We flash back to two passages that help us understand their objection, a promise God made through the prophet Isaiah and a song of praise from the Psalms.*

Read Isaiah 43:25, then Psalm 103:2-3 (give both page numbers; two readers)

1. According to these verses, who forgives sins? And what does the psalm say God does right beside forgiving?

Answer • share after the discussion

God does: I, I am he who blots out your transgressions. And the psalm puts two things side by side: who forgives all your iniquity, who heals all your diseases. These passages speak of God forgiving and healing. In the Gospel scene, Jesus forgives the man's sins and heals him, showing his authority to forgive.

BACK TO THE PRESENT

Read aloud: *Back to the house with the hole in the roof. Now we can better understand the scribes' question: Who can forgive sins but God alone?*

THE PERSONAL QUESTION

Read aloud: *Four friends carried that man to Jesus. Who has carried you toward Jesus, a parent, a grandparent, a friend, a teacher? And who could you carry? Write one name of each on your reflection card.*

Leader: *Give a full minute. Do not ask for names aloud. Some students will only think of one; that is fine.*

THE CATHOLIC CONNECTION

Share after the discussion

Here is what the Church says about tonight. Only God can forgive sins, and the Church teaches that Jesus forgives sins because he is the Son of God (CCC 1441). The scribes had the right rule and missed the right answer. The Church says what they could not: Jesus is true God and true man, not half of each, but fully both (CCC 464).

That is why the cross will matter next week. If Jesus were only a good teacher, his death would be sad. Because he is God, his death can save the world. And the forgiveness he gave the man on the mat is still given today, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation, where Jesus forgives through his priest. We will spend a whole night on that in Session 6.

Leader: *Keep the Reconciliation mention to one sentence tonight; Session 6 carries it. Two guards: do not suggest the man's paralysis was caused by a particular sin (the passage does not say that), and do not say God could never give human ministers a role in forgiveness; Jesus's authority to do exactly that matters in Session 6. If a student pushes back that a teacher could just be lying, honor it: that is the choice the scene forces, and we will watch Jesus back it with his life.*

PRAYER

Leader: *Remind them, every time: you do not have to feel anything special. Feelings are not the measure of God's grace.*

Read aloud: *Let us pray. Talk to Jesus in your head while I say these words. Jesus, you are not just a good teacher. You are God, and you can forgive what nobody else can. Forgive me. And help me carry someone to you. Amen.*

ONE STEP THIS WEEK

Read aloud: *One thing this week. Every day, pray for the person you would like to carry to Jesus, by name, for one minute. That is it. Just the name and one minute.*

CLOSING PRAYER

Lord Jesus, true God and true man, you forgave a man's sins and then made him walk to prove it. Forgive ours. And make us like the four friends, willing to break a roof to bring someone to you. Amen.

MEMORY VERSE

“The Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” (Mark 2:10)

Part 3: Leader Reference Card

TONIGHT'S PASSAGE

Mark 2:1-12 (read aloud in segments); flashback Isaiah 43:25 and Psalm 103:2-3

SUPPORTING REFERENCES

- John 20:24-29 (Thomas: My Lord and my God)
- Matthew 9:2-8 (the same story in Matthew, if a student's Bible is open there)

CATECHISM

- CCC 1441 (only God forgives sins; Jesus does because he is the Son of God)
- CCC 464 (true God and true man)
- CCC 1422-1424 (the Sacrament of Reconciliation, for Session 6)

SAINTS WHO SAID YES

- St. Thomas the Apostle (John 20:24-29)
- St. Teresa of Calcutta (1910-1997, canonized 2016; summarized)

MATERIALS

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