

"YOUR SINS ARE FORGIVEN"

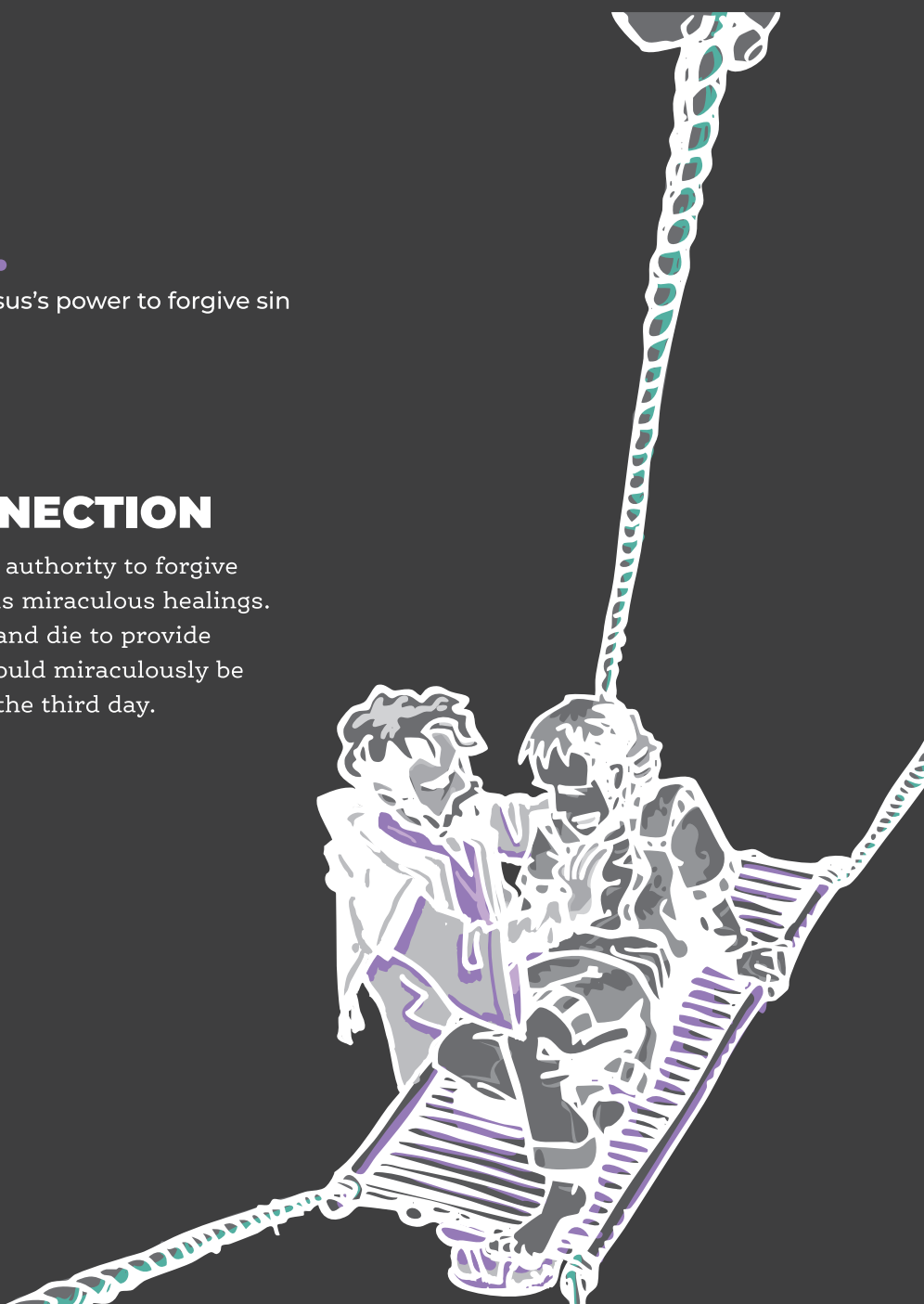
MAIN POINT.

Our obedience shows Jesus's power to forgive sin and transform hearts.



CHRIST CONNECTION

Jesus's claim to have the authority to forgive sins was supported by His miraculous healings. Jesus would later suffer and die to provide forgiveness of sin and would miraculously be raised from the dead on the third day.



EVIDENCE

This week, we're covering the passages and main points below. But we encourage you to read all of the content on the timeline as you prepare to teach.

Mark 2

ONLY JESUS CAN FORGIVE OUR SIN

MARK 2:1-7

1 When he entered Capernaum again after some days, it was reported that he was at home. 2 So many people gathered together that there was no more room, not even in the doorway, and he was speaking the word to them. 3 They came to him bringing a paralytic, carried by four of them. 4 Since they were not able to bring him to Jesus because of the crowd, they removed the roof above him, and after digging through it, they lowered the mat on which the paralytic was lying. 5 Seeing their faith, Jesus told the paralytic, "Son, your sins are forgiven." 6 But some of the scribes were sitting there, questioning in their hearts: 7 "Why does he speak like this? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?"

OBEDIENCE IS EVIDENCE OF TRANSFORMATION

MARK 2:8-12

8 Right away Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were thinking like this within themselves and said to them, "Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? 9 Which is easier: to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat, and walk'? 10 But so that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he told the paralytic—11 "I tell you: get up, take your mat, and go home." 12 Immediately he got up, took the mat, and went out in front of everyone. As a result, they were all astounded and gave glory to God, saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

BEFORE YOU TEACH

MAIN POINT.

Our obedience shows Jesus's power to forgive sin and transform hearts.

Leaders: This week, consider how loving Jesus precedes and prompts obedience to Jesus's commands (John 14:15).

BIBLICAL COMMENTARY

ONLY JESUS CAN FORGIVE OUR SIN

MARK 2:5

"It was a staggering claim, and we should understand it not only as a further exposition of Jesus's authority but also as another sign of the diminishing role of the temple. This is the second time in the Gospel when a prophetic figure opens a means of forgiveness outside the cultic center in Jerusalem. John the Baptist had called people to the desert to receive a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (1:4). And here in the village of Capernaum in rural Galilee Jesus declared that the Son of Man came to forgive sin on earth. Furthermore, Jesus's declaration follows a revelation of His power to make clean irrespective of the authority of the priests in the temple."¹

MARK 2:7

"Blasphemy is irreverent, profane, impious speech about God; and its penalty in Old Testament times was death (Lev. 24:16). Here the charge prepares the way for the same accusation at Jesus's trial (14:60-64). The scribes were certainly correct that the Scriptures everywhere teach that 'God alone,' or better 'One, even God' or 'the one God,' can forgive sins. Nor did Jesus deny this. What they failed to recognize was that the reign of God had drawn near in Jesus and that He had authority to act on God's behalf."²

OBEDIENCE IS EVIDENCE OF TRANSFORMATION

MARK 2:10-12

"At the point when the paralytic stood up, the world of tangible forms served as a sign for a spiritual truth. The man's physical disease symbolized his spiritual condition, and Jesus's power to heal his body authenticated the claim to restore his standing before God. When Jesus touched the leper, He shattered the social and religious conventions of his day. A new power had entered the world. It was the power to make people clean. It was not dependent upon the laws and rites of the temple. It operated outside the jurisdiction of the recognized religious authorities. Here that new power pressed its claim one step further. No physical condition rendered this man unfit to stand before God. The problem was sin, and Jesus did not make him clean by healing his body; Jesus made him clean by forgiving his sin."³

CONTEXT

In the Gospel of Mark, the writer (John Mark) focuses more on Jesus's miracles rather than His teachings. Jesus's teachings are sprinkled throughout the Gospel, but His miracles served as evidence: He is the Messiah for whom the people had been waiting. More precisely, John Mark wrote to a mostly Gentile audience, aiming to prove that Jesus was the true Son of God and to disprove the Roman belief that hailed Caesar as the "son of God." Jews expected the Messiah to come as a political ruler, who would re-establish Israel's rule and reign, but Jesus came in a way no one expected, not even His disciples (Mark 8:31-32). He came for more than the Jews, to serve rather than be served, and to give His life for our sin (Mark 10:45). How can we know Jesus is the Son of God, who has the authority to forgive sins? Jesus's miracles are evidence of His power, pointing us to the incredible reality that sinners find forgiveness in Him. In Mark's Gospel, Jesus's identity as the Son of God was confirmed and recognized by God the Father (1:11; 9:7); by unclean spirits and demons (3:11; 5:7); by Peter (8:27-30); and even by a Roman Centurion, who witnessed Jesus's last hour and said, "Truly this man was the Son of God!" (15:39). We can rest in the truth that Jesus has authority to forgive even the worst sinner.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

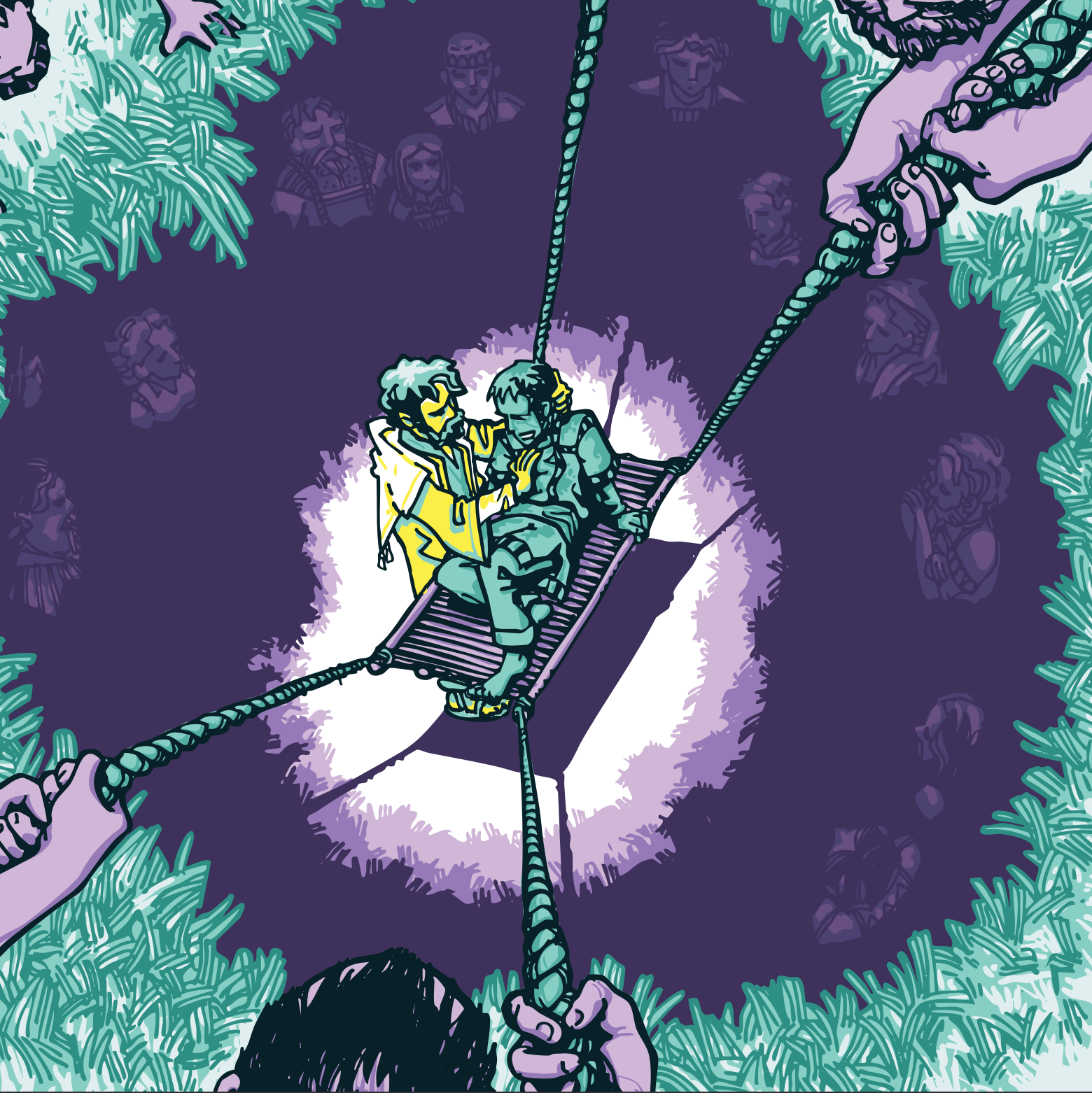
Sin's Effects in the World

Sin does not only impact our relationship with God; it is also the root of our broken relationships with the people around us. Human sinfulness is the reason that creation groans in anticipation for redemption and deliverance from its bondage to evil powers (Rom. 8:20-22). Sin has infected and redirected the social structures of society, leading to injustice and oppression. The distorting effects of sin are visible all around us, but the good news of the gospel is that the battle against these powers will be won through the work of Christ.

LEADERS' PRAYER

HEAVENLY FATHER, GIVE US EYES TO SEE THE DEVASTATION OF SIN IN OUR WORLD AND IN OUR LIVES. THANK YOU FOR GIVING YOUR SON SO THAT WE CAN BE FREED FROM SIN. HOLY SPIRIT, APPLY THE HEALING FORGIVENESS THAT COMES THROUGH SALVATION TO OUR HEARTS AND MINDS.

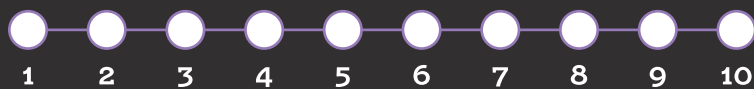




KICK STARTER

RATE IT!

How important is it for a superhero to have the power to heal themselves (1=Not needed; 10=Mandatory!)?



These optional activities are designed to help your students interact. You'll find a Discussion Activity and a Cultural Connection, which touches on a relevant topic in today's teen culture. Each group is different, so adapt these activities to fit your group's needs. The goal is for students to connect more to the lesson as they connect to the topic and to one another.

1

POWER OF FORGIVENESS

SUPPLIES LIST: NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing time for students to share responses:

- **HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE FORGIVENESS?**
- **WHO IS THE MOST FORGIVING PERSON YOU KNOW?**
- **WHY IS ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS OR GIVING FORGIVENESS SOMETIMES HARD?**

Forgiveness is the act of releasing someone of guilt. Because of sin, our need for forgiveness never decreases; it only increases as we continue to sin. Jesus taught about forgiveness—both our need for it and the command to give it. As we experience God's forgiveness, we must also grow in the ability to forgive others.

2

CULTURAL CONNECTION

Is it ever okay not to forgive someone? If we're honest, we probably have an invisible line that, once others cross, we determine not to forgive them. Maybe a friend repeats the same offense over and over again, and you don't want to deal with it anymore. Or maybe someone hurts you so deeply that you can't imagine moving past the pain. Forgiveness isn't always easy, but the radical call of the gospel is to forgive others as Jesus forgave us (Eph. 4:32; Col. 3:13). Even Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive someone—a question we wrestle with too! Jesus taught that we are to forgive others as He forgives us (Matt. 18:23-35)—endlessly. Now, forgiveness doesn't excuse harmful behavior or mean that we stay in a toxic situation; forgiveness is more about our own heart. Our ability to forgive doesn't come from our maturity or our strength but from experiencing God's grace; we forgive because we are forgiven. We loosen our grip on judgment because we are free from condemnation. If we consider the depth of our own forgiveness, then we'll more willingly forgive others.

DISCUSSION

MAIN POINT.

Our obedience shows Jesus's power to forgive sin and transform hearts.

ONLY JESUS CAN FORGIVE OUR SIN

READ MARK 2:1-7



WHAT DID THE PARALYTIC'S FRIENDS BELIEVE? HOW DID THIS BELIEF MOTIVATE THEIR ACTIONS?

The home Jesus preached in couldn't fit the large crowd that had gathered, but the four men carrying their friend didn't let this stop them. They had heard what Jesus could do, and they had faith, or confident trust and hope (Heb. 11:1), that Jesus could heal their friend. They were determined to get to Jesus! Their boldness to dig through the roof was rooted in and motivated by faith—faith Jesus noticed because their actions revealed it. **Trusting the Lord will impact our actions too, and the world around us will notice our faith.**



WHY DID JESUS FORGIVE THE PARALYTIC'S SIN INSTEAD OF HEALING HIS BODY?

Imagine the disappointment. These men interrupted Jesus's teaching and lowered their friend from the roof! Jesus seemed to ignore the paralysis, forgiving sin instead of healing his body. But Jesus didn't ignore the man's pain; He exposed a much deeper pain in need of spiritual healing. **The miraculous healing would come, but Jesus was most concerned with the man's heart—with relationship.** Through the paralytic, Jesus revealed something about all of us: Our greatest need is salvation from sin. Sin's effects are far more devastating than any sickness or suffering we could ever face. Our greatest need is forgiveness, and Jesus offers it freely.



WHAT DID THE SCRIBES *DOUBT* ABOUT JESUS? WHO DID THEY BELIEVE COULD FORGIVE SINS?

Were the scribes wrong to question Jesus's ability to forgive sins? Actually, the scribes were correct in their understanding of who had the ability to forgive sins: God. But they were wrong in their charge of blasphemy, the accusation of speaking irreverently or slanderously about God. **They doubted Jesus's identity, seeing Him as a dangerous false prophet and not God in flesh. They knew God alone had the authority to forgive sin, but they failed to see that God was standing in their presence.** As Jesus proclaimed the power and authority to forgive sins, the scribes inwardly cried, "Blasphemy!" Blasphemy against God was a serious offense that could result in being stoned to death. In essence, they charged Jesus and murdered Him in their thoughts. In fact, this same charge would later condemn Jesus to death (Mark 14:61-64). The crowd gathered that day to hear Jesus's teaching and to witness His miracles, but Jesus is more than a good teacher and healer—He is fully God. In the presence of God, the crowd witnessed Jesus's authority to forgive sins, authority God the Father had given Him.

OBEDIENCE IS EVIDENCE OF TRANSFORMATION

READ MARK 2:8-12



HOW EASILY CAN YOU HIDE WHAT'S IN YOUR HEART? HOW DOES KNOWING GOD SEES YOUR HEART IMPACT YOU?

We easily curate a perfect image for social media, while our lives may look drastically different. The scribes and the crowd expected Jesus to heal the man physically, but when He announced the man's forgiveness instead, their hearts accused Him of lying. Jesus addressed their hearts—the thoughts they hadn't spoken out loud. We may wrestle with sin in our heart or have doubts or questions about our faith, but we don't have to hide any of it. **God already knows our hearts; He invites us to confess our sin and to bring our doubts and questions to Him.** He sees everything we try to hide from others: selfish motives, pride, jealousy. The good news is that Jesus is willing to heal us—to forgive our sin.

WHY DID JESUS TELL THE MAN TO RISE, PICK UP HIS BED, AND GO HOME?

Jesus commanded the paralytic to get up, take his mat, and go home. Immediately, the man obeyed in front of the entire crowd. **The friends' bold faith got the paralytic to Jesus; then, the paralytic's bold faith enabled his literal steps of obedience! Faith results in obedience.** The man's restored body symbolized his soul's restoration. He walked with new purpose—to point glory to God. As believers, we've been healed from sin and death. We share the paralytic's purpose: to stand, to go, to share the hope of the gospel with others in desperate need of forgiveness.

WHY WAS THE MAN'S OBEDIENCE CRITICAL IN THIS MOMENT? WHY IS OUR OBEDIENCE IMPORTANT?

Without the paralytic's obedience to rise and walk, the crowd wouldn't see a healed man. **His obedience provided evidence.** The crowd was confronted with the reality that Jesus wasn't just a good teacher and healer but God in flesh, who healed the whole person. The paralytic's steps from that day forward were a testimony of God's healing power and Jesus's authority to forgive sin. **His obedience to stand and walk proved Jesus's identity. Does yours?** As believers, we are walking demonstrations of Jesus's power to forgive sin. We're new creations and ambassadors who represent the kingdom of God. But we have to walk in this new identity! If not, then how will others see God's power to deliver and forgive? **Our obedience is proof of God's work that has taken place (and continually takes place) inwardly.**

WRAP-UP



HOW DO YOUR CHOICES CONTRADICT JESUS'S POWER TO FORGIVE SIN? WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE SO THAT OTHERS SEE JESUS'S WORK IN YOU?

The paralytic's friends lowering him through the roof was evidence of bold faith. Does our faith leave evidence like this? **We can easily confess Jesus with our mouths but not our actions—or our hearts. Our daily choices reflect what's beneath the surface.** When we use profanity or gossip, cheat on a quiz, or compromise standards for purity in who we date or in the content we consume, we send a confusing message to a watching world. We won't do this perfectly, but authentic faith leaves a trail of evidence (Matt. 7:15-20). Don't get the sequence wrong, though: Legalism says that first you have faith, second you obey, and then, you're saved. The gospel teaches that first you have faith in Jesus *and* are saved, and then you obey Him out of love. **Faith in Jesus leads to obedience—the fruit of your salvation that grows the longer you know Him.** Because of Jesus's costly sacrifice, we experience forgiveness and transformation and are walking evidence of His power and authority! What a joy to reflect Jesus's work!