

# life groups

NLC Weekly Sermon Study

Week of February 5, 2017  
Sermon: Find Your Place—Be The Church



# Schedule

**30 MIN** Eat, Meet & Greet

**15 MIN** Ice Breaker Game: **Connecting Stories.** **Instructions:** This game is all about finding common experiences or themes between people. The goal of the game is to connect mini-stories in an interesting way. **Materials required:** Pens and Post-it Notes or notecards. Divide into small groups of 6-8 people. Each person must share at least one item that connects to the other mini-stories. The longer the chain of items that can be created, the better. Write down a few words on a post-it note to keep track of each part of the story.

The first player begins by sharing an interesting memory or experience that they have. For example, one player can say: “One time, I accidentally locked myself out of the house. So then I spent the entire day at a coffee shop.” Any other person can tell a related story that has any similar themes or elements to the previous story. For example, the next person can say, “I am a total coffee addict. Every day I drink 3 cups of coffee, and it sometimes prevents me from being able to sleep at night.”

The next player, based upon the previous story shared, can say something related, such as: “I don’t sleep much at night because I play lots of computer games until early morning.” Any person can then add to the story, by saying something like, “I also love computer games.” To help the group remember each part of the story, write a few words on a post-it note for each part of the story chain. The more interesting or funny the story, the better. The group with the longest connected chain of stories wins. This activity is a fun way to get people to share stories, while helping them learn similarities or common interests.

**NOTE:** Please use the following study in whatever way flows most naturally for your group. If you lead a small group, you may choose to stay together and go straight through the study. If your group is larger—like a House Party or a City Group—you may want a leader to take the group through the main points, then save the questions for small group breakouts. How you use the study is always up to your discretion as a leader.

## **OPENING PRAYER**

**45–60 MIN** Find Your Place: Be the Church

**ASK PARTICIPANTS TO TAKE TURNS READING MARK 2:1-11**

## **THE CONTEXT OF THIS STORY:**

- Capernaum was a large Galilean fishing village, a busy trading center.
- This was Jesus’ main base during his Galilean ministry, where He lived, and the place of His first converts—Peter and Andrew.
- With healings & revival there, the news spread fast. In this story Jesus is preaching on power to a packed house.

# How Can We Be The Church?

## 1. By Understanding our own Brokenness

- All are paralyzed somewhere—a mess without Christ. Your brokenness is your greatest ministry tool; you're imperfect like they are!

**Q1.** Are you glad someone was willing to carry you to Christ? Who was that person for you?

**READ PROVERBS 14:4** “Where there are no oxen, the stalls are clean.”

- Jesus had room for your mess, and we have to make room for messes: marriages, money, emotions, thinking, sin.
- The presence of God is even more amazing when you have paralyzed, broken, messy people around.

**Q2.** How can you make more room in your life—even your group—for more people? Even messy people?

- In the Mark 2 story, there were probably many people who walked right by the paralytic, with no one inviting him in.
  - › They just wanted to **go to** church but not **be** the church.
  - › Thank the Lord for the four friends!

**HAVE SOMEONE IN THE GROUP READ MARK 2:2-4 AGAIN.**

- These guys fought to get close to Christ, but crowds kept them away, while people inside were getting healed, saved, and set free.
  - › Why did they work so hard to get the paralytic there? Because they heard Jesus was the only hope.
  - › **The power of the church is in the hands of Christ but the potential of the church is in the hands of the people.**

**HAVE SOMEONE READ MARK 2:17**

- The church is like a hospital, but what is the use of a hospital, if there is no ambulance?
  - › An ambulance is always looking for the broken, but a weird church is when you have people just working on each another.

**Q3.** How can your group make an impact in your city, outside your connections within the church?

**READ ACTS 1:8** “But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit

has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

- The word “end” is often translated “uttermost parts,” relating to time, space and rank.
  - › **Time:** The people we don’t normally spend time with.
  - › **Space:** The people furthest from our sphere of influence.
  - › **Rank:** The people last on your list to invite to the table.

## 2. By Getting Out Of The Way

**HAVE SOMEONE READ MARK 2:4-5 AGAIN.**

- A crowd of people blocked the paralyzed man from Jesus. There was a crowd between his disability and his miracle.

**Q4.** How have Christians been a main block keeping others from Christ?

**Q5.** Are you blocking someone from Jesus, or did you maybe notice a lost opportunity this past week? (Sometimes it can be just as much what you don’t say or do as what you do say or do).

- People who are skeptical of God or burned out on the church often say they don’t have a problem with Jesus but with Christians who say they love Jesus but have hurt them deeply: Christians with no compassion!
- It has often been said, “People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care,” and it’s true!

**HAVE SOMEONE READ MARK 2:3-4 AGAIN**

- The tension of the story is that the house was packed with people who were hungry for the truth. But the truth is, the power of God has no purpose until the powerless are let inside.
  - › The four guys couldn’t get in. The people inside were doing churchy stuff but not allowing room for the hurting.

**Q6.** What do you think motivated these four guys to help the paralytic? Would they have had the same motivation to serve the man’s need if they had worked solo?

**Q7.** Do you know anyone going through a tough time right now? Someone who needs to be carried to the table? Do you have friends you can team with in reaching that person, and if so, how?

- › Be intentional about reaching the person God just placed on your mind.
- › Church gets better here when you bring in the hurting! You won’t

do that if you don't remember your own condition without Christ.

- › At NLC, and maybe even in this group right now, there are people paralyzed in fear, in rejection, or in lack of hope.

**Q8.** Have you ever seen someone's life get destroyed by the church through comments, distancing them, or gossip? Have you ever done that yourself, or have you been the recipient of that?

- Remember the woman caught in adultery? Jesus said, "He who is without sin, cast the first stone..."
  - › In Bible times the first stone was huge, meant to crush and kill, known as the "kill shot."
  - › Jesus was saying, "If you are sinless, take the kill shot."
  - › We all have the capacity to take the kill shot when we get self-righteous—killing someone's reputation, confidence, or their spirit.
  - › There were probably people who walked by the paralyzed man who thought, "Maybe he did something to deserve this."

#### **BE AWARE OF:**

- The spirit of COMPLACENCY
  - › This is the spirit of "good enough."
  - › We're big enough; we don't need to raise more money, do more outreach, or do more missions. We don't need youth ministry to grow—just reach my kid!
- It's never going to be good enough until we have Christ enough.
- The spirit of COMPROMISE
  - › With compromise, there is no pursuit of holiness.

**READ PS 24:3-4** "Who may ascend the mountain of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? The one who has clean hands and a pure heart."

- › **It's hard to fall into sin while you are carrying a paralyzed person.**

- The spirit of GREED
  - › This is when our vision outweighs our provision.

**READ LUKE 12:48** "From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and from him who has been entrusted with much, even more will be demanded."

**READ 2 KINGS 4** "Elisha asked a widow, 'What do you have in your house?'" She said, "Only a small jar of oil," but she gave it. Then her sons and the next generation were blessed. They grew up serving God.

- › "You don't give **to** a church; you give **through** a church."

- The spirit of CONSTRICION
  - › This is a small mindset that says, “What’s in it for me?”
  - › This mindset complains, “It’s not deep enough,” but don’t put your lack of study time on others. instead, be the one who wants the enemy to fear when you get up in the morning!
- **A church must be so strong that everyone would notice if it closed down.**

3. By keeping the call in your hands

**READ MARK 2:5, 10-11**

**Q9.** Whose faith helped the paralytic?

- The paralytic had been lying on the mat for some time and was probably sick and tired of it, thinking, “I finally get to get rid of this thing!”
- But his pain became his purpose, and his misery became his message. Your mat is your ministry. You cannot leave it, because someone else needs it.
- Verse 10 is the first time in Mark that Jesus is referred to as the “Son of Man,” emphasizing that Jesus is fully human, having the ability, willingness and desire to have compassion (“co-suffering”) for us in our deepest need, and is equally motivated to help us overcome sin.
- Discipleship means being a student, apprentice, or imitator of the teacher. As disciples of Jesus, we are to be Spirit-led in compassion to others’ suffering.
- When we are Spirit-led, we become deeply motivated by compassion to respond to others’ suffering. Why? Because we begin seeing others from God’s perspective, not our own.

**Q10.** What pain has Jesus healed in you? What bondage has He broken in you? What kind of broken people can you bring to the table? If your ministry was based on the mat you carry, what would God’s calling on your life look like?

**TAKE PRAYER REQUESTS & PRAY OVER NEEDS**

**ANNOUNCEMENTS**