



Upside Down  
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The Crossing Church  
Las Vegas, Nevada

## OPENING

This week, as we continue our journey through the Gospel of Mark, we encounter a paralyzed man and his four friends. They have brought him to Jesus by faith and the man was wonderfully healed into a new normal. We have all been marked by Jesus in one way or another. This time of uncertainty may move us into a new normal where God can reach us, or it may send us backward into the old way of living where apathy and fear mark us. We pray for the new normal with faithful friends always there to encourage us.

**QUESTION: What is something you aren't missing today that surprises you? What is the best thing that happened to you this past week?**

**QUESTION: What are you feeling joyful about and thankful for today?**

## SCRIPTURE<sup>1</sup>

**Mark 2:1b–5b** ...so many gathered that there was no room left, not even outside the door, and he preached the word to them. Some men came, bringing to him a paralytic, carried by four of them. Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralyzed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

**Mark 2:7-12** "Why does this fellow talk like that? He's blaspheming! Who can forgive sins but God alone?" And he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things? Which is easier: to say to this paralyzed man, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Get up, take your mat and walk?' But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins." So he said to the man, "I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home." He got up, took his mat and walked out in full view of them all. This amazed everyone and they praised God saying, "We have never seen anything like this!"

**2 Corinthians 5:17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

## OBSERVATION

Those who were following Jesus 2000 years ago were hearing about and witnessing the new kingdom Jesus was announcing. They had been looking forward to the coming of their Messiah who they thought would defeat the Roman occupation of Israel. Additionally, they viewed illness or disease as a consequence of sin and a sign that God was punishing them. But, what they were seeing was upside down and backward from what they expected, because what Jesus came to bring them was a new covenant -- the kingdom of God would come to live within believers. It was in this environment that the faith of four friends, who did the unheard of, made it possible for this paralyzed man to receive healing from Jesus for sin and disability, and to move into a new normal in his life. This story is so timely today because we, too, are in a season marked by change. Jesus' arrival marked a time of transition. Things were suddenly shifting – the old was passing away.

**QUESTION: Which of your friends do you trust to go far beyond the normal to help you? How do you know they would do or risk virtually anything for you? How is your small group helping you to cope today?**

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<sup>1</sup> All scripture is NIV unless otherwise indicated

## APPLICATION

This is a season that will mark us. How that happens is our decision. Amid the confusion and uncertainty of today, we have a couple of options: We can either spend all of our time yearning for what we are missing from the old normal or we can begin planning and living for the new one. We don't want to make the mistake of longing, yearning and pushing toward what we have known when God is working right now to lead us toward what we have needed. Consider this: Is it possible that the old normal wasn't that great? Some of us have cracks in our hearts that have been present for so long that we just assume they are permanent. We have tried to hide them, but these flaws are now front and center. In this season of isolation and pause, Jesus is asking us to begin to move into a new life. Dr. Parker J. Palmer<sup>2</sup> said, **"Wholeness does not mean perfection: It means embracing brokenness as an integral part of life."** This is comforting -- we are all broken in some way.

**QUESTION: What has damaged your heart to such an extent that you can't recover from it? How has God used your past failures and brokenness to change you into a person whose life has Kingdom value?**

**QUESTION: For those of you who overcame strongholds through Rooted, how did your life change afterward?**

**QUESTION: What do you think God is wanting to change in you during this time? What walls is He climbing, what mountains is He kicking down -- to come after you? Are you praising Him for that?**

**QUESTION: What new things have you been doing during this pause in your life? What new habits are you looking forward to continuing going forward into the future?**

Some of us have followed Christ for so long, we are comfortable where we are with Him. Where is our passion for Jesus today? Where is the motivation to get up early and meet Him at our kitchen table. Where are the phone calls to family and friends during which we pray for them and encourage them to persevere in their faith? Where are our voices being raised with our hands in praise to our magnificent God we say we love? What are we teaching our children about the Bible and God's plan to reconcile us back to Him? Where is our joy as we look forward to each day with Jesus beside us?

**QUESTION: What is your own response to each of these questions? If you have allowed apathy to enter into your relationship with God when will you decide that this season has taken you where you can actually encounter Jesus again in a whole new way?**

Jesus is asking us to embrace a new normal. The paralytic man saw healing as his new normal, but what is ours going to look like? Some of us are feeling a bit like we are laying on life's mat or maybe an old recliner. We feel paralyzed – so many barriers, so many opinions, so little information affecting our futures. Jesus is calling us to **1) Lean into the character of God** that never changes. His grace, His love, His mercy, His care for us have not changed, so let that comfort and encourage us; **2) Lean into the parts of us that God wants to change.** In the midst of chaos, there is ground to be gained. It's up to us to find that ground; **3) Lean into the new normal** while others are drifting back into their old ways. People always tend to push back toward the familiar when they face the unknown. But, it may be that the changes God wants us to embrace are habits, hobbies, relationships, or spiritual practices that are much healthier for us than those of the past.

**QUESTION: What is going to be difficult for you to accept in the new normal? What end result will motivate you to push ahead into that strange place in spite of your hesitation?**

**QUESTION: How have your relationships with your spouse, children and friends improved recently?**

This new future Jesus is calling us to is something that will bring life. It is worth pursuing.

## PRAYER

Heavenly Father, thank you for friends we can rely on for support and comfort. Help us to be encouragers for others and to be on fire for the new normal You have planned for us. In Jesus' name. Amen

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<sup>2</sup> Author and Senior Partner of the Center for Courage and Renewal



## QUESTIONS

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## QUESTIONS YOU MAY WANT TO ADD

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- 3.
- 4.