



## Four Friends' Faith

(based on Mark 2:1-12)

Jesus had been out teaching, healing, and proclaiming the good news of God's love. When people heard he was home, so many gathered at the house to hear what he had to say that it was full, inside and out!

Four friends carried their friend to see Jesus. Their friend was a young man who was paralyzed and could not walk. They had heard that Jesus had healed people and they wanted Jesus to help their friend. So, the friends brought him to the house only to find it so full of people they couldn't even get to the front door.

"What now?" one of them asked.

"How about the roof?" another wondered.

"Let's do it!" the other two shouted.

So, the four friends climbed up the outside stairs to the roof of the house with their friend who was lying on a mat. They found some loose tiles and moved them aside. Then they began to dig through the layers of dried mud that made up the roof. It was hard work, and they hadn't brought tools. Soon a small hole appeared. Dirt and debris dropped down on the people below. They looked up to see a larger and larger hole growing in the roof. The friends gently lowered their friend down on his mat through the hole. People moved aside, pressing against the walls, to make room for the man on his mat.

When Jesus looked up and saw the hot, sweaty, caring, hopeful faces of the four friends peering through the hole, he saw their faith. Jesus turned to the young man on the mat and said, "Son, your sins are forgiven."

Some people in the room—experts in religious law—squirmed when Jesus said this. They looked at one another, thinking and murmuring. "Why does he say this? Only God can forgive sins!" "He can't speak for God." "This young man didn't go through proper channels or follow our rules." "This is unheard of!"

Jesus knew what they were saying and asked them, "Why don't you just ask these questions out loud? I'll ask you, is it easier for me to say, 'Your sins are forgiven' or 'Stand up, take your mat, and walk'? I could do either. But, so you know I do have the authority to forgive sins," Jesus turned to the young man and said, "Stand. Take up your mat and go home."

The man who could not walk immediately stood up, gathered up his mat, and walked right out the door in front of everyone. The crowd was amazed and praised God, saying, "Wow! We've never seen anything like that!"

The four friends grinned at one another and scrambled off the roof to meet their friend.



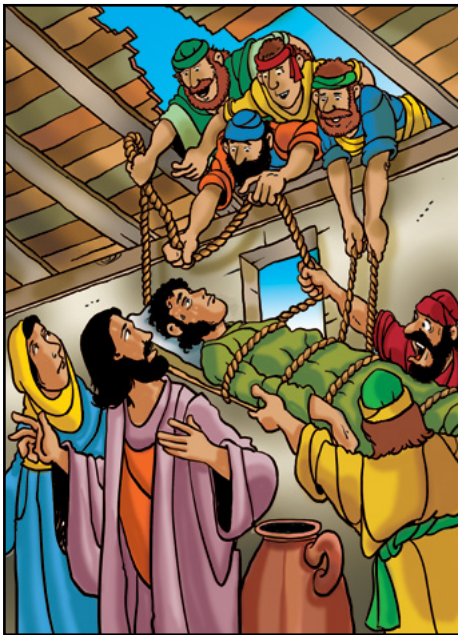
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Use one or more activities from each section to explore grace and gratitude with your children this week.

### Recognizing God's Grace

- Read and enjoy the story together—imagine and wonder.
- Retell the story using props from your home. Be creative like the friends were! Stuffed animals or spoons may be the friends and Jesus. Pillows from a sofa or facial tissues may be the roof of the house.
- Read *Binkle's Time to Fly* by Sharmila Collins (Flyaway Books, 2020). Notice how it takes a village to help someone in need.



### Responding to God's Grace

- Wonder what you can do to bring people together to help someone in need. Make a plan that includes each member of your family, and neighbors or your church community.
- Talk together about your friends and how they help you. Make a card to thank a friend.

### Celebrating in Gratitude

- Give each person a pretzel or other treat. Have everyone hold the pretzel in one hand with their arm out straight and stiff. Invite everyone, while they are keeping their arm straight and stiff, to eat their pretzel. It is not possible! Wonder how everyone can eat their pretzel. Perhaps a friend could help!
- Pray this prayer each day this week.

*Dear God, thank you for friends! Help me to be a friend to others and help them when they are in need. In Jesus' name, we pray. Amen.*