

**Title:** ENCOUNTERING FORGIVENESS

**Text:** MARK 2:1-12

**Teacher:** TOM NELSON

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**Mark's Gospel Continues...**

Jesus' "fame" spreads

Coming "home"

**A Truly Amazing Story (Mark 2:1-5)**

A jam packed house

A bold step of faith

A startling declaration

**Jesus Confronts His Critics (Mark 2:6-12)**

An unexpected Jesus

A supernatural healing

The greater miracle

**The Transforming Power of Forgiveness**

How do we experience true forgiveness?

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## CONVERSATION STARTER

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- Have you ever wanted to meet someone so much that you went to great lengths to meet them? Why? Were your expectations met in meeting this person? Why or why not? Have you ever been in a situation where you asked for one thing and you ended up getting another? What was your response?
- Read Mark 2:1-12. Who are some of the different characters in this story, and how do you think they reacted to Jesus' actions? In what ways do you think the paralytic got more than he bargained for? Why do you think Jesus addressed the issue of the forgiveness of sins first? Which character do you most identify with in this story? Why?
- Read Psalm 103:1-18. How is God described in this passage? How does this passage link healing and forgiveness? What does this passage teach us about the forgiveness of sins? How does the picture of Jesus we find in the New Testament embody the characteristics of God in this Psalm?
- Read the excerpt below. Do you agree with Lewis that believing in the forgiveness of sins is more difficult than we would like to believe? Why or why not? How does Lewis distinguish between excusing and forgiving? Do you think this is a valid distinction? Why or why not? Why do you think we try to make our sin less sinful in our confession? What implications does this have for how we go about forgiving others?
- Do you have trouble receiving God's forgiveness? Why might that be? What needs are you currently bringing to Jesus? How might we help one another encounter the forgiveness Jesus offers? How has the forgiveness of sins brought about healing and wholeness in your life?

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**EXCERPT FROM:** *"On Forgiveness"*

**BY:** C. S. Lewis

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We say a great many things in church (and out of church too) without thinking of what we are saying. For instance, we say in the [Apostles'] Creed "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." I had been saying it for several years before I asked myself why it was in the Creed. At first sight it seems hardly worth putting in. "If one is a Christian," I thought, "of course one believes in the forgiveness of sins. It goes without saying." But the people who compiled the Creed apparently thought that this was a part of our belief which we needed to be reminded of every time we went to church... I find that when I think I am asking God to forgive me I am often in reality (unless I watch myself very carefully) asking Him to do something quite different. I am asking Him not to forgive me but to excuse me. But there is all the difference in the world between forgiving and excusing. Forgiveness says "Yes, you have done this thing, but I accept your apology; I will never hold it against you and everything between us two will be exactly as it was before." But excusing says "I see that you couldn't help it or didn't mean it; you weren't really to blame." If one was not really to blame then there is nothing to forgive. In that sense forgiveness and excusing are almost opposites... But the trouble is what we call "asking God's forgiveness" very often really consists in asking God to accept our excuses... What we have got to take to Him is the inexcusable bit, the sin. We are only wasting time by talking about all the parts which can (we think) be excused... The...remedy...is really and truly to believe in the forgiveness of sins. A great deal of our anxiety to make excuses comes from not really believing in it, from thinking that God will not take us to Himself again unless He is satisfied that some sort of case can be made out in our favor. But that would not be forgiveness at all. Real forgiveness means looking steadily at the sin, the sin that is left over without any excuse, after all allowances have been made, and seeing it in all its horror, dirt, meanness, and malice, and nevertheless being wholly reconciled to the man who has done it. That, and only that, is, forgiveness, and that we can always have from God if we ask for it.