



Small Group Study Guide

It's All About Jesus (Part 3): Forgiving Sins - Scripture: Matthew 9:1–8 (Parallel: Luke 5:17–26)

1. Opening Questions

- In the light of eternity, what is the single most important thing that has ever happened to you? What is the best, most impactful thing you could ever do for someone else?

2. Main Theme: Jesus Puts First Things First

Read **Matthew 9:1–8**. Notice the order of Jesus' actions—He addresses the man's heart before addressing his legs.

- **Bringing Others to Jesus:** The paralytic needed friends to bring him to Christ. Who in your life needs you to help bring them to Jesus right now?
- **Our Greatest Need:** Why is our greatest need spiritual rather than physical? What is the danger of not realising we have a spiritual problem? (remember leprosy & spiritual numbness)
- **Jesus' Address:** Jesus speaks directly to the man's deepest struggles:
 - "Take heart" > Addresses loss of hope.
 - "My son" > Addresses loss of belonging.
 - "Your sins are forgiven" > Addresses guilt and shame.
- **Discussion Question:** If Jesus had healed the man's paralysis first, what danger might the man have faced regarding his spiritual state?

3. The Claim to Divinity & The Trilemma

When the religious leaders heard Jesus forgive sins, they thought, "*Who can forgive sins but God alone?*" They recognised that wronging another person is ultimately a rebellion against God (see Psalm 51:4). By forgiving sin, Jesus was explicitly claiming to be God.

C.S. Lewis famously argued that Jesus leaves us with only three logical options (**Liar, Lunatic, or Lord**):

1. **Liar:** Did Jesus deliberately deceive people? (*Consider: His teaching promotes ultimate moral integrity, and He willingly died for His claims rather than backing down.*)
2. **Lunatic:** Was He suffering from self-delusion? (*Consider: His deep wisdom, emotional stability under pressure, and profound respect for others, especially women, do not align with mental breakdown.*)

3. **Lord:** He is exactly who He claimed to be—God in the flesh.
- **Discussion Question:** Why is it impossible to accept Jesus merely as a "great moral teacher"? How does Lewis's Trilemma challenge the culture's view of Jesus?

4. The Core Gospel Message

1. **God Loves You:** He has a good plan for your life and desires a relationship with you (John 3:16, John 10:10).
2. **Sin Separates Us:** Living our own self-directed lives creates a barrier we cannot fix through religion or good works (Isaiah 53:6).
3. **Jesus Bridges the Gap:** Jesus died for our sins and rose again to prove it was dealt with (John 14:6).
4. **We Must Respond:** Knowing the facts isn't enough; we must personally receive Him by faith (Revelation 3:20). Like medicine, Jesus' remedy for our sin must be accepted to take effect.

5. Personal Application & Prayer

A simple way to respond to God is the "**Sorry, Thank You, Please**" prayer:

- **Sorry:** For living self-directed lives separate from God.
- **Thank You:** For Jesus dying on the cross for our sins and offering eternal life.
- **Please:** Come into my life, forgive me, and lead me as my Lord and Savior.
- If you have prayed this prayer, God's Word promises that you are His child, your sins are forgiven, and you have eternal life. How does this assurance impact your daily worries? How would you explain this to a new Christian who is having doubts?
- Pray for the boldness to bring others to Jesus this week, and thank Him for addressing our deepest spiritual needs.