

LESSON 2

American Character Builders Opioid Awareness Faith-Based Curriculum

CONNECTION FROM THE VIDEO

People addicted to opioids drift into isolation, but that is the last thing that they need. They need to be surrounded with community that offers light and hope.

LESSON OBJECTIVE

Those who have fallen into addiction need healing of both physical and spiritual brokenness. However, in order for this to happen they need people in their corner fighting for them.

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever participated in a Breakout Room? If so, can you describe the experience?

- Summarize what they said and fill in any holes that they may not have mentioned. A Breakout Room is an activity in which you are locked inside a room with a group of people (most likely your friends). You are given multiple clues to solve and a time limit to break free from the room. It's an intense atmosphere, filled with excitement and nerves. Solutions to the clues are bounced around, victory shouts are given when one is solved, and tension mounts when the team has stalled. It's a bonding experience. If you break out of the room within the time limit you feel accomplished, but if you don't, you are still able to leave the room. It may not be with a sense of victory, but nonetheless you are freed.

Sadly, there are many trapped in opioid abuse and they are attempting to break free alone. There is no team or close-knit circle to surround this person. They keep stumbling around in the darkness, longing for someone to show them the light. As the body of Christ, it is our responsibility to point them to the hope found in Jesus. They are people trying to fill a void in their life, just like we once were.

SCRIPTURE

Mark 2:1-12

BIBLE BACKGROUND

Jesus has just openly started His ministry. During His time in Galilee, He healed many, cast out demons, and taught the Word authoritatively. His reputation had spread quickly and by the time He enters Capernaum, crowds are flocking to Him. This is where we pick up in our passage.

LESSON CONTENT

I. COMMUNITY - Mark 2:1-4

Jesus has just returned to Capernaum which has now become his home base. He was preaching at a house and it was packed wall to wall. There was an overflow crowd standing outside desperately trying to catch a glimpse of Jesus. They recognized that Jesus was markedly different. The way He taught about the kingdom of God and the miracles He performed were earth shattering. The thought that rang through their minds was that if they could make it to Jesus, then He could deal with their affliction.

Here we find a paralyzed man enter into our story. We don't know if he has been that way since birth or if there was an accident that caused his condition. Either way, he was unable to provide for himself. Most men and women who were disabled would rely on the religious community to support them (such as the case in Acts 3). There was no public health care or welfare system to defend for their needs. They were viewed as outcasts to society—those who did not have anything to offer. With this in mind, we find something striking in the story.

There were four men that took up the cause of this paralytic. They loaded this man on a cot and brought him to the house where Jesus was preaching. When they got there, the most natural thing to do would have been to try and catch Jesus on a day that was not so busy. But they wouldn't settle for anything less than the best for their friend. They hoisted him up to the roof, dug a hole through it, and lowered him down to where Jesus was.

These four friends showed tremendous care and concern toward the paralytic man. They sought out his good when he couldn't do that for himself. Those who are trapped in opioid addiction need others to come around them and point them to the hope of the gospel. We need to keep in mind that we can't fix their problem, but we can attempt to bring them to the feet of the One who can make them whole again. This kind of love is self-sacrificial and can often lead to heart break. You may consistently reach out to someone and they could reject your help, leading to a further spiral. They may show improvement for a while yet find themselves deeper into addiction later down the road. While this may not be easy, the call of the believer is to lock arms with other like-minded believers to support and care for the well-being of the broken and oppressed.

II. SPIRITUAL LIFE - Mark 2:4-7

Ask your students this question: If one of your friends was struggling with opioids, what kind of advice would you give them? Typical answers might be...

- 1) Don't hang around people who will negatively influence you.
- 2) Fill whatever free time you have with activities (sports, hobbies, etc.).

3) Don't allow yourself to walk into places that will spark temptation.

These are all practical and useful pieces of wisdom. However, they only address the outer behavior of the sin without challenging the heart. Let's look back at our passage to see what kind of emphasis Jesus placed on the heart.

As the paralytic is lifted down, the first action Jesus takes is unexpected. Instead of choosing to heal his body, He forgives his sins based on the friends' faith. Huh? What was Jesus demonstrating through this? Jesus was uncovering and exposing the truth that man's greatest need is a relationship with God Himself.

Ephesians 2:1 says that we were dead in our trespasses and sins. The Bible explicitly teaches that we are not just bad people—we are *dead* people. What can dead people do? Right, absolutely nothing! Those who are not rooted in Christ do not have the power to break the chains of sin in their lives. Through their own will power there may be times where they temporarily are able to say no to sin, but they still long for the true life found in Christ.

As we've just talked about, dead people don't take the initiative. Rarely do they walk into a church without being invited or strike up a spiritually sensitive conversation on their own accord. They must be pursued. Now, that doesn't mean that we put ourselves in situations that would compromise our safety or morality. But we shouldn't be closed off to befriending people dealing with addiction. Ask them to coffee and get to know them. Invite them to come with your group of friends to the movies. Build the relationship so they know you're authentic when you have the spiritual conversation.

Almost every individual who has overcome addiction will testify that it was one or more friends who stood by them through the entire ordeal. Those friends did not enable the addict, but they did not give up on them either.

III. PHYSICAL LIFE - Mark 2:8-12

While we just talked about the spiritual need of the individual, it's also important to point out that Jesus did not neglect physical needs. In our passage, He commands the paralytic man to "rise, pick up your bed, and go home!" Verse 12 tells us that He immediately rose, picked up his bed, and started glorifying God! There is power in the name of Jesus' Word.

The need for healing encompassed both the spiritual and physical condition. We cannot neglect one for the purpose of the other. Many who are dealing with opioid addiction will need rehabilitation. Their body needs to go through detox. They will definitely need counseling to learn how to cope with their cravings and find a new rhythm in life.

When it comes to the signs of opioid abuse, we need to have attentive eyes and ears. Those who are bound in addiction rarely like to expose the darkness they are walking through for fear of being judged or labeled. Shame is a big factor in the urge to hide. As Christ-followers, our love, not our judgment, should define us. Let's be people who champion the redemption of both the body and soul.

Close your time in Prayer. Invite your students to pray for:

- Discernment to see those who are struggling
- Boldness and wisdom to reach out and build a relationship
- For God to move in power to draw people into a relationship with Himself so that others may experience freedom from temptation and addiction

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- What keeps us from reaching out to people we know who are actively struggling with addiction and substance abuse?
- What are some ways that you could be a brother or sister to someone in need?
- How has the community of others impacted and shaped you?

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