

# 61

## 'Lord, I believe'

Date:

*More miracles of Jesus*

**PRAY** Father, 'open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law' today (Psalm 119:18).

**READ** John 9

### REFLECT

Even a junior reporter could get the facts of this story straight: **JERUSALEM** – *An itinerant preacher from Galilee named Jesus sparked controversy earlier today. According to eyewitnesses, Jesus and his entourage met a man who was blind from birth as they walked on the main road near Jerusalem. After a brief dialogue, Jesus put mud on the man's eyes, told him to wash in a local pond and the man's eyesight was restored. Religious leaders have challenged the validity of the 'healing' and have launched their own investigation.*

Why is it so difficult for some to accept the fact that Jesus heals people? The Pharisees were more concerned about defending a set of picky religious rules than they were about experiencing God. When told about the healing, they condemned it on a technicality (9:16). If we ever let good things like our church traditions or our theological positions get in the way of our passion for meeting God, then something is off track.

The blind man was the only one who saw the light (9:5)! Instead of questioning or challenging Jesus, he simply *obeyed* (9:7). Next, he honestly *shared his experience* with others (9:11,25), even defending it in spite of the pressure tactics used against him (9:24–34). Finally, after taking time to think it through, he *put his faith in Jesus* (9:38). Perhaps the strongest proof of the validity of this miracle was the fact that the blind man never backed down. He could easily have changed his story, or at least shaped it just a little, to satisfy the Pharisees and avoid 'excommunication'. But he didn't... he couldn't... because he could see!

The Pharisees rejected the healing because Jesus didn't fit into their religious system. Their attitude was, 'How dare you lecture us!' The disciples might have missed it; their interest seemed more theological than personal: 'Who sinned... that he was born blind?' But the blind man was healed because he was open-minded about what Jesus could do. That's the first step to true faith: 'Lord, I believe.'

**APPLY** Why do some people keep their minds closed about Jesus today?

**PRAY** Lord, give me the courage to be a bolder witness for you, like the man who was born blind.

# 62

## Band of brothers

Date:

*More miracles of Jesus*

**PRAY** Spend a few minutes talking to God about any circumstances in your life that paralyse you – physically, emotionally or spiritually...

**READ** Luke 5:17–26

### REFLECT

You have to feel sorry for the poor Pharisees and the teachers of the Law. They were always on the defensive. Jesus was always right and in control of the circumstances, and it infuriated them. I can picture these pompous religious leaders, sitting there in the front row, arms folded, scowling as Jesus healed people. They were angry. When we find ourselves angry with God over the circumstances in our lives, we should take time to reflect on the underlying source of our anger. There may be an inconvenient truth we've been avoiding.

On the other hand, you have to feel love for the band of brothers who carried their friend to Jesus. I can imagine the hard work it took to lug a paralysed man across town. He was heavy; it took four men to lift him. And it would perhaps have been embarrassing. But they persisted for at least two reasons:

They loved their friend and showed it by sacrificial work. *They believed Jesus could make a difference.* It was a simple strategy, but it still works today: bring your friends to Jesus.

Imagine the commotion and drama as the man on the stretcher was lowered through the roof; it took guts and creativity to try a stunt like that. It also took faith, as Jesus pointed out (5:20). It's significant that Jesus healed the man because of 'their faith'. Sometimes God intervenes in the lives of people based on the faith of those around them. It's a reality that should energise our prayer and service for others.

Unfortunately the grumpy old Pharisees rejected Jesus in spite of the evidence that was clear to everyone else: the paralysed man walked out of the meeting praising God (5:25). They knew exactly what the deeper issue was: if they admitted Jesus had authority to forgive sins, they were admitting that he was God (5:21), and that was the one thing they weren't willing to do.

**APPLY** How could you take a step of faith in Jesus' power on behalf of someone close to you?

**PRAY** Spend a few moments asking Jesus to restore those areas of your life that need spiritual or physical healing. End with a time of praise.