**Digging Through the Roof to Bring Men to Jesus**

[**December 16, 2019**](https://maninthemirror.org/2019/12/16/digging-through-the-roof-to-bring-men-to-jesus/)*in*[**Equipping Men Blog**](https://maninthemirror.org/category/equipping-men/)

[By Dave Armstrong, Area Director for Man in the Mirror in Pennsylvania](https://maninthemirror.org/davearmstrong/)

One of my favorite miracles performed by Jesus is the healing of the paralytic in Capernaum. Here was a man who was unable to walk, but was carried to Jesus by other men so he could be cured ([Mark 2:1-12](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%202.1-12)).

Consider this account with me not from the standpoint of the miracle itself, but from the standpoint of what it took to get that man to Jesus. Their efforts, which were considerable, made a world of difference in the life of the now *former* paralytic.

You see, this man’s life radically changed that day because some friends thought it was worth the sacrifice to bring him to Jesus. His relationship to God changed when Christ forgave the man’s sins (2:5). His relationship to others changed because he was no longer viewed as an outcast in his society, begging for survival.

In addition to all that, his outlook on life changed. Now able to work, his dignity was restored. He could make the sixty-mile journey to worship at the Temple in Jerusalem. Depending on his age and the circumstances of his paralysis, he might even marry and have children.

That’s what discipleship does. It changes everything in a man’s life. You might object and say, “Isn’t this account about evangelism rather than discipleship? After all, this man finds forgiveness in Christ the Savior.” True, the man does. But the Great Commission says to “go and make disciples.” Discipleship and evangelism then are interconnected. Faith in Christ as Savior is just the first step in discipleship. There are many more steps along that path and men often need help on that journey.

***THE BIG IDEA:****It is worth the effort to disciple men, because when you bring a man to Jesus, it changes everything.*

So, what does it take to bring men to Jesus? There are four things that I see here.

**Teamwork**

*“Some men came, bringing to him a paralyzed man, carried by four of them.”*[*Mark 2:3*](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%202.3)

Here was a man who could not walk to Jesus. He could not crawl to Jesus. He could not even roll himself to Jesus. He had to be brought, and by more than one man. He was too heavy and the distance apparently too far for one man to do it alone.

The truth is men rarely come to Jesus by themselves. Someone—oftentimes *many* someones—makes an impact on their lives somewhere along the line, influencing them to trust Christ and follow Him, whether it’s a believing friend, relative, co-worker, or men’s leader.

The text merely identifies these men as “some men.” Down through the centuries these men have remained anonymous to us. The same may be said of your discipleship efforts when you minister behind the scenes doing seemingly mundane tasks. However, here is what we *do* know: they were a team. When your effort goes unnoticed by others, rest assured you are still part of a team, doing critical work.

If you are going to intentionally disciple the men of your church, it will take teamwork. At Man in the Mirror, we talk about [three strands of leadership](https://maninthemirror.org/2019/03/25/three-strands-of-leadership/): the support and involvement of the senior pastor, a passionate men’s leader, and a committed leadership team. You can add to that the need for men to serve as allies in your discipleship efforts.

One man cannot succeed at this alone—at least not for very long. He will grow tired, discouraged, and eventually give-up. It takes teamwork to bring men to Jesus.

**Tenacity**

*“Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd…”*[*Mark 2:4*](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%202.4)

Many years ago, I witnessed tenacity firsthand. The driveway had been newly paved with several inches of macadam. A few weeks later, against all odds, up through that tar-like substance poked a weed. Despite the weight and pressure of the compacted pavement, that little weed overcame the obstacles to push its way into sunlight.

Imagine for a moment the men who carried this man to Jesus. We don’t know how far or for how long they traveled, or how tired they were when they arrived. Yet, after all that effort and anticipation, they were met with a roadblock: the crowd. No one let them get inside the house to Jesus (2:2). No one made a way for them. No one seemed to even care. How discouraging!

But these men didn’t quit. They didn’t succumb to the excuses we are all tempted to make when ministry gets difficult: “Well, we did our best, but I guess it just wasn’t enough”; “Maybe it’s just not the right time”; “Maybe I am not the right man for the job”; or “It looks like God has simply closed the door.”

In [1 Corinthians 16:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/1%20Cor%2016.9), Paul writes that he is staying put “because a great door for effective work has *opened* to me, and there are many who *oppose* me.” Notice that open doors and opposition can go hand in hand. Obstacles do not necessarily mean that a door is closed. Sometimes you just have to push a little harder.

Luke adds this bit of information to his account of the healing: “And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick” ([Luke 5:17](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%205.17)). The opportunity for healing was there. It just was going to take a little tenacity—a little persistence.

There is not a single thing worth accomplishing for the Kingdom without the possibility of facing difficulty, opposition, hardship, or setback. Noah had his detractors. Abraham faced the impossibility of conceiving a child in old age. Moses led a stubborn people. Joshua had a land full of enemies. David spent years running from Saul before becoming king. Elijah dealt with the threats of King Ahab and Jezebel. Nehemiah faced opposition to rebuilding the wall of Jerusalem. Jesus had His Gethsemane. Paul was beaten, stoned, and shipwrecked.

It is a spiritual battle to disciple men! The enemy of our souls will stop at nothing in order to dissuade you from the task. It will take tenacity to overcome. At Man in the Mirror, we say it takes 5-10 years to build a sustainable discipleship ministry to the men in your church. Do not give up. Pursue the calling that God has placed in your heart.

In the 1968 Olympics, halfway through the marathon, runner John Akhwari from Tanzania fell and hurt himself badly. He injured his shoulder and dislocated his knee. But he did not quit. Over an hour after the winner had completed the race—and as the spectators were leaving—John limped into the stadium, bleeding but determined. The remaining crowd saw him and began to cheer as he made his agonizing way to the finish line. Afterward, when reporters asked John why he did not give up, he replied, “My country did not send me 5,000 miles to start the race. They sent me 5,000 miles to finish the race.”

There will be ups and downs, successes and failures. Keep at it. Finish the race.

**Tactics**

*“…they made an opening in the roof above Jesus…”*[*Mark 2:4*](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%202.4)

I’m told that when fleas were trained for the flea circus, they were put in a jar with a lid. At first the tiny pests would jump and jump, hitting their little heads against the top of the jar. Ouch! After a while, however, they didn’t jump quite so high; it just didn’t hurt so much that way. After that, the trainer could remove the lid, because the fleas never caught on. They simply continued to jump to just below the rim of the jar. They had changed their original, bold goal from getting out of the jar to merely not getting a headache!

Not so with the men carrying the paralytic. Merriam-Webster’s definition of the word “tactics” is this: “the art or skill of employing available means to accomplish an end.” These men didn’t change the goal to settle for something less because it would’ve been easier. They just changed their tactics.

[Luke 5:19](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%205.19) tells us, “When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus.” Mark’s Gospel describes the process as “digging through it” (2:4). Flat roofs in that day were made of beams, with tiles in between that had been covered over with thatch and earth. It was quite a project to tear up that roof, but these men would not be dissuaded from their bold goal: to put him right in front of Jesus.

I believe the greatest strategy killer in the church is, “It’s never been done that way before.” No man had ever been brought to Jesus through a hole in a roof before either, but it worked!

Praise the Lord that He is the God of *new* things. In Scripture, we read of *new* songs, *new* mercies, a *new* creation, a *new* Heaven and earth, *new* names, and *new* wineskins. Neither the message of the Gospel nor the goal of discipleship should ever change, but the strategies do.

The traditional ways of doing men’s ministry reach about 20% of the men of a church—or fewer. Man in the Mirror’s [No Man Left Behind Model](https://maninthemirror.org/a-new-perspective-on-mens-ministry/) exists to cover this gap. It is designed to help you reach—over time—all the men of your church. But it includes some *new* ways of thinking about and implementing ministry to men—paradigm shifts for many leaders. Sadly, too many churches—even after learning these effective principles—return to the same old tactics that have been used repeatedly in the past with little success in discipling men.

Don’t compromise your goal, but be flexible with your tactics so that you can be used by God in the lives of men.

**Trust**

*“When Jesus saw their faith…”*[*Mark 2:5*](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%202.5)

The Contemporary English Version states verse 5 this way, “When Jesus saw how much faith they had…” Now remember, Jesus, the Son of God, could read the hearts and minds of men (2:8). He could look and see whether faith resided inside them. But He could also see their faith by what they had just done. You see, their faith was demonstrated by their actions. “Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by my deeds” ([James 2:18](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/James%202.18)).

Notice that it says, “When Jesus saw *their* faith”—not just the paralytic’s, but also the men who brought him. One man’s faith may bring blessing on another. It was Abraham’s faith in action that rescued Lot (Genesis 14). Paul’s faith saved a shipwrecked crew (Acts 27).

**Trust is the last point I mention here, but it is actually the first. You see, everything here was conditioned by faith. It was faith in what Jesus could do that motivated these men to team up and carry this man to Jesus. It was faith that demonstrated itself in tenacity. And it was faith that caused them to change tactics. They believed God could move mountains and through them, He did.**

What about the men in your church who need to be discipled to follow the Lord? Are you willing to believe God—*truly* *believe God*—to do it through you?

There are only two times in the Gospels where Jesus was amazed. They both had to do with faith. On one occasion, He was amazed at the centurions’ great faith ([Luke 7:9](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Luke%207.9)). On another, He was amazed at the people of Nazareth’s *lack* of faith ([Mark 6:6](https://biblia.com/bible/niv/Mark%206.6)). Which one will He be amazed at in you?

**Conclusion**

What is it that you need most in your ministry to men? Is it teamwork, tenacity, tactics, or trust?

There is no doubt that it takes effort to develop a team, to be tenacious, to change tactics, and to trust God through it all, but remember…

***THE BIG IDEA:****It is worth the effort to disciple men, because when you bring a man to Jesus, it changes everything.*

Copyright © 1986-2019 [Man in the Mirror](http://maninthemirror.org/)