

LOOK AT WHAT JESUS CAN DO!

I've been having a conversation with Jesus, questioning Him about how a person with deep depression can focus on Him when she can't control her thoughts.

But I feel like I've been arguing with him and I don't feel very good about it. I had set out to find His truth but all I did was look for loopholes, claiming that things were different for people with depression. I wasn't open to listening. But now I want to start listening, because He's been very good to me. Who am I anyway to be arguing with One like Him?

The truth is, I know we do need to keep focusing on Jesus, no matter how hard it gets. We need to try.

I love the story in John 9 where Jesus and His disciples come upon a man who was born blind. I especially like how Eugene Peterson tells it in *The Message*:

The disciples asked Jesus, "*Rabbi, who sinned: this man or his parents, causing him to be born blind?*" Jesus replied, "*You're asking the wrong question. You're looking for someone to blame. There is no such cause and effect here. Look instead for what God can do.*"

Aren't we who are born with mental health conditions similar to the blind man? The question for us should also not be who is to blame. Instead, we need to look at what Jesus can do.

Jesus made some mud and put it on the blind man's eyes, telling him to wash in the Pool of Siloam. The man trusted Jesus and did what He told him to do, even if it did seem like kind of a strange thing to do. He came back home, seeing! Amazing what Jesus can do when we trust Him!

- How do you face hardship and suffering?
- Are you able to focus on Jesus?
- Can you recall a time of hardship when focusing on Jesus gave you joy?

But what about those times when we *can't* focus on Jesus? Might we then not be like the paralyzed man in Mark 2:3-12, unable to connect with Jesus on our own? According to the Message by Eugene Peterson:

They brought a paraplegic to him, carried by four men. When they weren't able to get in because of the crowd, they removed part of the roof and

lowered the paraplegic on his stretcher. Impressed by their bold belief, Jesus said to the paraplegic, “Son, I forgive your sins

But Jesus did not heal him immediately. Let’s read what happens next:

Some religion scholars sitting there started whispering among themselves, “He can’t talk that way! That’s blasphemy! God and only God can forgive sins.”

Jesus knew right away what they were thinking, and said, “Why are you so skeptical? Which is simpler: to say to the paraplegic, ‘I forgive your sins,’ or say, ‘Get up, take your stretcher, and start walking’? Well, just so it’s clear that I’m the Son of Man and authorized to do either, or both . . .” (he looked now at the paraplegic), “Get up. Pick up your stretcher and go home.” And the man did it—got up, grabbed his stretcher, and walked out, with everyone there watching him. They rubbed their eyes, stunned—and then praised God, saying, “We’ve never seen anything like this!” The lame man needed to rely on friends who had faith in Jesus – great faith, actually, to have gone to the lengths they did.

Sometimes we need to rely on godly friends to connect us to Jesus.

- Do you have a friend who can encourage you in your faith or pray for you when you can no longer pray for yourself?
- Are you able to reach out to friends when you’re depressed and have trouble connecting with Jesus?
- How has Jesus used your pain in the past?
- What has Jesus done in your life?