



Join the
CROWD

Join the Crowd

Before hand:

Print out:

- 'Everyone is talking about it' cards and cut them up. Place these cards on random seats before the service begins.
- 'Character' cards, enough for one character per small group (4-5 people).

Cut up one square of tinfoil per person (about 6cm x 6cm)

Overview:

This is an example of how the service may be structured. Adapt this to suit your church. The timings are approximate. Aim for an hour long service with food to share together at the conclusion.

This resource also includes links to images and videos that can be used in a Powerpoint.

5mins	Opening	Prayer Notices Celebrating milestones	Use inclusive language that welcomes everyone
5mins	Sung Worship	2-3 songs	Include different generations in your team
38mins	Join the crowd		
5mins	Sung Worship	1-2 songs	As a response to what they have experienced
5mins	Closing benediction	Prayer and blessing	

Join the Crowd

5mins: Set the scene

Today we are going to step into an account from the life of Jesus, we are going to use our imaginations to step onto a street in a lake side town called Capernaum. Maybe you have been there in person, so you can picture the scene. But for those of us who haven't been there, here's a few images to help get us started.

Powerpoint: Show a map of Israel with Capernaum highlighted.

Here's a map. It's always helpful to know where places are. Capernaum is in the north, on the shores of a lake. This lake goes by a few names. You can see here on this map it is called the Sea of Galilee.

Powerpoint: Show a picture of what Capernaum looks like today.

Let's zoom in on the town of Capernaum and see what we can see. This is what it looks like today. The first thing you might notice is this octagonal shaped building right in the middle. That's a church, built over the spot that tradition says is where Peter's house was and where Jesus stayed a lot of times.

To the right of that you can see a white rectangle building. That's a synagogue that dates from after Jesus time, but under this building are the stones of the older synagogue, where Jesus would have spent time while he was staying in town. And at the bottom of the picture you can see ruins of the old village. To the left you can see the edge of the lake.

Powerpoint: Picture of a reconstruction of Capernaum in the time of Jesus.

Now let's jump back in time, to this village in the time when Jesus lived. Here's a reconstruction of what Capernaum would have looked like.

I want you to use your senses to step into this village. I am going to give you just a couple of minutes to explore these. As you imagine yourself in this village:

- What can you see?
- What can you hear?
- What can you smell?
- What can you feel?
- What can you taste?

Powerpoint: List these questions on a slide.

I encourage you to turn to a small group of people and talk about it. Make sure no one is left out, include others around you. You have 2 minutes to chat.

3 mins: Whole church: invite the church to call out answers.

Add these observations to the discussion:

We can see that this is a fishing village, on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. We can smell fish drying in the sun. We feel that it is a small village with houses close to each other. In fact, around 1500 people lived in or around this village. The houses were often interconnected, with large family groups all connected together.

We can see that the houses are built of stone, dark basalt stone, with mud plastered over them. Most houses had a shared courtyard with a fire pit in the middle for cooking, and a place to grind grain. They had a set of stone stairs that went up onto the roof. The floor of the houses were cobbled, and the houses had a few low windows to let in some light. Hardly any houses have a second story, but the roof acted as one, a good spot to spread out.

The roofs of the houses were made of a series of wooden beams, with a thatch over the top and a layer of mud. They would pack the mud down every so often to keep it hard and watertight.

12 mins Step into the Crowd

The day that we have chosen to step into this village is one of those special days when Jesus is coming to visit. We can find a record of this in the book of Mark, Chapter 2.

Some of you have notes on your seats. Listen out for when I say, 'Everyone is talking about it', stand up and shout out what is written on your card and sit down again. You don't need to wait turns, just shout it out.

A few days ago Jesus came on one of his regular visits. But, what a visit it was! While he was here, he healed people, cast out some bad spirits and word has spread. **Everybody is talking about it.**

Those with cards are to stand and shout out their card:

- Jesus healed me
- I met Jesus
- Jesus healed my mum
- Did you see what Jesus did?
- Guess what Jesus did!
- Have you heard?
- Jesus is in town; quick let's go see him!

Wherever Jesus goes there is a crowd. People can't believe what is happening and they want to see for themselves. They want in on the action. In fact, the crowd has gotten so big, the place is so crazy that apparently Jesus had to sneak out in the early morning just to get some time alone. But even then, the crowds still found out about it.

Now you hear that Jesus is back. And the crowds are gathering. Everyone is squishing in and pushing forward to see Jesus. Everyone wants to get to him!

Activity:

Everybody in the crowd is there for a reason. Maybe they are curious. Maybe they need healing. Maybe they want to hear Jesus' stories. Maybe they just want to be as close to Jesus as possible. To help us to imagine that you are in the crowd, I have created some fictional people who might have been there that day. In small groups, you will be given a character. You need to read the card and then talk together about this:

Powerpoint: Display these questions

- Why are you coming to see Jesus today?
- Is there a question you want to ask or something you want Jesus to do for you?

Use your imagination. There is no right answer. Invent details if you like, to fill in the gaps.

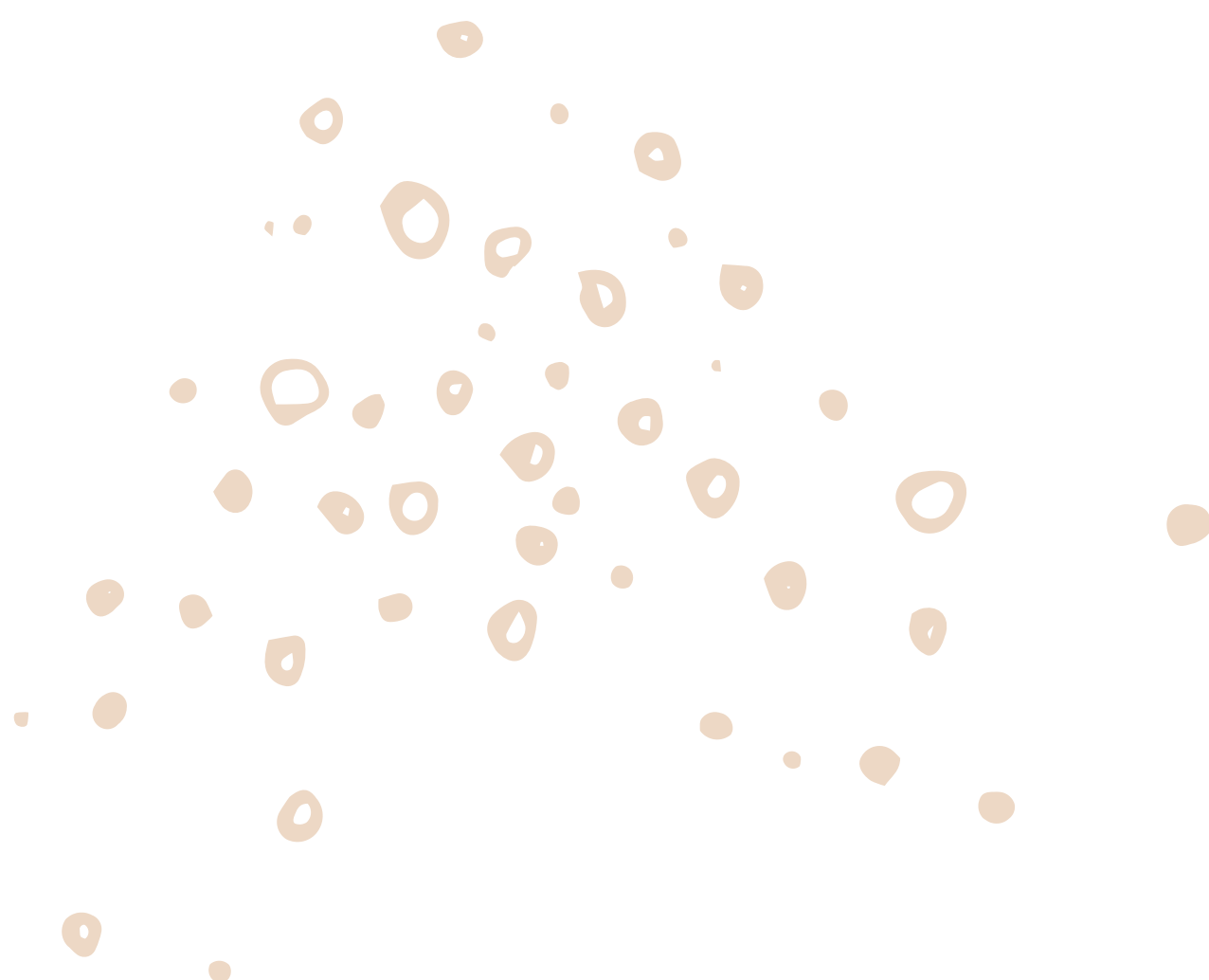
- You will have 5 minutes to jot down your ideas.
- Choose someone in your group to become that character. Decide together what that person will say.
- We won't have time for every group to share, so don't panic if your group doesn't want to share back, just have a conversation together.

For example:

Shalom, my name is Leah, and I am fed up with the Romans. They are crushing us with their taxes. My husband works night and day to bring home enough fish to sell at the market to keep us going. We have six children to feed, and life is tough. I want to see Jesus to ask him about the future. Where is the hope? Can he save us? I have so many questions!

Characters:

- Tobias, a 10-year-old boy who was playing with his friends in the olive grove near town
- Samuel, a fisherman who has come in from a night's fishing
- Ruth, a mother of 5 children, one of whom was healed by Jesus on a previous visit
- Benjamin, a leader at the local synagogue
- Sarah, a 13-year-old girl, who was grinding grain for the family's midday meal
- Joseph, an old man who needs help to walk
- Marcus, a Roman soldier based in Capernaum
- Hannah, one of Simon Peter's children who recently saw her grandmother healed by Jesus
- Elijah, a stall holder from the market
- Caleb, a 30-year-old man who collects taxes for the Romans.



Report back.

Depending on the size of your gathering, invite each group to send their 'character' to the front to present their question to Jesus.

Powerpoint: display Mark 2:1-12 on a slide

Scripture Reading: Mark 2:1-12. Invite someone to read this. Ask them beforehand so they can practice.

In the crowd that day were four friends. Their reason for being there was that their friend was paralysed. He couldn't walk.

Video Clip:

2:37 Show Max7 clip, 'Crippled Man'. You can download this for free from max7.org

3 mins Reflection:

Let's jump ahead to now, [insert date]

There were lots of different reasons why people were in the crowd that day. They had questions, they had needs or hopes and dreams. They were captivated by Jesus, curious, some of them were so desperate that they dug a hole in a roof.

As we think about those people back then, they were not that much different to us. We all come to Jesus for different reasons. We are all part of the crowd. Think about today as you sit here. Some of us are here because our parents made us come. Some of us are here because we have always been here. Or maybe want to draw close to Jesus, or desperate for healing or answers or wholeness. Maybe we are here, and we don't really know why.

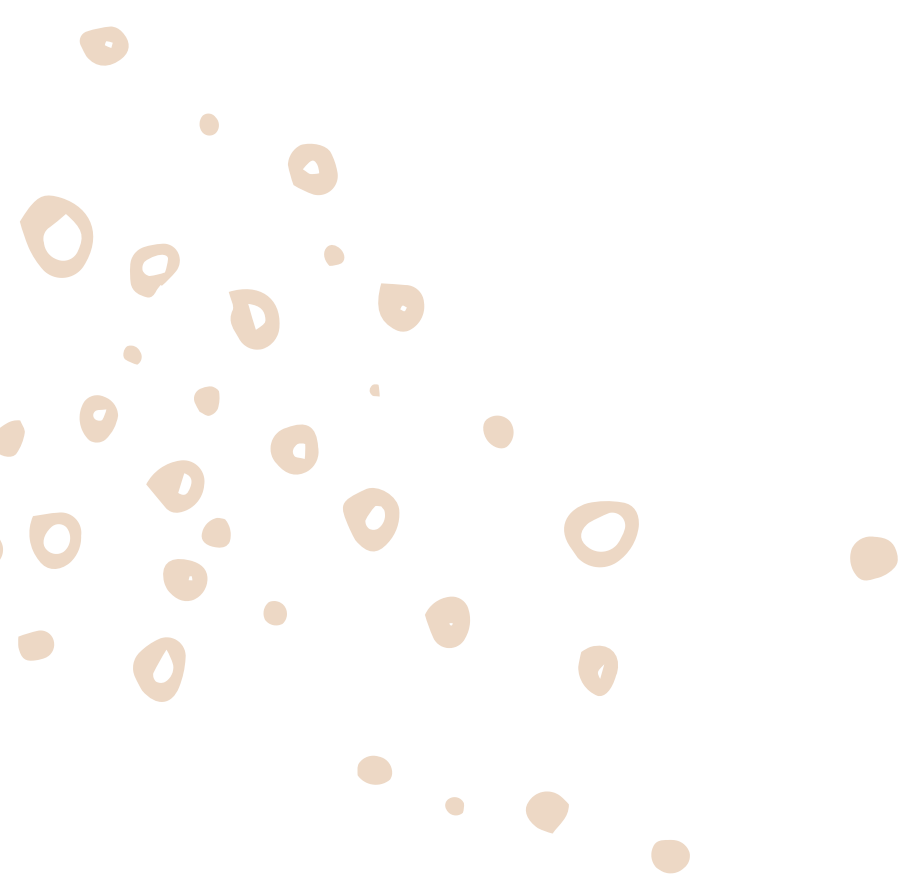
This passage offers us much to think about. I want to just point out two things.

One is that the first words Jesus speaks are these: “Son, your sins are forgiven.” The reason the four friends brought their friend to Jesus was to have him healed. Great reason, and Jesus does bring physical healing. But Jesus is about more than just the physical. Jesus cares about our whole being, about restoring the brokenness on the inside as well as our physical reality.

I do want to acknowledge that this passage raises questions for us about physical healing that we don’t have time to explore here. But, for some of us this passage brings its challenge, so I want to name that. This passage helps us to see the wider scope of Jesus’ mission, that while we come to Jesus with our own good reasons, we sometimes get more than we bargain for. God is unexpected.

The second thing I want to point out about this passage is my favourite. When Jesus sees the man on the mat in front of him, Mark records it like this: When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralysed man, “Son, your sins are forgiven.”

Did you notice that it is the faith of the friends that impress Jesus and cause him to act. Not the faith of the man on the mat.



I came across this a while back, and it has stuck with me, and helps to illustrate this point:

Powerpoint: display this Q&A:

"Q: What do you do when you just can't pray anymore? It all feels so incredibly pointless right now and I feel like I am just talking to myself. Is there a way through?"

A: Ask someone else to do it for you. Honest. It still counts. One day you'll have more faith than them and you will return the favour. Faith is a team sport." Nadia Bolz-Weber

I love this idea of faith as a team sport. These four friends literally carried their friend to Jesus. What does faith as a team sport mean? It means we carry each other, like these four friends did.

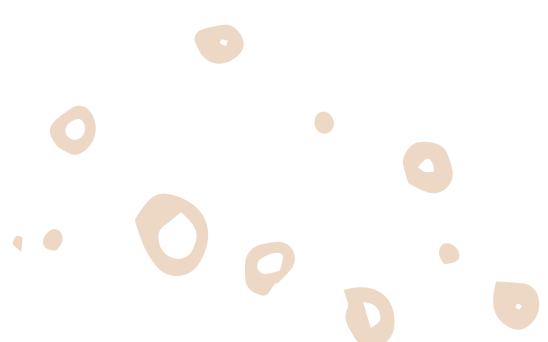
That could be literal, physical help. [Insert up-to-date example] As we look around our country at the moment, we have seen people being rescued from their roofs, carried through flood waters. An incredible expression of care. People literally being carried. We have seen churches in action in the midst of all this, opening up their buildings for evacuation centres and to send out supplies, as well as to provide places of prayer and comfort. That's incredible, and such an example of what faith in action looks like.

We carry others through the way we pray – by our commitment to bring them before God with the same kind of desperation that caused four men to dig a hole in a roof. There is a determination in these four friends to bring their friend to Jesus, no matter what. Can we pray for others with this kind of commitment?

We carry others through the words we speak – by our encouragement, words of kindness and forgiveness, by the way we advocate for them where justice is needed.

And in these ways, we bring them closer to Jesus.

As 2023 continues, we have the God-given privilege to carry and to be carried.



10 mins Response:

We are going to create something together now to take away with us as a reminder of this story, and to help prompt us to pray and act on behalf of others this week.

Silver statues:

- Each person will need a square of silver foil (approx 6cm x6cm)
- Instructions: (See attached file for instructions.)

Once you have created your person, I want us to spend a moment thinking about this story.

Can you think of one person who you could carry this week? This might look like doing something practical for them or praying for them every day or writing them a note of encouragement. Who might that person be? I'll give you a moment to think about who this might be. You are welcome to talk quietly with someone near you if you want to. Maybe a family might want to choose another family.

I encourage you to place your person somewhere in your house or car where you will see them often this week. Let this little silver person be a reminder to act, pray and speak.

Invite everyone to hold their statue and pray silently for a few moments for the person they represent.

Hand over to the Service leader...



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