

The Power to Heal  
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John 5:1-18

Opening discussion: Show of hands, how many find it can be uncomfortable knowing how to minister to someone who with an illness or disability? Any who are very comfortable with that? Some folks have the spiritual gift of ministering to the sick.

**What are some practical ways we can minister to someone suffering with illness?**

This passage of scripture centers on Jesus' healing of a man with a long-term illness. While we can't heal someone, we CAN show them the love of Christ in the midst of their suffering. This chapter also teaches us about the grace of God in the healing we all need...salvation for eternal life.

John 5:1–9a (ESV)

The Healing at the Pool on the Sabbath

5 After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. 3 In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. 5 One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.

6 When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" 7 The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me." 8 Jesus said to him, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk." 9 And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

- Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the feasts Jewish men were required to attend.
- He walked by this pool called Bethesda ("house of grace.")
- **Question: Did Jesus walked by this pool by chance? Why do you think that? What is the lesson for us when it comes to ministering to the sick?**
- Archeologists have found that it was really two pools, verse 2 tells us it had five covered areas where the sick would lay out of the sunlight. **Question: Why were there sick people laying and sitting around this pool? Does your translation have a verse 4? What's up with that?**
- **How many sick people does verse 3 say there were? How many does verse 5 say Jesus went to?** There are a couple of lessons for us. **First, what do you think that says about how you and I can minister to the sick? How did Jesus do it? Another question: Jesus healed only one man, what does that say to us about the sovereignty of God in healing?**

It's easy to be intimidated by the "multitudes" who are hurting, and just do nothing. Jesus modeled for us that we should share his love to the one who is in front of us.

- There's also a great lesson about the Grace of God in these verses:

Warren Wiersbe writes:

*“Jesus saw a multitude of sick people—but He chose only one man and healed him! This man was no more deserving than the others, but God chose him. This is a beautiful picture of salvation, and how it ought to humble us to know that we are chosen “in Him” and not because of our own merits but because of His grace (Eph. 1:4).”*

Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament (223). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Another point to note. Jesus approached the man. This reminds us of what we've said the past two weeks: People aren't looking for Jesus, they're looking for RELIEF from their problems. The good news is, Jesus is looking for them!

- Verse 5: How long had this man been an invalid? Verse 6 says Jesus knew this.
- A reminder that even when we feel totally helpless, Jesus knows our situation.
- Verse 6: Jesus asked the man: “Do you want to be healed?” **Why would he have asked such question? Can you think of a reason the man might not have REALLY wanted to be healed? What would change about his life if he were healed?**
- Maybe the tone of Jesus' voice was saying, “Do you REALLY want to be healed?”
- Have you ever known someone with an addiction or pattern of sin in their life who SAYS they want to be free from it, yet they seem to refuse any help to change?
- There are some things ONLY JESUS can change. We have to face this question though: “Do you REALLY want to be healed?”

Our Teacher's Guide makes the point:

*Jesus was engaging the man in a conversation that would change his life. Jesus, not the pool, was the man's only hope for healing. The question was designed to redirect the man's focus from the pool to Jesus.*

- Verse 7: **Did the man answer Jesus' question? How DID he respond? How do you imagine this lame man's disposition? What do you suppose the man thought Jesus might do?**
- Isn't that man just like most of us? Don't we limit our expectation of what God can do for us to our own ideas? This man was only looking for help with his own plan for healing. Jesus was ready to DO the healing.
- Verse 8: Like He did with Nicodemus; the woman at the well; the official whose son was sick; Jesus cuts to the chase. With AUTHORITY Jesus says three things: Get up; take up your bed (mat); and walk. “At once” the man was healed and got up.
- No hocus pocus. No big scene. Jesus just met the man's need.
- Modern day “faith healers” say you can only be healed if your faith is strong enough and you don't have sin in your life. **How does this account attack that notion?**

John MacArthur writes:

*Unlike many alleged modern healings, Jesus' healings were complete and instantaneous, with or without faith. This one proves the point, since the man exhibited no faith in Jesus at all. Yet he was healed instantly and wholly. John records that he immediately ... became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk. One of the*

*cruellest lies of contemporary “faith healers” is that the people they fail to heal are guilty of sinful unbelief, a lack of faith, or a “negative confession.” In contrast, those whom Jesus healed did not always manifest faith beforehand (cf. Matt. 8:14–15; 9:32–33; 12:10–13, 22; Mark 7:32–35; 8:22–25; Luke 14:1–4; 22:50–51; John 9:1–7), and this man is a prime example.* MacArthur New Testament Commentary (p. 174). Moody Publishers. Kindle Edition.

- Jesus’ healing of this man is a great example to us of how WE should minister to those with illness or disabilities:
  - Take the initiative - Don’t just say, “Call me if I can help.” Suggest something specific.
  - Sometimes all we can do is be PRESENT or just LISTEN.
  - We can ALL pray with and for those with illness.
  - Some are gifted to minister because YOU’VE BEEN THERE YOURSELF!

2 Corinthians 1:3–4 (ESV) says...

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, 4 who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. (Emphasis mine)

- Back to our text. This man who had been sick for 38 years is miraculously healed.
- The Jews in that Temple area must have been THRILLED! They probably all came running saying, “Praise God you’re healed!” “Let’s have a praise service!” Right?
- This passage not only focused on ministering to the sick. This incident really introduces a controversy in Jesus’ earthly ministry.
- Look at the second part of verse 9.

9b Now that day was the Sabbath. 10 So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.” 11 But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’ ” 12 They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk?’ ” 13 Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. 14 Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.”

- Verse 9: Jesus CHOSE to heal this man on the Sabbath. He KNEW what kind of trouble that would cause among the Pharisees but he INTENTIONALLY healed on the Sabbath.
- In fact, in Mark, Luke, and John, Jesus healed SEVEN TIMES on the Sabbath.
- **Why was this such an offense to the religious leaders? Did it violate scripture?**
- Verse 14: Jesus says to the man, “Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.” **What might that indicate about the man’s illness?** Every situation is different...(Think of Job’s situation; compare that to Paul’s words in 1 Cor. 11:30)

John 9:1–3 (ESV)

9 As he passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. 2 And his disciples asked him, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" 3 Jesus answered, "It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.

- We don't know if Jesus meant the man's illness was because of sin.
- But, we DO know this about what Jesus said: Living in a pattern of sin without trusting Christ as Lord and Savior will lead to consequences much worse than 38 years of illness.
- How did the man show his gratitude for his healing? Look at verse 15:

15 The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. 16 And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. 17 But Jesus answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I am working." 18 This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

With this incident, the Gospel of John shifts. The rest of this book is about how the Jewish leaders hated Jesus. He was a threat to their power. He had to be dealt with. For you and me though, the very thing that threatened them, is what saves us. Jesus IS equal to God and, as Jesus said in verse 17: He and His Father ARE working, even now, for you and me.

So, What's the Takeaway?

- When it comes to the illnesses of those around us, Jesus modeled being INTENTIONAL to minister to them and show them His love. How can we do that this week?
- Then there are our own "illnesses." Perhaps not physical sickness, but SIN-sickness.
- As we examine our hearts, is there some pattern of sin in our lives that we SAY we want to be free from? If so, we have to look to Jesus and answer His question: "Do you want to be healed?" Then obey his commands: "Get up," "Walk," and "Sin no more!"