

## Introduction

When I was in prison ministry, one of the things that I tried to initially find out with each man that I ministered to was what they wanted. If a man was serious about making changes in his life, I had no problem working and investing my time into him. However, if a man showed no remorse or contrition, and was not serious, then investing my time into the man would not prove very fruitful. The national rate of recidivism was 71% at that time, meaning that 71% of the men who were released from prison would re-arrested and would be back in prison. If we dig deeper, the figures are even more discouraging. In three years, 68% of men are rearrested. In five years, 77% of men are rearrested. In nine years, 83% of men are rearrested. What this tells us is that most prison reform is ineffective. There are many reasons for this problem, but one of them is many men are sorry that they got caught, but not sorry about what they are doing. Many of them like the drugs, alcohol, and way of life and do not want to make a change. Rehab programs inside and outside the prison will not be effective with those that are not serious about making changes in their life.

Our passage today is about the healing of a man who has been ill for thirty-eight years. He is lying on a bed pallet by the pool of Bethesda, hoping to be healed of his condition. When Jesus saw the man, He asked him, “Do you wish to get well?” He answered that he had no one to put him in the pool when the waters were stirred. Jesus told the man to stand up, take up his pallet and walk. As the man miraculously stood up, he was healed.

When the religious leaders saw the man carrying his pallet, they told him it was impermissible to carry his pallet on the Sabbath. He told them that the man who healed him told him to pick up his pallet and walk. They asked him who it was, and he did not know. Later that day, Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you.” This man’s long-term illness had been caused by sin, and Jesus was warning him about not falling back into that sin so that nothing worse would happen to him. Jesus wanted the man to stay well and to live a righteous life so that he did not end up in worse shape than he was when Jesus healed him. The man went and told the religious leaders it was Jesus who told him to pick up his pallet and walk. Therefore, the religious leaders began to persecute Jesus.

We are going to look at the setting of the healing of this man. Second, we are going to look at the healing. Third, we are going to look at the aftermath from what happened. In our conclusion we will make three applications.

## Healing at the Pool of Bethesda

1. The Setting
2. The Healing of the Afflicted Man
3. The Aftermath

(Jn 5:1–5) “After these things 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, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. {3} In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, waiting for the moving of the waters; {4} for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted. {5} A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years.”

(Jn 5:6-17) “When Jesus saw him lying *there*, and knew that he had already been a long time *in that condition*, He said to him, “Do you wish to get well?” {7} The sick man answered Him, “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.” {8} Jesus said to him, “Get up, pick up your pallet and walk.” {9} Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and *began* to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day. {10} So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.” {11} But he answered them, “He who made me well was the one who said to me, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk.’ ” {12} They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Pick up *your* pallet and walk?’ ” {13} But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in *that* place. {14} Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you.” {15} The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. {16} For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. {17} But He answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.”

### 1. The Setting (Jn 5:1-5)

Jesus has been ministering in Galilee, and after these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. John does not tell us which feast it was. There were three main feasts that Jews were required to go to. The Feast of Passover (Nisan 14, March-April); the Feast of Pentecost was fifty days later (Sivan 6, May-June). The third feast was the Feast of Tabernacles, (Tishrei 15-21, September-October). There were other minor feasts that many Jews also went to. These included the Feast of Purim (Adar 14-15, February, March) and the Feast of Dedication (Kislev 25, November-December). Most scholars believe that this was the Feast of Passover and it marked the beginning of Jesus’ second year of ministry.

(Jn 5:1) “After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.”

In Jerusalem there was a Sheep Gate. This is where the sheep were brought into the city to be sacrificed. It was on the northeast side of the temple. When John wrote this book, the sheep gate had been destroyed. Excavations have uncovered some of the remains of the sheep gate. St. Stephen’s Gate, also called the Lion’s Gate, is located in the same place.

(Jn 5:2) “Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep *gate* a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes.”

In the book of Nehemiah, he identifies the gates, including the Sheep Gate. He sectioned off the walls using the gates, and each family or group had a section to rebuild. The walls and gates were important to secure the city. They also had other significant uses, including the place where trials and legal matters were resolved. They were the ports of entry to the city, and the names of the gates were tied to their use.

Gates in Jerusalem identified in Nehemiah	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fish Gate</li> <li>• Old Gate (Jeshanah Gate)</li> <li>• Valley Gate</li> <li>• Dung Gate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water Gate</li> <li>• Horse Gate</li> <li>• East Gate</li> <li>• Inspection Gate (Miphkad Gate)</li> </ul>

By the Sheep Gate, there was a pool, which was called Bethesda. Bethesda means house of mercy. There was actually an upper pool and a lower pool. These pools were fed by a spring and so the flow into them varied depending on the season and time of year. The pools could be used for bathing, and the cleansing of animals to be sacrificed. The pools were surrounded by five porticos or covered porches that provided shade for anyone that came to the pools and wanted to stay for a while. This was significant because there were a number of sick, blind, lame, and withered people.

We read that these people with various illnesses were waiting in these covered porches for the moving of the waters, for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water. Whoever was first to go into the pool when the water was stirred was healed of whatever sickness or disease that they were afflicted with.

In the NASB there is an opening bracket in the middle of verse three and a closing bracket at the end of verse four. The NIV and ESV do not include this text, but have a note with the text in the margin. The KJV includes this text without any qualifying note. The NKJV includes the text and a note stating that the Nestle-Aland and United Bible Societies (NU) omit this text. These are older and more diverse manuscripts than the Textus Receptus that the KJV is based upon. What this tells us is that the oldest manuscripts do not contain those verses. These were added later on as explanations, and are not considered to be part of the inspired word of God.

(Jn 5:3-4) “In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, [waiting for the moving of the waters; {4} for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.]”

Some scholars believe that this was actually a superstition, rather than something that actually happened. They point to the seasonal water movement from the springs rather than the stirring up by an angel of the Lord. Whether true or not, there was a multitude of sick, blind, lame, and withered at the Pool of Bethesda waiting for the water to be stirred, hoping to be healed of their illness.

Among those waiting there was a man that had been ill for thirty-eight years. That does not mean he has been waiting for thirty-eight years at the pool, but that he has been ill for thirty-eight years. We do not know the specific type of illness that he had, but we do know some symptoms of his illness. When Jesus saw him lying there, He knew that he had been in that condition a long time, and He asked him, “Do you wish to get well?”

(Jn 5:5-6) “A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. {6} When Jesus saw him lying *there*, and knew that he had already been a long time *in that condition*, He said to him, “Do you wish to get well?”

In verse seven he told Jesus that he had no man to put him into the pool when the water is stirred up. We gather from that comment that he had difficulty walking or moving about.

(Jn 5:7) “The sick man answered Him, “Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.”

We see in verse fourteen that Jesus told him not to sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you. This sickness that he had was apparently caused by sin in his life. There are lots of reasons

for sickness, and all of it goes back to sin. When Adam sinned, he brought the curse of sin on all of mankind. There was no sickness or death before Adam sinned. We also know that there were many sins mentioned in Deuteronomy 28 for disobedience to the Law. Some sins are caused by sin, and this was apparently the cause of this man's illness.

Some sickness can come as a result of God's discipline and judgment upon our sins. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul said that because they had been taking the Lord's Supper in an unrighteous manner, they were being judged and disciplined by the Lord. God can use many different ways to discipline His children, and this is a good example of that. He could also withhold rain, provision, answers to prayers, and many other things to discipline us. God disciplines those whom He loves.

(1 Co 11:29–32) “For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself if he does not judge the body rightly. {30} For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep. {31} But if we judged ourselves rightly, we would not be judged. {32} But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord so that we will not be condemned along with the world.”

(Heb 12:5–10) “and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, Nor faint when you are reproved by Him; {6} For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, And He scourges every son whom He receives.... He *disciplines us* for *our* good, so that we may share His holiness.”

Some sicknesses are caused by demons. In Matthew 9:32-33, a demon-possessed man was brought to Jesus, and He cast it out. Afterwards, the mute man spoke. In Matthew 12, another demon-possessed man was blind and mute, and Jesus cast the demon out and he could speak and see. Some teach that all sickness is caused by demons, but the scriptures do not support that. Some sicknesses are caused by demons, and other sicknesses are caused by a number of other things.

(Mt 9:32–33) “As they were going out, a mute, demon-possessed man was brought to Him. {33} After the demon was cast out, the mute man spoke; and the crowds were amazed, and were saying, “Nothing like this has ever been seen in Israel.”

(Mt 12:22–24) “Then a demon-possessed man who was blind and mute was brought to Jesus, and He healed him, so that the mute man spoke and saw. {23} All the crowds were amazed, and were saying, “This man cannot be the Son of David, can he?” {24} But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, “This man casts out demons only by Beelzebul the ruler of the demons.”

Some sicknesses are unto death. In 2 Kings 13:14, Elisha became sick with the illness of which he was to die. There is no sign of sin or demonic possession. Elisha had lived his life and was about to die. When Adam sinned and brought death upon us, our life on earth became temporary. After the flood, God told Noah that He was limiting life to 120 years. Our parts wear out or we can become ill, and that does not mean there is sin or demonic possession; it just means that we are getting old and it is a sickness unto death.

(2 Ki 13:14) “When Elisha became sick with the illness of which he was to die, Joash the king of Israel came down to him and wept over him and said, “My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!”

In John 11, Mary and Martha sent word to Jesus that Lazarus was sick. When Jesus heard that, He said, “This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God.” God allowed that sickness in Lazarus, which resulted in his death, so that Jesus could raise him from the dead, and God would be glorified.

(Jn 11:3–4) “So the sisters sent *word* to Him, saying, “Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick.” {4} But when Jesus heard *this*, He said, “This sickness is not to end in death, but for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by it.”

Sometimes we do not know or understand why someone is sick. In Paul’s second letter to Timothy he said that he left Trophimus sick at Miletus. There is no indication of sin or judgment on Trophimus. There is no indication that Paul or Trophimus were lacking faith. We just know that this co-worker of Paul was unable to continue the journey because he was sick.

(2 Ti 4:20) “Erastus remained at Corinth, but Trophimus I left sick at Miletus.”

## 2. The Healing of the Afflicted Man (Jn 5:6-9)

When Jesus saw this man lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, “Do you wish to get well?” Jesus may have known that he had been in that condition because He was omniscient, or He may have known that he had been in that condition because of the condition that he was in. Many sicknesses progress so that after thirty-eight years it would be rather obvious that the person had been in that condition a long time. If someone has not been able to move, then atrophy would be just one of the many things that you might see.

(Jn 5:6) “When Jesus saw him lying *there*, and knew that he had already been a long time *in that condition*, He said to him, “Do you wish to get well?”

Jesus’ question is a great question. In my introduction I mentioned that many people in rehab programs do not want to make a change. They want freedom from captivity, bondage, or consequences, but they do not want to change their habits or lifestyles. It might seem like a insignificant question since the man is at the pool, hoping for a stirring of the water and to be healed of his illness, but it is a good and legitimate question to ask.

It was not the only time that Jesus asked that question. In Luke 18, as Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging, and he called out to Jesus, “Have mercy on me!” Jesus commanded that he be brought to Him, and when he was near Jesus asked him, “What do you want Me to do for you?” It would seem obvious that the man would want to receive his sight, but Jesus asked the question. The blind man said, “Lord, I want to regain my sight!” Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.” Immediately the man regained his sight and began glorifying God and following Jesus.

(Lk 18:35–43) “As Jesus was approaching Jericho, a blind man was sitting by the road begging.... {40} And Jesus stopped and commanded that he be brought to Him; and when he came near, He questioned him, {41} “What do you want Me to do for you?” And he said, “Lord, *I want* to regain my sight!” {42} And Jesus said to him, “Receive your sight; your faith has made you well.” {43} Immediately he regained his sight and *began* following Him, glorifying God; and when all the people saw it, they gave praise to God.”

I have found that it is good to be specific in our prayer requests to God. In 1986 Karen and I began praying for God to make us debt free. I was specifically praying that in seven years time we would be completely debt free. One morning as I was praying, I sensed the Lord tell me not to pray for seven years, but for three years. So, we changed our prayers to be debt free in three years. Three years later we received an unexpected check in the mail and it was exactly what we needed to be debt free.

Another year, as I was driving to work, I heard the Lord ask me, "What would you like Me to do for you?" I was very specific in my answer. I said that we have seven children and we are living in a 1,450 square-foot home, and I would like to have a bigger house. Second, I said that our church is raising money to buy a facility, and I would like to give a \$10,000.00 offering. That next year, through a stock option that I had through Callaway golf, I was able to give our church stock that was valued at \$25,000.00, and we were also able to pay cash on a new 2,750 square-foot, five-bedroom home. It is good to be specific, and if you hear the Lord ask you what you want Him to do for you, take Him up on the offer. Like the blind man in Jericho that gave God the glory for regaining his sight, we have been able to give God the glory for the many specific answers to prayer that He has answered for us.

When asked by Jesus if he wants to get well, the sick man answered, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me." The man did not know who Jesus was, and what He could do for him. His hope was in getting into the pool when the waters stirred. He was not expecting to be healed by Jesus.

(Jn 5:7) "The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

Jesus said to him to do three things, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk." The first thing was to get up. This was not something that the man could do at that time. It required him to have faith and obedience. John records that "immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk." It does not say that he got up. As the man began to get up, he was healed immediately, allowing him to get up.

(Jn 5:8-9) "Jesus said to him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk. {9} Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and *began* to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day."

When God tells us to do something, we need to be obedient. When the Lord asked me to memorize the names of my neighbors and their children and pray for them, it took a lot of work and time to do that. This week I felt impressed by the Lord to write a letter to one of my grandchildren that just received Christ at Vacation Bible School. That only took me about fifteen minutes, not nearly as long as learning all the names of people in our subdivision. We have to do whatever the Lord tells us to do.

The second thing that Jesus told him to do was to pick up his pallet. As I was meditating and praying about this passage, I asked the Holy Spirit why the Lord asked him to pick up his pallet and walk. It was the Sabbath and some scholars teach that the Lord did this to confront the doctrines of men that the religious leaders had come up with. I do not believe that this had anything to do with why Jesus told him to pick up his pallet and walk. Jesus was not contentious, and He did not intentionally stir things up with the religious leaders. A British evangelist and Bible teacher by the name of G. Cambell Morgan said that the reason Jesus told him to pick up

his pallet was so that he would “make no provision for a relapse.” He did not want the man leaving the pallet there with the intention or possibility of returning to that same place the next day. The Apostle Paul wrote that we are to make no provisions for the flesh in regard to its lusts thereof. When someone is freed from a sin, he needs to get rid of the reminders and things that trigger the person to get involved in that sin. An alcoholic should not leave alcohol laying around; he needs to pick up his pallet by emptying the bottles in the house.

(Ro 13:14) “But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to *its* lusts.”

The third thing that Jesus told him to do was walk. This man had been carried by others for a long time. He had been dependent upon others to get him anywhere. Jesus is telling him to walk and not to be dependent on others.

There is a balance in this. We are to bear one another’s burdens. At the same time, we are to work hard and eat our own bread. We are also told that each shall bear his own load. We are to take responsibility for our lives. This man had been dependent on others for a long time, and Jesus was giving him a new start in life, and Jesus wants him to walk on his own.

After telling the man to get up, pick up his pallet, and walk, the man was immediately made well, picked up his pallet and began to walk. A man that had been sick in this condition for thirty-eight years was immediately made well. He was not just healed of his sickness, but his body was restored. I imagine that his muscles had atrophied and become weak, and that his sense of balance may have become bad, but he picked up his bedding and began to walk.

(Jn 5:9) “Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and *began* to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day.”

### 3. **The Aftermath** (Jn 5:9-17)

John gives one more detail about the healing that took place; it happened on a Sabbath. Because he was carrying his pallet on a Sabbath, the Jews said to him, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.”

(Jn 5:9-10) “Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and *began* to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day. {10} So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.”

Their statement is based on the law that God gave Moses about the Sabbath. In Exodus 20, the Lord commanded, “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.” The law was pretty clear; we are not to work on the sabbath day. We are to work the other days and rest on the seventh day.

(Ex 20:8–11) “Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. {9} “Six days you shall labor and do all your work, {10} but the seventh day is a sabbath of the Lord your God; in it you shall not do any work, you or your son or your daughter, your male or your female servant or your

cattle or your sojourner who stays with you. {11} “For in six days the Lord made the heavens and the earth, the sea and all that is in them, and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and made it holy.”

The consequence for breaking the sabbath under the Law was severe. In Exodus 31, the Lord commanded that anyone who profanes the sabbath is to be put to death, and cut off from among his people. The Jews, and this refers to the religious leaders, told the man that it was not permissible to pick up his pallet and carry it on the Sabbath. This man has just been miraculously healed by someone, and that person told him to pick up his pallet and walk. Now he is being confronted by the Jewish religious leaders, and the consequences he is facing is death.

(Ex 31:13–14) “But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘You shall surely observe My sabbaths; for *this* is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctifies you. {14} ‘Therefore you are to observe the sabbath, for it is holy to you. **Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people.**”

In Numbers 15, a man was found gathering wood on the sabbath day, and he was brought to Moses and Aaron. The Lord told Moses, “The man shall surely be put to death.” So the whole congregation stoned him to death outside the camp, just as the Lord had commanded Moses. The Jews told him that it was not permissible to carry his pallet on the Sabbath; they did not threaten the man. However, in the back of this man’s mind, he knows where this is headed.

(Nu 15:32–36) “Now while the sons of Israel were in the wilderness, they found a man gathering wood on the sabbath day. {33} Those who found him gathering wood brought him to Moses and Aaron and to all the congregation; {34} and they put him in custody because it had not been declared what should be done to him. {35} Then the Lord said to Moses, “The man shall surely be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him with stones outside the camp.” {36} So all the congregation brought him outside the camp and stoned him to death with stones, just as the Lord had commanded Moses.”

God’s law was general and was about the principle of taking a sabbath. It was for man to rest and to refrain from working. The Pharisees and scribes put together the Mishnah and the Gemara (Talmud) to give specific rules about what was or was not allowed on the Sabbath. The Mishnah was twenty-four chapters long, and had thirty-nine categories of work that were prohibited. The Gemara was a commentary on the Mishnah, and it had 157 folio pages to further elaborate on what could or could not be done on the Sabbath.

Here is an example of these man-made laws. A man was not allowed to carry a handkerchief in his pocket on the Sabbath. The law that the Jews were referring to when they said that it was not permissible to carry your pallet was the Melachah #39 (Hotza’ah), which related to carrying things. It said that you cannot carry anything more than four cubits, which is six feet. In Mishnah Shabbat 1:1-1.3, is said that even carrying anything light, like a mat or handkerchief is forbidden.

These Jewish leaders were more concerned about their man-made laws than showing compassion to people. In Luke 14, Jesus was at the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees and there was a man suffering from dropsy. He asked them, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath or not?” They kept silent. Jesus took hold of the man and healed him. Then He gave them an illustration. He asked if they had a son or an ox fall into a well, would they not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath? They made no reply. Jesus

(Lk 14:1–6) “It happened that when He went into the house of one of the leaders of the Pharisees on *the* Sabbath to eat bread, they were watching Him closely. {2} And there in front of Him was a man suffering from dropsy. {3} And Jesus answered and spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees, saying, “Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath, or not?” {4} But they kept silent. And He took hold of him and healed him, and sent him away. {5} And He said to them, “Which one of you will have a son or an ox fall into a well, and will not immediately pull him out on a Sabbath day?” {6} And they could make no reply to this.”

In regard to healing on the Sabbath, Jesus told the Jews in John 7 that since they allowed a man to be circumcised on the Sabbath, why were they angry because He made an entire man well on the Sabbath. He told them not to judge according to appearance, but to judge with righteous judgment. Jesus never sinned, and He never told anyone else to sin. The religious leaders were wrong in their interpretations and applications of God’s Law.

(Jn 7:22–24) “For this reason Moses has given you circumcision (not because it is from Moses, but from the fathers), and on *the* Sabbath you circumcise a man. {23} “If a man receives circumcision on *the* Sabbath so that the Law of Moses will not be broken, are you angry with Me because I made an entire man well on *the* Sabbath? {24} “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.”

The man defended his actions, saying, “He who made me well was the one who said to me, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk.’” He was just doing what he was told to do by the man who had healed him. The Jews then asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk.’” They wanted to get to the bottom of the issue, and stop this person who was instructing people to break the Sabbath. While they asked him this question, I believe they had a pretty good idea that it was Jesus. There had never been anyone else that healed people, particularly someone like this, who had been ill for thirty-eight years. Jesus had done lots of signs in Jerusalem, and the Jews now considered Jesus a bigger threat than John the Baptist.

(Jn 5:10–12) “So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.” {11} But he answered them, “He who made me well was the one who said to me, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk.’” {12} They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Pick up *your* pallet and walk’?”

The man did not know that it was Jesus who had healed him. Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place. He may have slipped away because He did not want to draw attention to Himself. He may have slipped away to avoid a confrontation with these Jewish leaders. He may have slipped away because He had something else to do.

(Jn 5:13) “But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in *that* place.”

Afterwards, Jesus found the man in the temple. There are hundreds of thousands of people there for the feast. Some scholars say that there could have been over a million people there. Finding someone would be pretty difficult to do unless you set up a specific time and place to meet. But Jesus found the man. You cannot hide from God. He is not only omniscient, knowing all things, but He also sees all things.

(Jn 5:14) “Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you.”

When Jesus was gathering His first disciples, He told Nathaniel that he was an Israelite in whom there is no guile or deceit. Nathanael asked Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.” Jesus saw Nathanael, and He also saw where the man that He had just healed was, and He found him.

(Jn 1:47–48) “Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” {48} Nathanael said to Him, “How do You know me?” Jesus answered and said to him, “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.”

After Jesus found the man, He said to him, “Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you.” Some scholars say that Jesus is referring to eternal life and judgment. Jesus has healed and forgiven him, and he wants him to live uprightly and avoid eternal punishment and torment. That may or may not be what Jesus was inferring. His illness was caused by sin, and in the context of the verse, Jesus was warning him about returning to sin so that he does not have a worse condition. I think that Jesus was referring to his life on earth, but there is a judgment that comes after life, and for those who have rejected God, they will face far worse things in the future. Both interpretations are true.

(Jn 5:14) “Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you.”

After Jesus warned him not to sin anymore, the man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. The man had to know that the Jewish leaders were upset with Jesus, and would come after him. Despite being healed of his illness, which he had for thirty-eight years, and being warned about sinning, he went and reported Jesus to these Jewish leaders. There is a sense that he betrayed Jesus to save his own neck.

(Jn 5:15) “The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.”

When the Jews heard that it was Jesus that had healed the man on the Sabbath and told him to carry his pallet, they began persecuting Him. In chapter two, after overturning the money changers’ tables and driving out the animals, the Jews asked Him about what authority He had to do these things. Their response this time was not to ask questions; it was to persecute Him. In verse eighteen, which is where we will pick it up next week, they were not just persecuting Jesus, they were now seeking all the more to kill Jesus.

(Jn 5:16-18) “For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. {17} But He answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working. {18} For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.”

Jesus’ response to the Jews was that His Father is working until now, and He is also working. Jesus was doing the things that His Father was showing Him to do. That is what all of us should be trying to do. We should ask the Father what He is doing. We should ask Him to show us what He is doing, and we should get involved in what He is doing.

## Conclusion and Applications

In our passage a man who has been suffering from an illness for thirty-eight years is waiting at the pool of Bethesda, the house of mercy, in hopes that he will be healed. Jesus was in town for one of the feasts of Israel, and He went to the pool of Bethesda. When He saw the man, He had mercy on Him and healed him. When the Jewish leaders saw the man carrying his pallet, they were not concerned that he had been miraculously healed from his severe affliction. They were only concerned that this man was carrying his pallet on a Sabbath.

Our first application is that God wants us to show mercy and compassion on people. God is merciful and compassionate, and He wants us to be merciful and compassionate. In Colossians 3, Paul tells us to put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. People that are suffering, like this man was, need compassion, kindness, humility, and gentleness. Our churches need to be like the pool of Bethesda, houses of mercy, where people that are hurting can receive mercy, compassion, and healing.

(Col 3:12–13) “So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience; {13} bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.”

As a teacher my first response is to teach someone truth, and to help them understand why they are in that predicament, and what they should have done differently. There is a time to teach people truth, and we need to teach all of God’s principles. But when someone is hurting or suffering, it is time to show compassion and mercy. Later on, at the appropriate time, we can teach truth. Later on, Jesus told the man not to sin anymore so that nothing worse happens. His first response was mercy and compassion. He taught him truth later on. We need those in the body with the gift of mercy, because their gifting is so valuable to people that are suffering.

Our second application is to be on guard against legalism. Be careful about becoming legalistic, particularly about applications. Paul said that no one is to act as our judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day. For me, I have chosen not to drink wine or alcohol. I have to be careful about making that a law for others to follow. Jesus made wine and drank wine. It is not a sin to drink wine; it is sinful to drink too much wine and get intoxicated. It would be wrong to get legalistic and tell people that they can only drink four ounces of wine. We run the risk of becoming Pharisaical. We have to teach God’s principles and allow room for people to make applications for their own lives.

(Col 2:16–17) “Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day— {17} things which are a *mere* shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.”

Our third application is to constantly seek to do what the Father is doing. Jesus was always doing what the Father was showing Him to do. On an ongoing basis, we need to be asking the Father to show us what He is doing, and to show us what we can do to assist Him. In Henry Blackaby’s book, *Experiencing God*, he gave five ways to recognize where God is working. One of those ways was to notice a spiritual hunger or openness in someone’s life. He also said, “You must make major adjustments in your life to join God in what He is doing.”<sup>1</sup> He also said, “Find out

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<sup>1</sup> Warren Blackaby and Claude King, *Experiencing God*, Unit 6, Day 1, page 159

where the Master is working and then that is where you need to be.” That is the way Jesus lived, and that is the way that we need to live our lives.

### **Closing Prayer**

Father God, thank You for this example of how Jesus showed mercy to a man that had been suffering for a long time. Help us to have compassion and to show mercy to those who are hurting. Help us to work alongside of You. Show us the things that You are doing, and help us to make adjustments in our lives to come alongside of You. We pray these things in Jesus’ name. Amen.

### **Discussion Questions**

- When you see someone suffering from an illness, what is your initial response?
- What are some ways to show mercy to those who are suffering?
- Why do you think Jesus asked the man if he wanted to get well? Is that something that you would normally ask someone who is suffering from a long-term illness?
- When Jesus told the man to pick up his pallet and walk, do you think it was to confront the legalistic laws of the Pharisees, or to get the man off to a new start in life?
- When the Jews saw that the man had been healed, what should have been their response? When we see someone healed, what is our normal response?
- How did the response of the Jews reveal the condition of their hearts?
- The Jews thought they were being careful in obeying God. In reality, were they obeying God?
- What are some ways that churches become legalistic in their practices?
- What are some ways that you can recognize what the Father is doing? Once you recognize what the Father is doing, what should your response be?

## **Healing at the Pool of Bethesda**

### **Introduction (Jn 5:1–17)**

1. **The Setting** (Jn 5:1-7, 1 Co 11:29–32, He 12:5–10, Mt 9:32-33, 12:22-24, 2 Ki 13:14, Jn 11:3-4, 2 Ti 4:20)
  
2. **The Healing of the Afflicted Man** (Jn 5:6-9, Lk 18:35–43, Ro 13:14)
  
3. **The Aftermath** (Jn 5:9-17, Ex 20:8–11, Ex 31:13–14, Nu 15:32–36, Lk 14:1–6, Jn 7:22-24, 1:47–48)

### **Conclusion and Applications (Col 3:12–13, 2:16–17)**

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.