



## Silverdale Baptist

Encountering Jesus ~ Lifting Up The Stuck ~ John 5:1=9 ~ 07/30-31/2022

### Big Idea

Last week we saw that when people encounter Jesus, the blind begin to see. This week we will see that when Jesus encounters the lame, the lame begin to walk. Spiritually speaking, what keeps you from walking with Jesus?

### Getting Started

**Have you ever been stuck? Tell us about it.**

**How were you stuck?**

**What did it take to get you unstuck?**

Most of us have been stuck at some point in our lives. We may have been physically stuck in the mud or stuck in the sand like Pastor Tony. Or we may have been stuck in a relationship with no clear way forward. Some of you may feel stuck in a job you are not excited about. Regardless of the details, the question is, "How do you get unstuck?" Let's study John 5 and see what happens when a man stuck on a mat for 38 years encounters Jesus.

**Leader note:** We have included Pastor Tony's notes in the application section of this lesson. Pastor Tony asked, "What keeps you on the mat?" The man's physical illness kept him on the mat in this story. But,

*in addition to physical problems, many things keep us from moving forward in this life. Pastor Tony points out ways all of us can walk forward with Jesus, regardless of our situation.*

## Learn

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ JOHN 5:1-17

**What happens in this story?**

**Who are the main characters?**

**How long had the man been lame?**

**What question does Jesus ask the man?**

**Does the question seem odd? What would you have expected Jesus to do or say?**

**How does the man answer the question?**

**Does the answer seem odd? What would you have expected the man to say?**

**Who is the man blaming for his lack of healing? Whose fault is it that he hasn't been healed?**

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER RE-READ JOHN 5:1-17

**How does Jesus respond to the man's blame game?**

**What did he do when Jesus healed him? Where did he go?**

**How did the Jews (the spiritual leaders of Israel) respond to the good news that the lame man could walk? Why?**

**What do you learn about Jesus from this story?**

## Apply

*"Come as you are, but don't stay where you are. – Pastor Tony.*

### What keeps you on the mat?

What is the one problem that keeps you from moving forward with God?

1. Gathering with other mat dwellers.

The man in our story spent his time with like-minded people. They were all waiting on the healing that never came.

**Who do you spend time with? Complainers? Gossips? Weak Christians who aren't growing?**

**Have you begun to resemble them?**

**Principle - Be careful who you hang out with because you might become just like them.**

## 2. Having a victim mentality.

**Whatever your problem is, whatever keeps you on the mat, do you want to get well?**

**What responsibilities come with your moving forward, getting off the mat?**

**Are you willing to live with those responsibilities?**

**Are you willing to stop playing the victim and let go of your bitterness, your unforgiveness?**

**Principle – Stop finding your identity in what happened to you and find your identity in Christ.**

## 3. The blaming of others.

**Who do you blame for the situation you are stuck in? Your past? Your spouse? God? Your boss?**

**Will you take responsibility, forgive, and move forward?**

**Principle – Take responsibility for where you are. Instead of blaming, forgive.**

## How do you get unstuck?

1. Believe that Jesus is greater than your situation. (John 5:8-9)

2. Pick your mat. (John 5:8-9)

3. Walk with Jesus. (John 5:8, 14)

Observations:

- Standing for Jesus Will Cost You.
- When You Stand For Christ, He'll Stand With You.
- Following Jesus Means Loving Like Jesus.

## Pray

Father, please keep us from playing the victim and blaming others for our situation. We want to be healed and walk with You. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Dig Deeper

### The Cure (John 5:1–15)

When you visit St. Anne's Church in Jerusalem, they will show you the deep excavation that has revealed the ancient Pool of Bethesda. The Hebrew name *Bethesda* has been spelled various ways and given differing meanings. Some say it means "house of mercy" or "house of grace," but others say it means "place of the two outpourings." There is historical and archeological evidence that two adjacent pools of water served this area in ancient times.

The pool is situated near the northeast corner of the Old City, close to the Sheep Gate (Neh. 3:1; 12:39). Perhaps John saw some spiritual significance to this location, for he had already told his readers that Jesus Christ is "the Lamb of God" (John 1:29).

We do not know which feast Jesus was observing when He went to Jerusalem, and it is not important that we know. His main purpose for going was not to maintain a religious tradition but to heal a man and use the miracle as the basis for a message to the people. The miracle illustrated what He said in John 5:24—the power of His Word and the gift of life.

While it is true that some manuscripts omit the end of John 5:3 and all of verse 4, it is also true that the event (and the man's words in John 5:7) would make little sense if these words are eliminated. Why would anybody, especially a man sick for so many years, remain in one place if nothing special were occurring? You would think that after thirty-eight years of nothing happening to *anybody*, the man would go elsewhere and stop hoping! It seems wisest for us to accept the fact that something extraordinary kept all these handicapped people at this pool, hoping for a cure.

John described these people as "impotent, blind, lame, paralyzed." What havoc sin has wrought in this world! But the healing of these infirmities was one of the prophesied ministries of the Messiah (Isa. 35:3–6). Had the religious leaders known their own Scriptures, they would have recognized their Redeemer; but they were spiritually blind.

No matter how you look at this miracle, it is an illustration of the grace of God. It was grace that brought Jesus to the Pool of Bethesda, for who would want to mingle with a crowd of helpless people! Jesus did not heal all of them; He singled out one man and healed him. The fact that Jesus came to the man, spoke to him, healed him, and then met him later in the temple is proof of His wonderful grace and mercy.

John noted that the man had been ill for thirty-eight years. Perhaps he saw in this a picture of his own Jewish nation that had wandered in the wilderness for thirty-eight years (Deut. 2:14). Spiritually speaking, Israel was a nation of impotent people, waiting hopelessly for something to happen.

Jesus knew about the man (see John 2:23–24) and asked him if he wanted to be healed. You would think that the man would have responded with an enthusiastic, "Yes! I want to be healed!" But, instead, he began to give excuses! He had been in that sad condition for so long that his will was as paralyzed as his body. But if you compare John 5:6 with verse 40, you will see that Jesus had a spiritual lesson in mind as well. Indeed, this man did illustrate the tragic spiritual state of the nation.

The Lord healed him through the power of His spoken word. He commanded the man to do the very thing he was unable to do, but in His command was the power of fulfillment (see Mark 3:5; Heb. 4:12). The cure was immediate and certainly some of the many people at the pool must have witnessed it.

Jesus did not pause to heal anyone else; instead, He “moved away” (John 5:13) so as not to create a problem. (The Greek word means “to dodge.”)

The miracle would have caused no problem except that it occurred on the Sabbath Day. Our Lord certainly could have come a day earlier, or even waited a day; but He wanted to get the attention of the religious leaders. Later, He would deliberately heal a blind man on the Sabbath (John 9:1–14). The scribes had listed thirty-nine tasks that were prohibited on the Sabbath, and carrying a burden was one of them. Instead of rejoicing at the wonderful deliverance of the man, the religious leaders condemned him for carrying his bed and thereby breaking the law.

It is not easy to understand the relationship between this man and Jesus. There is no evidence that he believed on Christ and was converted, yet we cannot say that he was opposed to the Saviour. In fact, he did not even know who it was that healed him until Jesus met him in the temple. No doubt the man went there to give thanks to God and to offer the appropriate sacrifices. It seems strange that the man did not actively seek a closer relationship with the One who healed him, but more than one person has gratefully accepted the gift and ignored the Giver.

Did the man “inform” on Jesus because of fear? We do not know. The Jewish leaders at least turned from him and aimed their accusations at Jesus Christ; and, unlike the healed blind man in John 9, this man was not excommunicated. The Lord’s words (John 5:14) suggest that the man’s physical plight had been the result of sin; but Jesus did not say that the man’s sins had been forgiven as He did in dealing with the sick man lowered through the roof (see Mark 2:1–12). It is possible to experience an exciting miracle and still not be saved and go to heaven!

### **The Controversy (John 5:16–18)**

The Jewish leaders did not prosecute the man who was healed, even though he had broken the law; but they did begin to persecute the Lord Jesus. As the guardians of the faith, the members of the Jewish Sanhedrin (the religious ruling council) had the responsibility of investigating new preachers and teachers who appeared in the land, lest some false prophet come along and lead the people astray. They had looked into the ministry of John the Baptist (John 1:19ff) and more recently had been scrutinizing the ministry of Jesus.

Jesus had healed a demoniac on the Sabbath (Luke 4:31–37), so the Sanhedrin was already suspicious. In the days following the miracle recorded in John 5, Jesus would defend His disciples for picking grain on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:1–8), and would heal a man’s withered hand on the Sabbath (Matt. 12:9–14). He deliberately challenged the legalistic traditions of the scribes and Pharisees. They had taken the Sabbath—God’s gift to man—and had transformed it into a prison house of regulations and restrictions.

When they confronted Jesus with His unlawful conduct, He simply replied that He was doing only what His Father was doing! God’s Sabbath rest had been broken by man’s sin (see Gen. 3); and ever since the fall of man, God has been seeking lost sinners and saving them. But when Jesus said “My Father” instead of the usual “our Father,” used by the Jews, He claimed to be equal with God.

The Jewish leaders instantly understood His claim, and they changed their accusation from that of Sabbath-breaking to blasphemy, because Jesus claimed to be God. Liberal theologians who say that Jesus never claimed to be God have a difficult time with this passage.

Of course, the penalty for such blasphemy was death. It is here that the “official persecution” of Jesus began, culminating in His crucifixion. In the days that followed, our Lord often confronted His enemies with their evil desire to kill Him (John 7:19, 25; 8:37, 59). They hated Him without a cause (John 15:18–

25). They ignored the good deeds that He performed for the helpless and hopeless, and centered their attention on destroying Him.

Jesus made Himself equal with God because He is God. This is the theme of John's Gospel. The Jewish leaders could not disprove His claims, so they tried to destroy Him and get Him out of the way. Both in His crucifixion and His resurrection, Jesus openly affirmed His deity and turned His enemies' weapons against them.

British writer George MacDonald pointed out that John 5:17 gives us a profound insight into our Lord's miracles. Jesus did *instantly* what the Father is always doing slowly. For example, in nature, as mentioned earlier, the Father is slowly turning water into wine; but Jesus did it instantly. Through the powers in nature, the Father is healing broken bodies; but Jesus healed them immediately. Nature is repeatedly multiplying bread, from sowing to harvest; but Jesus multiplied it instantly in His own hands.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Warren W. Wiersbe, [\*The Bible Exposition Commentary\*](#), vol. 1 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 304–306.