

Getting Off the Ground

Have you ever felt stuck? If so, take heart and get ready to rise up. The message today from this powerful scene is titled ***“Getting off the Ground”***. **John 5:1-15**, let's read the text that this scene is from.

After these things there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, waiting 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 then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted.

*A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. 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?”***

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, **“Get up, pick up your pallet and walk.”***

Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day. 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.”

But he answered them, “He who made me well was the one who said to me, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk.’” They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Pick up your pallet and walk’?” 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.

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." The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

John 5:1-15

Now, this episode and this text is a complicated one. The reason is that in the text we just read, there are details that are not in every manuscript copy that we have of the Bible.

The detail about the legend of the moving of the waters and the people needing to be the first ones in there is not in every manuscript copy of Scripture.

The majority of the New Testament, which is 27 books, was finished by about 70 years after Christ's resurrection. This is well within the lifetime of those who were there.

There are more than 5,000 manuscript copies that are 99% identical to one to another. They are not different on one issue of significance when it comes to doctrine.

Now some of these things might be instances where historical tradition and storytelling about true facts just got handed down and eventually got added into the biblical information.

You see in the footnotes of the scripture that exact thing. *"These details are not in some of the earliest and best transcripts."*

What we can confidently say is that Jesus showed up on this day and for a man who was being held down. Jesus called this man to stand. He's calling us to stand as well. It can help us get off the ground from whatever figuratively we are being pinned down by. The believer's entire life is all about going from low to high.

"Set your mind on things above, not on things of the earth."

Colossians 3:1

Whatever way you're being held down, I want to give you five steps, one for each of the five porches in the pool of Bethesda that can help you.

To go from low to high like God wants us to, we must:

1) _____ false assumptions.

In all of our lives there are assumptions. We think, if I had blank, then I would be blank. If I had this job, I'd be happy. If I had the right relationship, things would be good.

As long as his eyes were on the water and waiting for bubbles and other people around him, he wasn't going to have his eyes on Jesus. He would never be walking like he was meant to.

Jesus of course is the living water. He's the cure.

2) Asking hard _____.

Do you want to be made well?

It's possible to develop an addiction to your affliction. You can be focused so long on what can't help you that you just get stuck there and forget about even the hope of a better life.

You accept your lot and soon get comfortable there because it justifies your behavior. Disappointment that is lived with long enough can make the heart sick, discouraged, and despondent. You can't be well against your will. One of the things the enemy tries to get us to say is, "Yes, I will change, but I'll do it tomorrow.

The right time to do the right thing is right now.

We all know the first step is the hardest step

3) Doing _____ things.

The scary thing for you might be not making excuses anymore.

You will always stay stuck if you're focused on passing the buck. You are not taking responsibility, not taking ownership. What excuses are you holding onto that Jesus is calling you to drop?

"But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift."
Ephesians 4:7

4) Listening to the _____ voices.

It was against the heart of God who created the Sabbath to be a source of rest and worship and rejuvenation. The religious leaders had turned it into more work to actually have a day off than actually just working all the time. He's now walking, but they're angry because of the day that it took place on.

It's also important to note that he was told, pick up your mat and leave this place. You're not coming back here.

5) Making different _____.

"Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you." I don't know what is worse than 38 years lying on the ground, but it must be pretty bad.

As the Bible says, *"what a man sows the same he shall reap."*

The truth is, the sobering truth is, what you do with your liberty can lead you back to captivity. This man was being warned to not make a certain level of choices, because if he did, he would end up at an even worse spot.

It tells us that a new start must be followed by a new plan.

Proverbs 26:11 warns about a person who does the same foolish thing over and over again and compares that person to like a dog who throws up and then returns to it. Jesus has set you and I free so we can stay free.

What you are cured from, you get to carry. This man was cured from the mat he had been lying on for almost four decades. When he was set free, he was told to carry and to walk with it.

It was a souvenir of the powerful work God had done in his life to strengthen him moving forward.