

Life Changing Community Group Discussion Questions

week of 7/26/26

Summary

This sermon centered on the story of Jesus healing a paralyzed man at the Pool of Bethesda in John 5. The man had been in his condition for 38 years, and Jesus approached Him with a surprising and penetrating question: "Do you want to get well?" Dr. Bowling unpacked how Jesus sees beyond our outward brokenness to the deeper spiritual paralysis that can take hold in our hearts through resentment, fear, guilt, addiction, or discouragement. Just as the sculptor sees the finished work within a rough block of marble, Jesus sees not just what we are but what we can become through His grace.

The sermon also explored how we can become so accustomed to our brokenness that we stop expecting change, defaulting instead to excuses and a kind of learned helplessness. Jesus does not debate our excuses. He simply says, "Get up. Pick up your mat and walk." The greatest miracle is not physical healing but the spiritual transformation that comes when we allow Christ to move us from paralysis to wholeness. Through the power of the Holy Spirit, God works in us to will and to act according to His good purpose, and no burden we have carried, no matter how long, is beyond His healing grace.

Intro Prayer

Heavenly Father, we come together today grateful that you know each of us by name. You see not only our outward circumstances but the hidden places in our hearts where we have grown weary or stuck. As we open your Word and discuss what it means to truly want to get well, we ask that your Holy Spirit would move freely among us. Help us to be honest with one another and open

to whatever you want to do in each of our lives today. May this time together draw us closer to you and to each other. In Jesus' name, amen.

Ice Breaker

What is one thing you have learned to do over the years that you once thought you could never do?

Key Verses

- John 5:6
- John 5:7-8
- Philippians 4:13
- Philippians 2:13
- Romans 8:37-39

Questions

1. Dr. Bowling described a condition called 'learned helplessness,' where repeated failures lead people to stop expecting change. Have you ever experienced a season like that spiritually? What did it feel like?
2. The man at the pool responded to Jesus not with a yes or no, but with a list of reasons why He had not been healed yet. How do we sometimes do the same thing when God invites us toward change?
3. Dr. Bowling said, 'The greatest paralysis is not in one's legs, but in one's heart and will.' What kinds of things do you think cause spiritual paralysis in people today?

4. Jesus told the man to pick up his mat and walk, meaning he was not to leave it behind as though he might return to his old condition. What does it look like practically to 'pick up your mat' and not go back to old patterns?
5. The sculptor Gutzon Borglum saw Abraham Lincoln hidden inside a rough block of marble. How does it encourage you to know that God sees what you can become, not just what you are right now?
6. Philippians 2:13 (NIV) says, 'For it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill His good purpose.' How does knowing that God is the one working in you change the way you approach personal growth and change?
7. After he was healed, the man went to the temple to give thanks rather than staying by the pool. What does that tell us about the connection between healing and worship, and how can gratitude be a sign of genuine transformation in our lives?

Life Application

This week, identify one area of your life where you have grown accustomed to spiritual paralysis, whether it is a habit, a grudge, a fear, or a discouragement you have carried for a long time. Bring it honestly before God in prayer each day and ask Him specifically, 'Lord, I want to get well in this area. Work in me to will and to act according to your good purpose.' Consider sharing this area with a trusted friend or small group member who can pray with you and hold you gently accountable.

Key Takeaways

- Jesus sees beyond our outward condition to the deeper spiritual paralysis of the heart, and nothing in our condition disqualifies us from His healing grace.
- We can become so accustomed to our brokenness that we stop expecting change, but Jesus cuts through our excuses with a direct invitation to get up and move forward.
- Picking up our mat means fully committing to the new life Christ offers and not leaving a way back to our old condition.
- Genuine healing is not just physical or circumstantial. It is a spiritual transformation that moves us from hopelessness to wholeness and from isolation to worship.
- God does not ask us to change by our own strength. Through the Holy Spirit, He works in us to will and to act, making real change possible for anyone who is willing.

Ending Prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for the reminder today that you see us fully and love us completely. You know the places in each of our hearts where we have been lying by the pool, waiting and wondering if anything will ever change. We believe that your grace is sufficient and that your Spirit is at work in us right now. Give us the courage to answer your question honestly, to get up, to pick up our mats, and to walk in the new life you have made possible. May we leave this time together not as people who simply heard a good discussion, but as people who are truly ready to be made well. We ask this in your name and for your glory. Amen.