

When You Are Out Of Options

Series: How God Changes Our Attitudes

Have you ever felt like you were out of options?

What Does The Bible Say?

Afterward Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days. 2 Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda, with five covered porches. 3 Crowds of sick people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches. 5 One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, “Would you like to get well?” (John 5:1–6 NLT)

Would you like to get well? This is a question we must all answer.

7 “I can’t, sir,” the sick man said, “for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me.” (John 5:7 NLT)

It comes naturally for us to make excuses.

How Can You Obey?

8 Jesus told him, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!”

9 Instantly, the man was healed! He rolled up his sleeping mat and began walking! But this miracle happened on the Sabbath, (John 5:8–9 NLT)

Do we really believe Jesus when He tells us to do something?

Additional Notes:

If you would like to use your home to disciple others, check out our training at www.crosswaveschurch.com/host. Cross Waves has produced short videos to train you how to use your home to reach others for Christ. So please check it out.

Explore:

Today's Deep Dive Into the Bible segment comes from the book, Heiser, M. S. (2014). *I Dare You Not to Bore Me with the Bible*. (J. D. Barry & R. Van Noord, Eds.) (pp. 36–37). Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press; Bible Study Magazine.

Explore:

“Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches” (John 5:2). We believe the reference here is to the sheep “gate” of Nehemiah 3:1. At first glance Nehemiah 3 does not seem to be very interesting reading, and yet there is much in it that is precious. It describes the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem in the days when a remnant of Israel returned from the Babylonian captivity. Various portions in the work of reconstruction were allotted to different individuals and companies. These portions or sections were from gate to gate. Ten gates are mentioned in

the chapter. The first is the sheep gate (verse 1) and the last is “The gate Miphkad” which means “judgment,” and speaks, perhaps, of the judgment-seat of Christ; and then the chapter concludes by saying, “And between the going up of the comer unto the sheep gate repaired the goldsmiths and the merchants.” Thus the circle is completed, and at the close we are brought back to the point from which we started—“The sheep gate.” This is the gate through which the sacrificial animals were brought to the temple—the “lamb” predominating, hence its name. The sheep gate, then, points us at once to Christ, and tells of His Cross.

Pink, A. W. (1923–1945). *Exposition of the Gospel of John* (p. 242). Swengel, PA: Bible Truth Depot.

Explore:

Jesus now goes up to Jerusalem to an unspecified feast. “Of the Jews” (v. 1) is superfluous except that it once again sets Jesus

over against Judaism. Since Passover is anticipated in 6:4, this is presumably not a Passover feast (→ Feasts, Festivals, and Fasts).

The pool described here is probably the one unearthed by archaeologists near the Church of St. Anne north of the Temple area. The name Bethzatha (rsv) may be derived from the northern suburb of the city in which the pool was located.

(Other, less likely names such as Bethesda and Bethsaida appear in some manuscripts.) The pool was, in ancient times, a kind of spa where healings were thought to take place (v. 3).

Descriptions of the duration of illness are often found in healing stories (v. 5; cf. Mark 5:25); there is perhaps no symbolic significance in the number thirty-eight (but cf. Deut. 2:14). That the Johannine Jesus knows the man's condition without asking (John 5:6) is typical (cf. 1:48; 4:17–18), as is his taking or maintaining the initiative (2:4–5; 9:5–7). The man's problem in getting into the pool in time (5:7) was explained by the addition of v. 4 in early manuscripts. Typically, Jesus does not deal with

that problem at all but gives a sharp command (v. 8; cf. Mark 2:9, 11). The man's healing is obviously the result of Jesus' word (cf. John 4:46–54), not of the healed person's faith (cf. Mark 5:34). Almost as an afterthought, we are told (John 5:9b) that the healing took place on a Sabbath, a common feature of Gospel healing stories (cf. 9:14; Mark 3:2) and a crucial fact in the following discussion.

Mays, J. L. (Ed.). (1988). Harper's Bible commentary (p. 1054). San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Explore:

A [The] feast of the Jews.—[Which feast? This point is still under dispute, but the controversy is now narrowed down to a choice between the Passover and the Purim. The decision has a bearing on the chronology of the gospel history. If the feast here spoken of be the Passover, then our Lord's public labors continued during three and a half years, since John notes three

other passovers as falling within His ministry, 2:13; 6:4; 12:1 and 13:1. If not, then the time must in all probability be reduced to two and a half years. On the bearing of the definite article on the question, and the various readings, see Text. Notes.—P. S.] Meyer: “Which feast is meant, appears with certainty from ch. 4:35; comp. 6:4. For ch. 4:35 was spoken in the month of December; and from ch. 6:4 it appears that the passover was nigh at hand; hence the feast here intended must be one falling between December and the passover, and this is no other than the feast of Purim, which was celebrated on the 14th and 15th of Adar (Esth. 9:21 ff.), that is, in March [one month before the passover], in memory of the deliverance of the nation from the massacre projected by Haman. So Keppler, [who first suggested this view], d’Outrein, Hug, Olshausen, Wieseler, Neander, Krabbe, Anger, Lange, Maier and many others.”‡ Meyer justly adds: The feast is not designated, because it was a minor festival,

whereas the greater feasts are named by John: not only the passover, but also the σκηνοπηγία, 7:2, and the ἑγκαίνια 10:22.

[The chief objections to this view are: 1. The feast of Purim was no temple feast, and required no journey to Jerusalem. But Christ may have attended this feast as He attended other festivals (7:2; 10:22) without legal obligation, merely for the purpose of doing good. 2. The Purim was never celebrated as a Sabbath. But the Sabbath spoken of, ver. 9, may have preceded or succeeded the feast.—P. S.]

Other views of the feast: (1) The passover: Irenæus, Luther, and many more;† (2) Pentecost: Cyril [Chrysostom, Calvin], Bengel, etc.; (3) the feast of tabernacles: Cocceius, Ebrard [Ewald]; (4) the feast of dedication: Petavius; (5) a feast which cannot be determined: Lücke, De Wette, [Brückner], Luthardt, Tholuck (7th ed.)

The feast of Purim [יְמֵי הַפּוּרִים], or simply פּוּרִים lot, from the Persian], Esth. 9:24, 26; ἡ Μαρδοχαΐκή ἡμέρα, 2 Macc. 15:36; Joseph. Antiq. xi. 6, 13. On the 13th of Adar a fast preceded the feast; in the festival itself the book of Esther (called מְגִלָּה by eminence) was read in the synagogues. As a popular festival it was distinguished, like the feasts of tabernacles, and dedication, by universal rejoicings. Fanaticism in the people naturally sought to make it a festival of triumph over the Gentiles (subsequently over the Christians also). And on this account was this particular feast of Purim so pre-eminently the feast of the Jews (with the article), and the article in the Cod. Sinait. in this place cannot be made to speak exclusively, as Hengstenberg proposes, for the passover. We must no doubt mark a difference between the simple expression, feast, and the expression: feast of the Jews.

Lange, J. P., & Schaff, P. (2008). A commentary on the Holy Scriptures: John (p. 180). Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software.

Explore:

Jesus sees that small glimmer of hope and cuts through all the cripple's hopelessness. Jesus gives a simple command, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." And the quiet, creative power of God begins to flow through his crippled limbs and spirit, and once again he knows the warmth of life. "And immediately ... made well... took up his bed ... walked." These strong words describing the action signify that life has broken in. The man is on his way home.

Then John adds a simple phrase, almost an afterthought it seems, "And that day was the Sabbath" (v. 9). They are words that are laden with potential controversy. It is almost as if Jesus has done this work of mercy on the Sabbath to get an explosive

issue into the open. By this act He has declared His authority and mission at a place and time which will cause confrontation.

Fredrikson, R. L., & Ogilvie, L. J. (1985). John (Vol. 27, p. 112). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc.

Explore:

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.

Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). The Bible exposition commentary (Vol. 1, p. 304). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

Explore:

Around the pool lay a great number of unfortunate people with various afflictions. The last part of v. 3 and all of v. 4 are not found in the oldest manuscripts of the Gospel, raising the question whether they were original (see Morris, Bruce, Brown, Bernard, and especially Godet). Regardless, the explanation does accurately reflect the superstition of the people and provides a proper understanding of the context for Christ's miracle.

The people were under the impression that from time to time an angel came and stirred up the water and that whoever first entered the water after this would be healed. The question may be asked as to how this (obviously incorrect) belief could be maintained over any extended period of time. The answer is that since many ailments are psychosomatic in nature, they can be "healed" if the victim believes strongly enough in the cure. This type of thing is quite common among primitive or otherwise superstitious peoples.

Stallings, J. W. (1989). *The Gospel of John*. (R. E. Picirilli, Ed.) (First Edition, p. 78). Nashville, TN: Randall House Publications.

Explore:

And I must confess that in all my years of hospital visitation I have never stood at the side of a bed and said, “Do you want to get well?” I do not think I would have asked it of the paralytic either. If I had, I can imagine his response. “I have been confined to this loathsome shell for years. When the water ripples, I claw my way, and I crawl over others, but I have never been able to get to the water. Someone always shoves me back. I’ve been lying here because I want to be healed—and you ask me if I want to be healed?” A cruel, ridiculous question. But not when it comes from the lips of our Lord.

I believe that is the question Christ asks all of us. I believe it summarizes the great problem in our lives. Do you want to be

well? Few things hamper the gracious work of Christ in our lives more than our response to this question.

Hughes, R. K. (1999). *John: that you may believe* (pp. 147–148). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books.

Question 1 of 5

Why don't people really want to get well? Why do they linger in their sin and not get help through Christ?

Question 2 of 5

How often do you deliberately choose to be among the suffering? Is Jesus' presence at the pool of Bethesda an encouragement to you or a rebuke—or both? Explain.

Question 3 of 5

In what way is the sick man's story really a tale about you and me?

Question 4 of 5

The man that was healed went to the temple for the first time in thirty-eight years. Do feel that you daily show enough gratitude to God for what He has done for you?

Question 5 of 5

Is Jesus telling you today, like the paralytic, to "stand up" in any area of your life? If so, what? If He is, what do you plan to do about it?