

Signs: The Poolside Sign
John 5:1-18
Growth Group Discussion Guide

Begin with prayer. Invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you all through God's word, and to lead your discussion.

Opening Questions (try to get everyone involved in discussion):

- What aspects of your current routine are especially energizing to you? What areas are especially draining?

Read John 5:1-18, then discuss the questions below.

- Unlike his previous miracles, Jesus is the initiator in this scene. Jesus seeks out the needy person, who doesn't even know who Jesus is, and the man makes no request of Jesus. Why might this fact be significant?
 - As you experience God in your life, is he more of an initiator/actor or a reactor? Explain.
 - How do you think the Bible, overall, portrays God in terms of active and reactive, and how can we align ourselves better with this reality?
- What do you think of the initial interchange between Jesus and the man? (Vv. 6-7).
 - Why do you think Jesus asks him this question, which seems to have an obvious answer?
 - What does the man indicate in his answer?
 - How does Jesus' later interaction with the man (v. 14) shed light on the man's deeper needs?
- Pastor Josh pointed out one great need that we all have: We need freedom from slavery to sin.
 - How do you feel about this assertion? Do you agree? Do you push back? Why?
 - If this claim is true, why might we not "want to get well?"
 - Josh mentioned that sometimes we have to experience "rock bottom" to recognize that we want freedom more than we want our sin. Is anyone willing to share how this experience has happened in his/her life?
 - If you have experienced God bringing you freedom from any kind of sin, and are willing to share, please do!
- The disabled man by the pool thought that his only hope for healing was found in the pool. Therefore, Jesus was only useful if he could get the man into the pool.
 - Are there any "pools" (i.e., supposed solutions) that you have been so focused on that you might not have heard God calling you to something else?
 - How does our striving cause us to miss out on what Jesus offers us?

- Pastor Josh said on Sunday that we all need **rest from our striving**. Tim Keller once said, “We need rest from *the work underneath the work*.”
 - What is the work underneath the work, in our life? In other words, thinking about the areas where you strive the most, what are you ultimately trying to accomplish by doing so?
 - To what degree have you experienced—or do you still need—the rest that Jesus gives from this striving?
 - How does the gospel make this rest possible? (See John 19:30)
- In John 5:16-18, what is Jesus implicitly saying about his identity? Why is this so upsetting to the Jewish leaders?
 - In these same verses, describe the point that Jesus is making about the ultimate intent of the Sabbath day. (Leaders: He essentially says, “Of course my Father and I have always been working to bring renewal and restoration on the Sabbath; because not only has the Sabbath been a day of rest, it has always been pointing to the greater, ultimate rest that I [Jesus] give).”

Concluding application:

- Pastor Josh presented one practical way of embracing the rest that Jesus gives—a weekly Sabbath. This is a 24 hour period each week to rest, re-energize, and worship God.
 - When you initially hear this, what is your reaction? Do you see this as more of an archaic, legalistic practice? Or does it sound like a refreshing possibility to you?
 - How does a weekly Sabbath relate to “God’s economy of grace”?
 - How does it give us rest from our striving, physically, emotionally, and spiritually?
 - What has been your experience in this area? Have you practiced a regular Sabbath? If so, what has your experience been like? If not, why not?
 - What currently keeps you from practicing a Sabbath? If you were to try this, what would have to change about your routine? What activities would be restorative to you on a Sabbath Day?

Sharing/Prayer

- As always, take some time to share areas where you need people to pray for you. Spend time praying for one another.