

**OVERVIEW****BROKEN: Where mercy covers our weakness.**

We cannot fix ourselves—not our bodies and certainly not our sin. In this lesson, students will understand that it’s not enough to simply want healing; we must actively seek it from a source that can deliver. By examining an interaction between Jesus and a man who has wanted healing for a long time, students will see how our human natures sometimes get in the way of our receiving what we need the most. A quick look at how winning the lottery can actually amplify problems will challenge students to consider what they’re putting their hope in.

**OPENING QUESTIONS**

- Share your highs and lows of the week.
- How do you usually handle being sick?
- How would your life get better if you won millions in the lottery?

**WHAT THE BIBLE HAS TO SAY ABOUT IT**

When you are sick, where do you go? Most likely, you go to a doctor, a hospital, or to the pharmacy for some medicine. If you have a more serious illness, you may visit a specialist for the latest advances in medicine. Whatever your situation is, chances are you don’t jump into the local pool with the hope of winning a miracle cure.

However, this is exactly what people did in ancient Jerusalem. An urban legend had developed about a pool near one of the entrances to the city. The pool was called “Bethesda,” which means “House of Mercy” in Hebrew, because sick people would seek God’s mercy through miraculous healing there. The legend said that an angel would appear and stir up the water. Whoever could jump into the rippling water first would receive God’s mercy and be miraculously healed!

This is where Jesus finds a man lying on a mat. Scripture doesn’t name his disability, but we do know his condition made it very difficult—maybe even impossible—to move. Each day for the past 38 years he had gone to this “miracle pool” only to be crowded out by others who want healing for themselves. When he tells Jesus his story, he’s quick to point out that no one has helped him reach the pool yet, as if that is the one thing standing between him and a healthy body.

Like so many of us, this man needed help, and in his desperation he was willing to do anything to obtain what he *thought* would cure him, like put his faith in an urban legend. But when faced with the one who could truly offer the healing his broken body *and* soul needed, he didn’t cry out, “Yes, please!” Instead, he offered excuses about why his plan wasn’t working.

**Read: John 5:1–13 | Discuss:**

- After waiting so long to be healed, how would you have responded if Jesus came to you and asked, “Do you want to be healed?”
- Have you ever refused someone’s help, even when you needed it? Why?
- Why do you think we tend to wait or make excuses when we need help from Jesus instead of directly asking for and receiving his help?
- Do you have a plan to “fix” a broken area of your life that just isn’t working? How can you actively seek Jesus’ help?

**Facilitator’s Note:** It is unclear whether this ancient urban legend developed because someone was actually healed at the pool of Bethesda or not. Regardless, it is worth pointing out how crowded this area was with people searching for healing—Scripture says “multitudes” were waiting. So often, like these people, we believe we know the cure for our troubles and try to obtain it on our own. The reality is that only Jesus can truly heal and make us whole.

## A SECOND LOOK

Have you ever driven by a billboard advertising the *Powerball* lottery? It’s a form of gambling where a player bets a few dollars to select 6 numbers, hoping they’ll match the numbers that get randomly drawn later that week. Usually the jackpot is in the millions, and the more drawings that happen without a match the more money goes into the jackpot.

Many people gamble with the dream that winning big will solve all their problems. Every once in a while, someone wins a *Powerball* jackpot, but you’re more likely to get struck by lightning. Plus nearly 70% of jackpot winners are broke within 7 years! Only a few lottery winners actually live happily ever after.

For instance, Jack Whittaker was already a millionaire when he won a \$315 million-dollar *Powerball* jackpot. Whittaker gave most of his money away to churches and Christian charities. He even started a foundation that provided food and clothes to low-income families. Yet he also made some poor choices that money couldn’t fix. These poor choices lead him down a path of much heartache, including his wife leaving him. Later, both Whittaker and his wife said that the money didn’t make their life better, and they wished they’d simply torn the ticket up.

What can we learn from the stories of lottery “winners” who end up losing everything? Most find that hitting the jackpot is actually a recipe for disaster; money can’t fix the sin that already exists in their hearts. What our human frailty leads us to think will solve our problems usually does not.

### Discuss:

- How does Whittaker’s story show that what we think will solve our problems often pales in comparison to what Jesus offers?
- Think of an area of life where you need Jesus’ intervention to fix what’s broken:
  - How are you waiting around like those at the pool of Bethesda instead of actively seeking Jesus’ help?
  - How are you putting your hope in earthly things instead of putting your hope in Christ’s mercy?

## APPLY IT

What is one thing you can do this week to identify an area where you need God’s intervention and then

## THINK ABOUT IT

“The irony is that while God doesn’t need us but still wants us, we desperately need God but don’t really want Him most of the time.” – Francis Chan

actively seek his help?

### Be specific:

What are you going to do?

When are you going to do it?

Is there someone who can keep you accountable?

**MEMORY VERSE** : John 5:6 (NIV)

### MARK OF A DISCIPLE

Disciples of Christ actively seek God’s intervention to heal their brokenness.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

*Illustration:* Steve Jobs, the co-founder of Apple, believed in asking for help. At the age of 12, he called Bill Hewlett (co-founder of the technology company Hewlett-Packard, better known as HP) asking if he could have any spare parts for a machine he was building. Hewlett was so impressed by this request for help that he offered Jobs a summer job—which he gladly accepted. Steve believed that asking for help from the right people was a key to success. He once said, “Most people never ask, and that’s what separates, sometimes, the people who do things from the people who just dream about them.”<sup>3</sup> Pre-teen Steve Jobs boldly asked for the help he *thought* he needed (spare parts) and was willing to accept the even greater offer when it came (a job). How does being willing to ask for help allow your students to receive what they truly need?

## PRAY TOGETHER TO CLOSE