

The Gospel of John

Believe and Live!

Lesson 6

John 5:1–47

“Do You Want to be Made Well?”

As peculiar as it may seem to any reasonable person, not everyone who lives with a debilitating problem wants the solution, and not everyone who suffers with a serious illness wants to be made whole. For some, their difficulty becomes a sort of comfort zone. Although they may complain outwardly, inwardly they don't really want things to change. Jesus proves this point in our text this week.

Making His way into Jerusalem, Jesus passes by a pool near the Sheep Gate, surrounded by five covered colonnades. It was here that the blind, lame, and paralyzed came daily to rest in the hope of being healed. (Note: verse 4 is believed to have been written by someone other than John and inserted at a later date to explain why the people came to this location.) The prevailing legend was that periodically an angel stirred the water and the first one to enter the pool after it was stirred would be healed.

At a glance ~ **Read John 5:1–15.**

The event in these opening verses of chapter three represents the third sign Jesus performed revealing His deity. This time the miracle is more public and it will serve to provoke the opposition of the religious leaders against Him. What facts stand out to you at first glance?

Jesus' increased popularity for His signs and wonders was about to stir up increased debate among the religious leaders in Jerusalem. They were not only in disagreement with Jesus' teachings, they would also begin to persecute Him with the intent to kill Him.

1. What do we know about the man Jesus singles out at the Pool of Bethesda?
vv. 5–7
 - a. What unusual question does Jesus pose to him?

- b. Obviously this man desired to be well, otherwise why position himself at the pool? Why do *you* think Jesus asks him such a personal probing question?

Could this man help himself? No! And not realizing who is speaking to him, he answers with a logical reason as to why he can't be made well. Notice he doesn't come to Jesus, rather Jesus comes to him in his need. Once the lame man's faith is connected to the power of Jesus, the healing is provided.

2. At the command of Jesus, how does the man respond in faith? vv. 8–9

There is no mention as to whether the man felt any physical manifestation of healing. Once he responded in obedience, strengthening and movement returned to the blood vessels, ligaments, nerves and muscles in his body. He was able to stand for the first time in thirty-eight years!

3. On what day of the week does this miraculous healing occur? Why was this a problem? vv. 9–10

4. Did this man at first know who had healed him? vv. 11–14

- a. Once Jesus had slipped away from the crowd, where did He find the healed man?

The law required that a person who had been healed present a thanksgiving offering at the temple.

- b. What admonition does Jesus share with this man? Notice the order of His instruction and the reason for it. With what does He begin?

In the case of this particular individual, a particular sin in which he engaged had caused his long-term illness. Jesus reminds him not to return to that sin or perhaps something worse might happen to him.

The religious leaders had added restrictions to the Jewish law—one of which prohibited anyone from lifting or carrying any kind of burden (such as a mat) on the Sabbath. Instead of rejoicing with this poor man over his healing, the leaders condemned him and Jesus for breaking the law. The one who received mercy and the One who gave it were now both the targets of those whose only desire was to enforce their self-imposed law.

The potential punishment for breaking the law was death by stoning. Jesus arrived at just the right moment to intervene and turn the attention off the healed man and onto Himself, as the man revealed who it was that had made him well (v.15). The religious leaders' response revealed the true motive of their hearts.

Picture it ~

We must note that not everyone's personal or physical suffering is the result of their sin, but the example in our chapter points to the fact that for some that is indeed the case. Imagine yourself beside the Pool at Bethesda that day . . . Jesus comes close to talk to *you*. What question would He ask, maybe something such as: *"Do you want to be healed of your illness—or your addiction—or your marriage relationship—or your emotional turmoil?"* What would it be in *your* particular case?

Can you honestly say that you are willing to take personal responsibility if He asks you to take it? Are you willing to commit to Him and do whatever it would take to change? Please share your thoughts (you need not share the personal details with your group).

Take a closer look ~ John 5:24

(Memorize and meditate on the memory verse each time you open your lesson.)

"Most assuredly I say to you, he who hears My Word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life."

What does this verse reveal to you about Jesus? Think about the words: *hears—believes—passed*, and the difference in your life because you have acted on your faith!

Jesus' Defense

Outlook ~ Read John 5:16–30.

With the miracle of healing beside the Pool of Bethesda, the circle of hostility widens around Jesus. From here on, it will continue growing until it culminates at the cross.

Even though he had broken the law, the religious leaders turned their attention away from the healed man and toward this new Teacher they determined to disprove.

1. For what reason do the Jewish leaders seek to destroy Jesus? vv. 16–18

a. Jesus ignores their threats and instead focuses on what? v. 17

By calling God His own Father, Jesus was making Himself equal with God. The penalty for blasphemy was death and these leaders wanted more than anything to kill Jesus. But He doesn't try to change their minds. He confronts their hostility by doing what He always did—carrying out the Father's will.

2. How was Jesus the living manifestation of His Father?

a. v. 19

b. v. 20

c. v. 21

d. v. 22

Jesus never chose to exercise His divine power for His own benefit. Whenever He displayed His power, it was on behalf of someone else and in order to glorify God. It was nothing for Jesus to heal a lame man; He would soon do "greater works" by raising a man from the dead. The Son who had proved His authority over Creation and physical illness and the Sabbath was equal in nature with God. He was in a loving relationship with the Father. Therefore, Jesus says in verse 23, *"All should honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him."*

3. What marvelous promise does Jesus make in verse 24?

4. How does Jesus claim to have resurrection power?

a. v. 25

b. v. 26

c. v. 27

In placing Himself under the Father's will, Jesus looked to Him for everything—including the authority to give life. Jesus understands our need, our condition, and our circumstances. He knows how we feel, He suffered as we do. He was tempted in every aspect we are tempted, yet He remained without sin. Therefore, the Father has granted—or given—the privilege and power of eternal life to those who believe in His Son.

We can only imagine the astonished looks on the faces of Jesus' listeners at this point and yet, He tells them not to marvel or be amazed. There is yet another incredible hour that is coming when the graves of everyone will be opened and the cemeteries emptied! Everyone will hear His voice and rise up to be judged (v. 28).

5. What will happen to those who have "done good"? v. 29

Only those who have God's life indwelling them through the Holy Spirit are able to *do good* in God's eyes. These are those who have heard His voice and obeyed His Word. Those who have "done evil" are they who have refused the Truth, denied Christ, and turned their backs on God.

a. What will happen to those who have "done evil"? v. 29

6. What makes Jesus fair in His final judgment? v. 30

The Fourfold Witness Regarding Jesus

Outlook ~ Read John 5:31–47.

The healing of the paralytic created a crisis point for the man who rejoiced at his healing but broke the law, for the Jews that were stirred up to hatred toward Jesus, and for Jesus who now would stand to vindicate Himself.

Jesus did not need the affirmation of anyone. He would speak in His own defense, beginning with the admission that if His testimony were to stand on His word alone, it would not be enough to refute His accusers. He cited the Old Testament requirements of providing the testimony of two or three witnesses (Numbers 35:30; Deuteronomy 17:6) before a testimony would be accepted as true. Jesus met that requirement by introducing testimony from four trustworthy witnesses as to His true identity.

1. With what remark about the Father does Jesus begin in verse 32?

2. What does Jesus say about the next witness to give testimony? vv. 33–35

3. What is the third witness and what do we learn from this testimony? v. 36

4. In verses 37–47, Jesus reintroduces the Father's witness and that of what other?
 - a. What further insight do you gain about this last witness from Hebrews 4:12–13.

The Scriptures the Jews quoted to defend themselves and accuse their offenders would one day bear witness against them. They could quote them but they didn't know the One who wrote them. To know verses in the mind does not necessarily imply they are also hidden in the heart. Jesus Christ—the One sent from the Father—is the living testimony of the Father and the Scriptures bear witness of Him!

In focus ~ (Key words) **witness** and **testify**

Looking at verses 31–40, note how any times John uses the words *witness* and *testify*. Both come from the Greek word *martureo*, as does the English word *martyr*. John uses these words in this chapter to emphasize the unity of the Father and Son and the issue of eternity that is answered by our faith in the Son. Using the resources you have on hand (Bible translations, dictionary, concordance), write a definition.

witness: _____

testify: _____

Selah ~

It's impossible to overstate the importance of *your* witness and testimony for the Lord Jesus Christ. What important facts should you keep in mind as you share Him with others?

2 Timothy 1:8 _____

1 Peter 3:15–16 _____

More like Jesus ~

Are *you* becoming more like Jesus? Absolutely! Every time you open the Word and spend time getting to know Him more intimately, you partake in the life-long process of drawing near—going deeper—bearing fruit—becoming more like Him. As you close your lesson today, determine to put into practice what you've learned by noting it below.

- Recite your memory verse _____

- Reflect on a lesson you received _____

- Respond with prayer and praise to God _____

Notes