

THE GOSPEL OF

JOHN

Healed at
The Pool

INTRODUCTION

John 5:1-18

There are billions of people around the world seeking salvation through religions that cannot save anyone. With sadness in my heart, I've watched Buddhists in Asia offering sacrifices, spinning prayer wheels, and going through other religious rituals in the hopes of attaining Nirvana. We have quasi-Buddhists in Flagstaff who fly prayer flags in the hopes that it will bring them good karma. I've seen Hindu holy men at the temple in Kathmandu who think that by looking weird and meditating every day, they will gain salvation.

...the Bible is clear that religion is impotent to save anyone. By religion, I mean any humanly devised system of belief that teaches that by keeping their rules, rituals, and requirements, a person can gain eternal life. Jesus consistently confronted the Jewish religious leaders of His day, even though they claimed to be following the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. They thought that by adhering to the Law of Moses, they could commend themselves to God. Over the centuries, they had added to that Law many of their own traditions. But Jesus deliberately confronted these religious leaders. Eventually, they were the ones who put Him to death...

[The Jewish leaders] had taken the Sabbath stipulation not to carry any burden on the Sabbath (Jer. 17:21-22) so far as to say that you could not carry a handkerchief from one room to the next. But to get around this rule, if you tied it on, then you could wear it into the next room! Jesus could have told this healed man not to do anything that would violate these Jewish traditions, but He did not. He told him to pick up his mat and carry it...

While religion is impotent to save, Jesus is mighty to save...

So while I do not believe that this healed man believed in Jesus and was saved spiritually, I do think that this miracle illustrates Christ's power to save, as contrasted with the impotence of religion to save anyone. And so I hope that you understand that coming to church, serving the church, being baptized, taking communion, or any other religious activities can never forgive your sins or gain you eternal life. But Christ is powerful to save you and will save you instantly if you will believe in Him.¹

¹ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-26-impotence-religion-power-christ-john-51-16>

OPEN IT

1. What's the longest you've ever stayed in a hospital? Do you remember how you felt when you were able to leave?

READ IT

John 5:1-18

EXPLORE IT

2. Who all does Jesus come across at the pool?
3. What does Jesus ask the sick man?
4. Why were the Jewish leaders persecuting Jesus?
5. What claim did Jesus make about who He is?

APPLY IT

“When Jesus Saw Him”

The further we move into John’s Gospel, the wider he draws open the curtains on Jesus’ identity and mission. His miracles grow bigger and his words grow bolder—all revealing Jesus to be the Messiah, the Son of God—even God the Son.

Isaiah envisioned the age of the Messiah in terms of a new exodus. The blind will see, the deaf will hear, the lame will leap, and the desert sand will become a pool of refreshing water (Isa. 35:1–10). The healing of the invalid by the pool of Bethesda is another declaration that the eschatological era of the Messiah has dawned—the “last days” of God’s final, earthly revelation of his grace have begun (Heb. 1:2; Acts 2:17). In Jesus, the kingdom of God has come near (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Mark 1:15).²

6. We’re hearing so much these days about new developments and data in medicine, but how would you feel if you had severe physical limitations in an era with no cure available? What would you do?

7. What three actions (verbs) does Jesus take toward the man in verse 6? What does Jesus’ conversation with the invalid man tell us about God’s interest in our physical well-being?

² ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible: Christ in All of Scripture, Grace for All of Life: English Standard Version. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. Print.

“Do you want to be healed?”

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 be healed?” 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.³

8. We all face ongoing challenges and disappointments in one form or another. What is something in your life that you’ve been frustrated with for years, but never truly brought before God for help or healing?

9. Why do we often try to solve our problems with man-made solutions before turning to God? What place does strategy and human effort have in solving our own problems?

³ Hughes, R. Kent. *John: That You May Believe*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2014. Print.

“That Day Was the Sabbath”

The fact that Jesus healed the lame man on the Sabbath is both intentional and significant. Jesus has authority over Israel’s Sabbath, for he is the Lord of the Sabbath (Luke 6:1–11; Mark 2:23–28). The Jerusalem temple had become a house of commercial business (John 2:16), but God meant it to be a “house of mercy” (the meaning of “Bethesda”; 5:2). Only through Jesus can we find God’s mercy and grace, and enter into true Sabbath rest (Heb. 4:1–10)—ceasing from our futile efforts to save ourselves, as we trust in Jesus’ perfect work on our behalf.⁴

10. What is one area of life you need to be reminded that Jesus has authority over? Are there any passages of scripture that can help remind you of Jesus’ authority in that area?

11. What is an area of obedience in which it’s easier for you to follow the letter of the law (legalism) rather than the spirit of it (God’s real intent)? How does that approach harm us?

12. Before he even knew Jesus’ name, the man described Jesus as, “The man who healed me....” Think back to God’s work in your life since you trusted Jesus as your Savior. What is one way God has brought healing in your life? If you haven’t trusted Jesus yet, what is an area in which you would like healing?

⁴ ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible: Christ in All of Scripture, Grace for All of Life: English Standard Version. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2019. Print.

“Sin No More”

[Jesus] warns him that, if he turns away, and mocks this gift, or makes an idol out of his health, and embraces sin as his way of life, he will perish. I take that — final judgment — to be the “worse thing” (in verse 14) that will happen because there aren’t many natural things worse than the thirty-eight years this man endured, and because in verses 28–29, Jesus says, “An hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.”

In other words: “I have healed you that you may be holy, that you may stop doing evil, and that you may not rise to the resurrection of judgment, but to the resurrection of life. I have pointed you to myself as a life-giver. I heal in more ways than one. Don’t turn from me to a life of sin.”⁵

13. We can see the compassion of Jesus since He healed the man’s body. How does Jesus’ call to repentance show His compassion on a deeper level?

14. We don’t know if the healed man repented of his sin, but he did tell the story about how his encounter with Jesus changed his life. What is one way Jesus has saved your life?

15. As Christians called to a life of holiness, how do we live out Jesus’ command to “Sin no more?” If we can’t live up to this standard of perfection, what does that say about our need for God every single day?

⁵ Piper, John. “Healed for the Sake of Holiness.” *Desiring God*. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/healed-for-the-sake-of-holiness>

“Making Himself Equal with God”

What is he saying? I think something like this. My Father and I created a perfect world, a paradise, and then we rested, not that we were tired, but stepped back as it were to enjoy the perfect display of our own glory revealed in our creative handiwork. That is what Sabbath is for—the restful, focused, enjoyment of God.

But then sin entered the world, and through sin came sickness and calamity and death. And from that moment, my Father and I have been working again. We have been working—in many ways that you don’t understand—to restore a Sabbath paradise to the universe. We have been working to overcome sin and sickness and death.

Even your own law, which contains the Sabbath command, was part of our working to conquer sin and hold back the miseries of unrighteousness and point you forward to a Messiah, a Savior, who would come and perform the decisive acts of restoration and transformation toward the new heavens and the new earth.

When I heal a man, and intentionally do it on the Sabbath, I am showing you something about myself. What was happening at the pool of Bethesda was that my Father and I were revealing the world that is coming. It is a world in which there will be no sickness and a world in which there will be no sin. “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”⁶

16. We’ve used the word “homoousios” since the Council of Nicaea in AD 325 to affirm that Jesus, God the Father, and the Holy Spirit are separate persons, but of the same substance. Why is it so important to hold to this doctrine that Jesus Himself proclaimed?

17. As we look forward to the eternal rest we will experience in Heaven, how does this miracle illustrate the healing and rest we will experience with God forever”

18. What does God’s gift of a weekly Sabbath look like in your household? If you need to grow in this area, what are some things that could help you experience the “restful, focused, enjoyment of God?”

⁶ Piper, John. “Jesus: Equal with God.” *Desiring God*. <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/jesus-equal-with-god>
This study was compiled and questions were written by Pastor David Wood (Aurora Campus) —www.villagebible.church/smallgroup