



## John (So That You Might Believe) (Week 4/12) Healing Paralysed Man

### Small Group Discussion Questions

**Connect:** *What is one area where you might be tempted to demand Jesus “come down”, and what might it look like to “Go” trusting in Jesus himself this week?*

#### Warm-Up

1. What are the ‘too-good-to-be-true’ offers that we commonly receive? Why are we *rightly* wary?
2. What gives you confidence about the reliability—and the claims—of the New Testament?

#### Read John 5:1-8

3. What are we told about the Pool of Bethesda? What power did people believe it held?
4. In our world today, what are the empty powers in which we can be tempted to place our hope?
5. What was the condition of the man in focus? How helpless and desperate would he have been?
6. When you hear of the man’s helplessness, how do you feel? How do you feel when you see people in similar situations today?
7. What does Jesus first ask the man? How would you respond if someone asked you that?
8. How does the man respond? What does he think Jesus can do for him?
9. Do you ever look to Jesus as merely a “means to an end” rather than him being our ultimate end?
10. When Jesus asks the man if he wants to be healed, how does this give insight into Jesus’ heart?
11. How are we like the man? *Do you think we’re ever blind to how desperate our situation is (without Jesus)?*
12. What is surprising about Jesus’ command in v.8? What does it show about the grace (gift) of Jesus?
13. Did the man recognise who Jesus is after being healed? What does this tell us about the relationship between receiving God’s gifts and knowing the grace of God?
14. Why does obedience follow belief? Why is this such good news? *Do you ask God to help you live this out?*

#### Read John 5:9-18

15. How do the leaders respond to the healing? How is it evident that they are interested more in rule-breaking rather than restoration? *What really incites them to persecute and seek to kill Jesus?*
16. When it comes to Jesus’ response regarding the Sabbath, why is his claim so significant?
17. When did Jesus finish his work that opened the door to new creation for us?
18. What is the greatest healing that Jesus offers to every person? What does it require?
19. In what ways is Jesus’ invitation to us the best offer imaginable?

**Apply** *In what parts of your life do you need to continue to change in response to the grace you have received? How could you ask God to help you in his strength?*

**Pray** *Gracious Father, thank you that Jesus brings life and healing. Help us to see the authority he has, and respond willingly to all he says and commands. Amen.*

# GOING DEEPER

## **John (So That You Might Believe) (Week 4/12) Healing Paralysed Man**

Small Group Discussion Questions

### **On Your Front Line this Week**

*What would it look like to reflect the gentleness of Jesus on your frontline?*

### **For Families**

- *Download:* some of the family resources to use at home: [stbartskids.org](http://stbartskids.org)

### **Listen, Watch, and Read**

- *Listen (sermon):* “The Pool” by Tim Keller:  
<https://gospelinlife.com/sermon/the-pool/>
- *Listen (sermon):* “Jesus Meets a Paralytic” by Rico Tice:  
[https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show\\_media=52375&show\\_file=55923](https://www.allsouls.org/Media/AllMedia.aspx?show_media=52375&show_file=55923)
- *Listen (sermon):* “Healed for the Sake of Holiness” by John Piper:  
<https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/healed-for-the-sake-of-holiness>
- *Read (devotional article):* “Healing at Bethesda” by Ligonier Ministries:  
<https://learn.ligonier.org/devotionals/healing-bethesda>

### **Series Resources**

- *Read:* “John: An Expository Commentary” by R C Sproul.
- *Read:* “The Gospel According to John” by Don Carson.
- *Read:* “The Message of John” by Bruce Milne. 
- *Read:* “The Gospel According to John” by Leon Morris.
- *Read:* “John for Everyone: Part 1” by Tom Wright. 
- *Read:* “Can We Trust the Gospels?” by Peter Williams. 
- *Read:* “Signs of the Messiah: An Introduction to John’s Gospel” by Andreas Köstenberger
- *Watch:* “John” by the Bible Project: <https://bibleproject.com/guides/book-of-john/>
- *Previous Series* from St Bart’s (including Children’s Resources):  
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/jesus-is>  
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/i-am>  
<https://www.stbarts.com.au/sermon-series/truth-glory>

 Available to borrow from the St Bart’s Library (Toowoomba): [stbarts.com.au/library](http://stbarts.com.au/library)

For sermons and additional resources, visit [stbarts.com.au](http://stbarts.com.au)

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## JOHN (SO THAT YOU MIGHT BELIEVE)

*Week 4/12 “Healing Paralysed Man”  
by the Rev’d Adam Lowe (22/02/2026)*

중풍병자를 고치시다 | 耶穌醫治癱瘓病人  
வியாதியஸ்தனை சுகமாக்கினார்

*Bible Passage: John 5:1-18*

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*Heavenly Father, please help us to recognise who Jesus is,  
and to respond by believing in him. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.*

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This term, in the lead up to Easter,  
*we’re considering the various signs of Jesus recorded in the Gospel of John.*

- The way that we are approaching that—our method—is not our own:  
We are coming to each of the signs with the purpose that John had in mind.
- *These signs are recorded to show us who Jesus really is, SO THAT we would believe in him.*
- We’re not meant to just stop and marvel at the wonder of the sign... [imagine that!]  
The signs are there to help us look to Jesus and believe in him.
- That’s the point!

*Yet, ironically, this third sign of the paralysed man being healed has had the opposite effect for some!*

- Instead of *belief* it has caused *disbelief*. /
- In the mid 19th century, there were quite a few commentators who said, look,  
you can’t rely on the claims made in the New Testament because it’s encounters like this,  
which prove how historically unreliable—*inaccurate*—it is.
- They said, there’s no evidence that this pool ever existed.  
And John must have been written much later on, *because not only did this pool never exist,*  
but he’s clearly got no clue of what buildings were like at this time, because:  
we don’t know of *any other examples of a pool with 5 sides and 5 covered areas.*
- It’s not just, “*tell John that he’s dreaming*”,  
but they’re saying, you can’t treat any of this as historically reliable. /

- Maybe you have felt like that at times. You're not sure what you can believe. Or perhaps you've already decided that none of it is believable. /
- Many people thought: the commentators are right. *This doesn't stack up, it's not credible.* / Until 1888 when an archaeological dig discovered the site of a pool. /
- A pool rectangular in shape. With a portico on each of four sides. But it was also divided in half, *with a portico in the middle.*
- It took more than a century for archaeologists to confirm the find. But here it was, with 1-2-3-4-5 colonnades, *just as John had described.*

*Now, I'm telling you this, not because I think it's a slam dunk case for the historicity of the NT; but because it challenges us: that no matter what you think about Jesus—even if you have written Christianity off as untrue and irrelevant—that if you are willing to take another look with—an open mind and an open heart, you might be surprised about the truth of who Jesus is, along with the invitation he offers.*

So let's do that today. What does this sign show us about Jesus?

- We see:
- **The Heart of Jesus;**  
**The Grace of Jesus;** *and*  
**The Response to Jesus.**

## THE HEART OF JESUS | VERSES 1-6

예수님의 마음 | 耶穌的心腸 | இயேசுவின் இதயம்

First, *we see* the **heart of Jesus**. *Chapter 5, verse 1.*

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<sup>1</sup> Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. <sup>2</sup> Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. <sup>3</sup> Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. [ 4 ] <sup>5</sup> One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. <sup>6</sup> When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

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This pool — *the pool of Bethesda* — *is not to be confused with the Pool of Siloam mentioned in c. 9.*

- And what makes it really interesting is the healing power some believed it had. There was a superstition at the time that when the water was stirred up in the pool — *we don't really know what caused the water to bubble up,* that if you were the first to get in *at that moment—THEN—you would be healed.*
- In your Bible you might notice verse 4 is missing, or it might have brackets around it: *that's because that verse doesn't actually appear in the earliest of manuscripts.*
- The verse describes an angel of the Lord coming down and stirring the water. It's not an endorsement that this was happening, but it's like a later margin comment, to tell the reader that this is what was popular belief at the time.

- So, long story short, *it's no wonder that there were a great number of disabled people there.*
- The blind, the lame, and the paralysed.  
Lying there in wait — that's what the porticos were for — for who knows how long...  
To make their move, and scramble as best you could, into the water first when it changed./
- Can you imagine when the water stirred, how chaotic it must have been? *As all of these desperate people scrambling at the same time as they clinged onto the hope for healing.*

One of the people there — who *Jesus sees* — has been an invalid for thirty-eight years.

*We don't know* the precise nature of his disability, just likely he's *at least* paralysed.

*We don't know* how old he is or how long he's been there waiting.

*We don't know* if he was born with the disability or if it is the result of an accident. BUT:

- He likely has no work.  
He would have been excluded socially and religiously.
- There was no social security. No NDIS. No health care nor hospitals.  
We think waiting lists for surgery or emergency can be long,  
but in the ancient world his situation is dire.
- And his condition is likely permanent. /
- Some commentators have noted the parallel between the man being disabled for 38 years,  
*and the reference in Deuteronomy 2 of God's people wandering in the wilderness for 38 years.*
- At the point when they were on the edges of the promised land but could not enter.

- In a way that's what it is like for this man. He's in the wilderness.  
He's been waiting on the edges and entering this pool is the only hope he's got.
- Or at least he thought.

Because it's right into the thick of this circumstance,  
that a stranger, Jesus, singles him out, and says to him, "do you want to get well?"

- How would you respond to that?  
What sort of question is that? Do I want to get well?  
What do you reckon Jesus: of course I want to get well!
- *Sometimes today when people ask a question like that it's really just a thinly veiled way of saying, if you were serious about getting well then you do something about your situation.*
- Maybe that's what people thought about the man. Or maybe they just didn't care.
- *But* this isn't just a wildly insensitive question.
- Look at how the man responds. *Verse 7...*

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"Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me."

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The man is not offended by the offer of help.

- He's got no one.

- And every time the water is stirred, everyone else who is desperate, scrambles in first.
- But Jesus SEES him. Jesus goes to him. Jesus offers help. *No wonder the man is not offended.*
- Yeah, Jesus, *I would like help.* / How do we respond to Jesus' invitation to us? //
- The man is grateful, but he thinks that Jesus is just a means to an end.  
He wants Jesus to help him get his salvation by assisting him into the pool.  
But he hasn't yet realised that Jesus is the very source of salvation. /
- We can treat Jesus like that, too, of course sometimes.  
We can kind of treat him like a middle man, to get what we want. The outcome we desire.  
But what we really need is him. /
- Sometimes we just don't like accepting help.  
Other times the offer of salvation offends us, because it means admitting:  
that we are sinners in need of saving AND we can't possibly save ourselves.
- In an ultimate way, we're all in need of healing that is out of reach on our own.
- Can you see: there's a spiritual parallel for us with the man's situation.
- Jesus has seen the desperate situation that we are in,  
putting our hope in all sorts of things, and he calls us to put our *hope in him.* /
- I love, that even though the man doesn't really know what Jesus is offering,  
he basically says, 'yes'. // He's hoping for help to access the power of the pool,  
but the one who is all-powerful is offering ultimate hope in him.

## THE GRACE OF JESUS | VERSES 7-8

예수님의 은혜 | 耶穌的恩典 | இயேசுவின் கிருபை

That's the heart of Jesus. Second, we see the **grace of Jesus**. *Verse 8...*

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Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." 9 **At once the man was cured;**  
he picked up his mat and walked.

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In this entire encounter, Jesus says only three things:

- Do you want to get well? /  
Get up! Pick up your mat and walk. /  
See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you. /
- **It's incredibly understated.** / It is just the raw power of Jesus at work through his word. //  
*There's no fanfare. No dramatic display. No magical water is needed.*  
*There's no profession of faith. The man doesn't even know who Jesus is. Nor where he goes.*
- The man is just left standing there after he's stood on Jesus' word.
- It's important to note that when Jesus finds him later and tells him to stop sinning,  
*verse 14*, it doesn't necessarily mean that his disability had been caused by his *own* sin.  
*Nor does it mean that everything bad we experience is caused directly by our own sin.*
- But Jesus is pointing out to the man—and to us—that the *worst thing* that can happen to us,  
is not the pain and the brokenness we experience. But our biggest problem is our sin.

- Jesus isn't diminishing the pain that we feel. The problems that we endure. The brokenness of our world and our own lives that we know.
- But he's showing us that he has come to address our ultimate problem. /
- Why did Jesus only heal this man?  
Why didn't Jesus heal every person who was afflicted with something?
- I don't know. But I do know that he came to save us from our ultimate affliction. /
- Maybe there's something right now that you long to be healed from?  
Perhaps there's something in your life that you desperately want resolved?  
Or even good longings that you keep praying will be fulfilled?
- I can't provide an answer as to why some people are healed and some are not.  
But what I do know for sure is that by going to the cross and rising again, Jesus has faced the worst possible thing we could face: the penalty for our sin, and he has endured it for us. He's poured out his grace freely to us, at great cost to him. /
- As Jesus says to the man, stop sinning, he's beckoning him, calling him to repent.
- Jesus isn't just the source of hope. He's the judge of the world.

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The name of this pool means something like the pool of mercy, or the pool of grace. But here is the ultimate source of grace, standing before the man, standing before us. And the way we plumb the depths of his grace is simply by believing in him.

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Did you notice the order of things that happened? *Jesus didn't go up to the man, and say, "mate". Get your life sorted. Stop sinning. Live the perfect life and then come to me.*

- No, Jesus saw him. Went to him. Healed him. *And then called him to a life of obedience.*
- The man didn't even know who Jesus was. Or where he went.  
John says: he had no idea who it was — Jesus was simply the man who had made him well. It's only later that he has a name: Jesus made me well. / **That's grace.**
- Jesus saw us. Jesus came to us. *Jesus died for us before we asked. Even before we knew his name! He invites us to come to him and repent, not when we've got it all in order, but right now.*
- Tim Keller put it like this. *"Religion says I obey [and only then] I am accepted".*
- But the Gospel of grace says: *"I am accepted therefore I obey". // Do you know what that means?*
- **It means that if you have not yet believed in Jesus:**  
you don't need to wait until you think you're worthy. You never will be. All you need to do is recognise the one who has already seen you, and cry out, "Lord have mercy."
- **But it also means, that if you do believe in Jesus:**  
we need to seek *in his strength* to obey in response to the grace we've received.  
When you become a Christian, we've got to keep putting away sin.  
Not because our salvation is dependent on it, but as fruit that we have been saved.  
Each day we've got to keep getting up, in his strength, by his power, standing on his word.
- We pray, *Lord, please help me to change in response to the grace—your grace—I have received.*

## THE RESPONSE TO JESUS | VERSES 9-16

예수님께 반응하기 | 对耶稣的回应 | இயேசுவிற்கு நமது பதில்

Finally, we see the **response to Jesus**. Verse 9...

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9 At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, 10 and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, "It is the **Sabbath**; the law forbids you to carry your mat." 11 But he replied, "The man who made me well said to me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'" 12 So they asked him, "Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?"

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With some of the other signs in John's Gospel we see *how to respond to Jesus, to believe in him*. With the religious leaders *here* we witness how NOT to respond.

- John doesn't fill us in on whether the man believed in Jesus, *only that he had learnt his name!*
- But we're left without a doubt in how the Jewish leaders responded.
- As they witnessed a man who had been disabled for 38 years healed, they're outraged because he's carrying his mat on the sabbath.
- Um, guys — are you serious?! He is carrying his mat. He's walking!
- The very thing which is source of consternation for you, *should be the cause of celebration.* /
- At first, they are cross with the healed mat carrier! / How dare he!
- *(The teachers had come up with 39 categories of work that they considered unlawful on the Sabbath.)*

- But when they learn that someone else told him to pick up his mate, their attention shifts to the one who told him — in their eyes — to break the law.
- They're blind to what has really happened here. Maybe they didn't know at first that he had been healed. But even when they do know: *the man who made me well told me to pick up my mate and walk, they're deaf to the miracle and zero in on whoever this person is causing others to break the law.*
- They're more concerned with **rule-breaking** rather than **restoration**. They want to track Jesus down to **reprimand** him, when they should **revere** him as Lord.

However, the clearer the claims of Jesus come into focus, the more hardened and defiant the religious folk become. Verse 16...

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16 So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to **persecute him**. 17 In his defense Jesus said to them, "My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working." 18 For this reason **they tried all the more to kill him**; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

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- *They began to persecute Jesus. / They tried all the more to kill Jesus.*
- And there's no doubt why. It's because they knew that Jesus was claiming to be God. /
- *The rabbis taught that the only person who could work on the Sabbath and not sin, is God. God kept on working because he didn't need to rest and was continuously sustaining the universe.*

- When God rested on the seventh, it wasn't because he needed to.  
His work of creation was done — and invited us into the pattern of rest and rest in him.
- Not only is Jesus claiming to be God,  
but he's showing them that he's at work in order to provide us with the ultimate rest.
- The only reason we can rest assured that our eternity is secure,  
is because of Jesus' work on the cross and in his resurrection. That it is finished.
- Hear again what Jesus says, *My Father is always at work to this very day, and I too am working.*
- They knew what Jesus was claiming.
- But legalism had so blinded their hearts,  
that they failed to recognise the good news of who had arrived,  
along with the invitation he brings. ///

You know, we receive too-good-to-be true offers all the time.

- I keep getting emails from a sub-Saharan prince offering me money if I just help him with a funds transfer. *And no one must take him up on the offer, because the emails keep arriving. /*
- When we hear an offer too-good-to-be-true,  
we're right to be wary.
- We're right to be sceptical.
- We don't want to be fooled or taken advantage of.

- But do you think that is the intent of Jesus?
- The one who sees you.  
The one who has come to us.  
The one who has poured out his grace...
- Before we recognised him, before we believed in him, even before we were born? /
- We're closer to the paralysed man than we might first imagine. /
- Most invitations that are too-good-to-be-true are exactly too-good-to-be-true.
- But not with Jesus.
- Do you want to keep clinging to pools of false hope,  
or do you want to get well?
- Not just from an illness but from the greatest problem that plagues humanity? From sin. /
- Do you want to get well?
- If you do, there's only one person to look to.  
There's only one person to believe in.
- If we are willing.
- *Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.*