

The Pool At Bethesda

John 5:1-15

MEMORY VERSE

JOHN 5:8-9a

Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked.

WHAT YOU WILL NEED:

Rope or twine and a sleeping bag or rolled blanket.

Chalk and chalkboard or butcher paper and a marker.

ATTENTION GRABBER!

Rise, Take Up Your Bed and Walk

Ask for a volunteer. Have him stand with his arms at his side and his legs together. Bind him from his shoulders to his ankles with a rope or twine, and then lay him down on the floor.

Give your volunteer the command to pick up his bed and walk (if you have tied him up properly he will not be able to do this).

Untie your volunteer and explain to the class that just like the man we will learn about today, we are completely unable to help ourselves or save ourselves from our condition. Only Jesus can help us. **Jesus brings healing and hope to a dying world.**

LESSON TIME!

Have you ever been in an impossible situation, helpless and without hope of ever seeing the circumstances change for the better? Our physical needs are obvious, but as we learn about the ministry of Jesus we find ourselves in great need spiritually.

We are sometimes so concerned about our bodies, how they feel and how they look, that we neglect our spiritual need for God to

heal our heart from sin. In our lesson today we will learn of a man who needed healing and hope in his life. In many ways we are like him because we have a desperate need for healing within our heart from sin. We will see that **Jesus brings healing and hope to a dying world.**

John 5:1

After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem."

Jesus resided in Galilee, but took time out from His ministry to attend a feast in Jerusalem. Jesus attended the feast of Passover, which was required of all Jewish men by law. The feast of Passover was instituted when the children of Israel left Egypt.

If you remember the story, the people were commanded to sacrifice a lamb and apply its blood over the doorposts of their homes. The Lord judged Egypt and the angel of death took the first born of the people of Egypt. But the angel of death passed over and spared all those who had the blood covering their door posts, symbolizing the way we are protected from eternal death because of our sins by the covering of Jesus' blood over our lives. So the feast of Passover was an important time to the Jews, but it also had some very vivid pictures of who Jesus was as the lamb of God. **Jesus brings healing and hope to a dying world.**

Though Jesus was the Son of God, He lived His life as a perfect example for us to follow. He fulfilled all of the commandments of the Law and obeyed God's word completely. So He observed the feasts as He was supposed to. He would certainly have many opportunities to minister to the needs of the people in Jerusalem.

How exciting it must have been for the people who had come to worship and learn God's word, to meet the Son of God in the temple. Perhaps by this time people were beginning to hear about

Jesus and all that He had done. Wherever Jesus went He would always bless others.

How very important it is for us to gather together in church to worship and be touched by God through His word (Hebrews 10:25). We can be encouraged and be an encouragement to others as we come together to worship and serve our Lord. If it was important to Jesus, it should also be important to us.

Get Me to the Church on Time

On the chalkboard draw an outline of a church or cut out the shape of a church on a large piece of butcher paper and pin it to the bulletin board.

Ask the children to give you reasons why it is important to attend church. Write their answers inside the church outline on the chalkboard with chalk or the bulletin board with a large marker.

Read Hebrews 10:24-25 to your class:

HEBREWS 10:24-25

And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works,

not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.

John 5:2-4

Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches.

In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind,

lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water.

For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.

Located north of the temple, the Pool of Bethesda had five porches filled with a multitude of sick, blind, lame and paralyzed people who hoped for healing in its waters. To the people, Bethesda meant the House of Mercy. It was here that the sick would have hope in someday becoming well again; this hope was all they had. As the pilgrims came to the Temple to worship, they would see this spectacle of despair in Bethesda, which reminded them of the sad spiritual plight of the world.

Verse four tells us that the people believed that an angel came down and stirred the water of the pool, and whoever got into the water first would be healed of their condition. We are not sure if this would actually happen or was just a superstition of the people. We do not see it mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. But certainly God could do anything. It does show the desperate situation that the people were in. When a person recognizes his

sickness and discovers his doom, he will earnestly seek a cure; he will do whatever he can to find healing, even if means living by a pool of water in the possible hope of a cure.

We must realize that our sinful condition is like a sickness because our sin separates us from God. God is holy and perfect; He cannot dwell with sin. Spiritually, we must be healed from sin within our heart. It is Jesus who brings us that hope because He completely removes our sins (Acts 22:16; 1 Corinthians 6:11). We can have a new start and a new life because **Jesus brings healing and hope to a dying world.**

John 5:5

Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years.

Many of us could not imagine the hopeless conditions of this man, who for 38 years suffered with this horrible sickness. The Apostle John did not say what kind of physical problem he had or if he was born this way. We know that he needed someone to help him move, so he was probably crippled or paralyzed. How awful!

This man had feelings, hopes and desires just like us. It was the simple things in life that he desired to do like walking, working, playing, or even going to worship in the temple on his own. Many of these things we take for granted. Think about it. If you were in this man's condition how would you get home from church today?

John 5:6

When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, "Do you want to be made well?"

Here we see the tender affection of Jesus for those who are sick and broken-hearted. Jesus recognizes the man's needs and immediately goes to help him. Jesus also knows our needs and will help us.

Jesus appropriately asked, "Do you want to be made well?" After 38 years, this man's problem had become a way of life. It's possible that no one had ever asked him that before, yet alone offered help to him. He had no hope of ever being healed and no ability to help himself. Jesus asks each one of us the same question. Do we want to be made well? As we mentioned above, we have the sickness of sin in our lives and Jesus desires to help us with that, but He won't force us to receive His forgiveness.

Unfortunately some people would rather live in a state of spiritual sickness and sin than to surrender to Jesus and let Him heal them. They would rather live a life of selfishness, ignoring Jesus and His desire to save them. Jesus had designed this question to focus the man's attention on Him. To get him to really think about his situation and receive the Lord's healing.

Sin, like this sickness, creates a great problem for us. Either we do not recognize our condition of sin (Isaiah 1:5-6; Luke 5:31), or we do not want to be cured, to be cleansed from our sins. People are often happy for a little while in their sin but eventually feel trapped by them. No matter how trapped we feel in the infirmities of our sin, Jesus can minister to our deepest needs, because **Jesus brings healing and hope to a dying world.**

John 5:7

The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

This man replied that he didn't lack the desire, but the means to be healed. He was without strength and without friends. Can you imagine the loneliness and despair this man experienced for 38 years? It was "every man for himself" as they competed for the waters at the moment they were stirred.

Proverbs 19:4 tells us, "Wealth holds many friends, but a poor man is separated from his friends." This man had nothing to offer anyone. There was no friend he could find to help him, but Jesus. If Jesus lives in us, then we need to follow His example and be a friend to others, expecting nothing in return. Proverbs 21:13 tells us, "He who shuts his ear to the poor, will also cry himself and not be answered."

John 5:8-9a

Jesus said to him, "Rise, take up your bed and walk." And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed and walked."

This was a strange thing to say to a crippled person, but only Jesus could do such a wonderful miracle. There was no need for the waters, only the loving mercy of Jesus. When we obey His command, God will work in and through His word.

Instantly, the man was healed and made whole. In obedience, the man picked up his mat and walked. In an instant, this man's world was changed. Muscles long shriveled because of not being used were completely restored. Isaiah prophesied that in the days of the Messiah the lame would "...leap like a deer..." (Isaiah 35:1-7). Jesus had shown His supernatural power as a sign to all that the Messiah had come.

John 5:9b-13

And that day was the Sabbath.

The Jews therefore said to him who was cured, "It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed."

He answered them, "He who made me well said to me, 'Take up your bed and walk.'"

Then they asked him, "Who is the Man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk'?"

But the one who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place.

Here is revealed the true heart of the religious leaders of that day. They didn't even care about the man or that He had been made well. Rather they only cared about a rule of theirs being broken. Jesus always went to the heart of the matter, while religious people only look at the outside, not really caring about people.

The Sabbath was a central issue in the conflicts between Jesus and His opponents (Mark 2:23, 3:4). Though the Mosaic Law required that work cease on the seventh day, the religious leaders added their own rules which were not of God. These human traditions often hid the divine intention in God's Law. God is always kind and merciful to people. Unfortunately some religious people are not. This man didn't think about the reaction of the religious leaders, he simply obeyed the words of Jesus.

We need to learn from this story not only to put our trust in Jesus, but also to care about other people. We should never be concerned about trying to live a life good enough to please God. We can't do it. But Jesus pleased God in all He did. We simply need to put our trust in Him. When we do He will change our hearts and help us to follow Him.

Ridiculous Rules

Write on the chalkboard a sensible rule like "Do not run in the classroom."

Tell your class that they can now help you come up with some ridiculous rules relating to the sensible rule like, "Tie your shoe laces together on Thursday," or "Walk hunched over on Wednesday," etc. Make a list on the chalkboard.

Explain to the class how the Pharisees added silly rules to God's law and then expected other to follow them.

The Jews were naturally interested in the name of the man who told the cripple to violate their rules. The Pharisees were more concerned with their rules than with people. Interestingly, this man didn't know who Jesus was. Jesus chose to heal the crippled man as an act of pure grace, to display the glory of God in him. Jesus came to die on a cross to save us from eternal punishment in hell, by His grace. Jesus wants everyone to believe in Him, because He offers salvation to all. **Jesus brings healing and hope to a dying world.**

JOHN 5:14-15

Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, "See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

The man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

Jesus later found the healed man in the temple area, which implies that Jesus came to him in order to speak to him. This time the man would receive a warning from Jesus. The warning was that his tragic life of 38 years as a cripple was no comparison to the doom of hell. Jesus was not just interested in healing this man's body, but in healing his soul from sin. This man's real problem was the crippling condition of sin in his heart. He needed to seek forgiveness and healing from his sins.

What a wonderful feeling of excitement and relief this man must have experienced from this miracle. To be freed from a body of crippling bondage. What a miracle! But he needed an even greater miracle, to have his sins forgiven. His healing was great, but he had to turn from his sins and seek God's forgiveness to be spiritually healed.

It's God's forgiveness that will ultimately be the greatest gift we will ever receive, for this is our greatest need. Hopefully this man

realized that **Jesus brings healing and hope to a dying world.** How about you? You can turn to Jesus today and allow Him to save you.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer asking for healing and hope from sin. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them opportunity to do so. Pray with those children as the others work on their scripture memorization worksheets.