

# Jesus Heals a Man at Bethesda

**SESSION IN A SENTENCE:** When the man who was disabled put aside his hopelessness and despair and trusted in Jesus, he was healed.

**BACKGROUND PASSAGE:** John 5

In the fall of 2017, Marine Corps veteran Rob Jones, who had lost both of his legs to a land mine in Afghanistan, ran thirty-one marathons (that's 874.2 miles) over thirty-one days in thirty-one different cities on prosthetic running blades. He ran to try to change the narrative of wounded veterans struggling to transition to civilian life. He ran to raise money for veterans' charities. He ran to inspire others, and he accomplished these goals. In every city, people showed up to run behind him, following in his steps.<sup>1</sup>



Why do the achievements of those with disabilities often inspire others to follow in their steps?

# Group Time

## Point 1: A hopeless condition leads to despair (John 5:2-7).

<sup>2</sup> Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. <sup>3</sup> In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. <sup>5</sup> One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. <sup>6</sup> When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, “Do you want to be healed?” <sup>7</sup> The sick man answered him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down before me.”

The scene in John 5 opens up with a disheartening picture: people with diseases and disabilities lying within sight of a pool of water. Many believed that when the water of the pool was stirred up, it had healing properties—but only for the first person into the pool. Out of the many people waiting for the movement of the water, Jesus singled out one hopeless man.



What are some areas of life in which people may feel helpless?

Jesus asked the man if he wanted to be well, and the man’s response revealed he was filled with despair. His only focus for healing was the pool, and he couldn’t get into the pool in time. Day after day, week after week, he saw other people beat him to it. On top of that, he had no one; he didn’t have one friend or kind passerby willing to wait by his side to help him into the pool. Being hurt, without hope, and alone is a recipe for despair. But Jesus is the ultimate healer; Jesus is the solution to our hopelessness and despair.



How do you see loneliness contribute to despair in the world?

## Point 2: A miraculous healing leads to obedience (John 5:8-15).

<sup>8</sup> Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.” <sup>9</sup> And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

<sup>10</sup> So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.” <sup>11</sup> But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’” <sup>12</sup> They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk?’”

<sup>13</sup> Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place. <sup>14</sup> Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.” <sup>15</sup> The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.

Jesus healed the man not by taking him down into the pool of supposed powers but by commanding him to get up and walk. There is power in the word of the Son of God, and when Jesus speaks, diseased and disabled bodies obey. Immediately the man obeyed Jesus’ command. The man didn’t get grace because he obeyed. Rather, he was given grace first and then was given the ability to obey in faith.



What happens to our obedience when we start trying to earn the grace God has already given to us in Jesus?

Jesus later found the man who had been healed and told him no longer to walk in sin. Jesus cared about the man’s whole being. Not only did the man need to be healed of his broken body, he needed to be healed of his broken desires. The ultimate purpose of the grace Jesus showed the man in healing him was so he might **walk in holiness**.



### Voices from Church History

“The divine Word is so mighty, powerful and strong in believers that the person (though not a godless person) has the ability to will and accomplish everything that the word commands one to will and to do. For the gospel is ever the power of God for the salvation of all who believe ... Yes, all things are now possible to the believer in him who gives strength, Christ Jesus.”<sup>2</sup>

—Balthasar Hubmaier  
(c. 1480-1528)

### Point 3: A hostile response leads to a bold claim (John 5:16-18).

<sup>16</sup> And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath. <sup>17</sup> But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”

<sup>18</sup> This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

Imagine the man’s joy in his every step as he walked for the first time in decades. But when he carried his mat into the presence of the Jews, all they saw was a man breaking the man-made Sabbath laws meant to keep people in compliance. After it was determined that Jesus healed the man and “incited” him to break their Sabbath laws, the Jews turned their fury onto Jesus. This incident sealed the Jews’ negative opinion of Jesus, and their persecution of Him would eventually lead Jesus to the cross.



What are some man-made rules that Christians should ignore?

First the Jews persecuted Jesus for His work, but they ramped up their efforts when they understood Jesus’ claim as to His person—He is equal with God. When Jesus called God “My Father,” He was implying, in part, the wonderful mystery of the Trinity. The Jews understood enough to know that Jesus’ claim would have been blasphemous if He were not equal to God, so they wanted to kill Him. But Jesus is indeed the Son of God, so they were rejecting the very One who made them and was sustaining them even as they rejected Him.

**God Is One in Three Persons:** While the Bible affirms that God is one (Mark 12:29; 1 Cor. 8:4-6), it also affirms that God exists as three Persons—Father, Son, and Spirit. Each Person of the Trinity is fully \_\_\_\_\_—the Father is God (John 6:27), the Son is God (Phil. 2), the Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4)—and each Person is \_\_\_\_\_ from the others (Matt. 11:27; John 10:30; 14:16). This perfect \_\_\_\_\_ within the three Persons of the Trinity is a first-order doctrine; departing from it is to \_\_\_\_\_ orthodox Christianity.




# Daily Study

## Day 1: Read John 5:1-7

Jesus approached the disabled man and asked a curious question: Do you want to get well? The answer seems obvious—of course, he wanted to get well! Why else would he be lying there at the side of a pool that offered the hope of healing? Why wouldn't the man want to get well? He didn't respond with sarcasm but perhaps with a hint of newfound hope that finally someone—Jesus—had come along, noticed him, and would help him get in the water when it was time. Here he was, gazing longingly at the pool when the One who could make him whole stood right in front of him.

We can fixate on things that promise to bring wholeness to our lives. We may even try to get Jesus—or use Him—to help us achieve those things. Yet Jesus always stands in front of us and asks the same question: Do you want to get well? Well, do you, or do you want to remain where you are, longing for things that won't satisfy?

 What are those things in your life that distract you from the Savior and Healer who calls to you even now? Confess and repent of them now.



### Voices from Church History

“When Christ came up to Jerusalem, he visited not the palaces, but the hospitals; which is an instance of his humility and condescension, and tender compassion; and an indication of his great design in coming into the world, which was to seek and save the sick and wounded.”<sup>4</sup>

—Matthew Henry (1662-1714)

## Day 2: Read John 5:8-15

By and large, most Jews were sticklers for keeping the Sabbath. It was a key command from the Lord (on par with circumcision) for keeping the Jews separate from the pagan peoples who surrounded them. The Pharisees and teachers of the law through the generations had drawn out a lengthy list of what constituted as “work” so they wouldn’t break God’s law and work on the Sabbath. However, their lengthy list mostly included human-invented regulations that exceeded the intent of God’s law in the first place, such as carrying a mat from one place to another.

So when the Jews saw the healed man walking with his mat, they would have been infuriated, and then even more so upon finding out that someone had told him to carry his mat! But they missed the miraculous forest for their human-centered trees. They missed that their promised Sabbath rest with healing in His wings had come in the flesh in Jesus.



What are some laws or expectations that you are living up to in your own strength instead of obeying Jesus’ commands by faith?

## Day 3: Read John 5:16-23

“What do you do with Jesus?” It is easy in the world today, maybe even expected to a degree, to believe in God, or a god. Some people are atheists, but most people hold some form of religious belief structure in which God or a higher power figures prominently. So, when talking to most people about matters of faith, most will probably say they believe in God and that things are good between them.

But what if you asked these same people, “What do you do with Jesus?” You may get any of the following responses: “He was a great man”; “He was a good teacher”; “He was a martyr for His message of love and grace”; “He was a crazy man”; “He was the figment of some people’s imagination”; “He is the Son of God, the Savior of the world.” According to Jesus Himself, what you do with Jesus is what you do with God. In other words, Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father except through faith in Jesus (John 14:6).



How should Jesus’ words in this passage affect the way you speak with people about God, matters of faith, and Jesus, in particular, as you share the gospel?

## Day 4: Read John 5:24-30

Did Jesus preach the gospel—salvation by grace—or a salvation by works? If we just take His words in verses 28-29, we easily could come to the conclusion that Jesus determines our future state in eternity based on our good or wicked deeds. But we must remember to read these verses in context, which includes the surrounding passage but also the entire Gospel of John, and even the entire Bible.

In the immediate context, verse 24 connects eternal life with hearing the word of Jesus and believing in the God who sent Jesus. Salvation comes by faith, just as the gospel proclaims. In the larger context of John's Gospel, Jesus answers a question posed to Him about how people can do the works of God. His answer: "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent" (John 6:29). In other words, the work of God that we must do is believe in Jesus. Works are important, but the whole of Scripture shows that good works flow out of the work of God in a heart of faith (John 3:21).



What role do good works have in your life: Are they efforts to earn God's approval or an overflow of your heart of faith? How will you know the difference?

## Day 5: Read John 5:31-47

Jesus boldly confronted the people who wanted to kill Him because of His claims about being the Son of God. He minced no words about His identity, His unity with the Father, and His centrality in the work of salvation, eternal life, and resurrection. Yet He didn't berate His accusers. Instead, He let the Scriptures speak and indict them for their unbelief.

The Scriptures Jesus spoke of were not the New Testament but the Old Testament. He declared without hesitation that the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings testified about His person and His work (v. 39). Eternal life is not found in the Scriptures apart from their testimony to the Giver of eternal life—Jesus. Furthermore, Moses was the most influential figure of the Hebrew Scriptures; he was God's prophet to deliver the Israelites from the Egyptians and the mediator of the law of God to the people. But for all his greatness, he too pointed to the One greater than himself (v. 46; see Deut. 18:15-19).



How do Jesus' words challenge your understanding and perspective regarding the Old Testament?





*The Gospel Project®*  
Adult Daily Discipleship Guide ESV  
Volume 8, Number 4 Summer 2020

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Printed in the United States of America

*The Gospel Project®: Adult Daily Discipleship  
Guide* ESV (ISSN 2330-9393; Item 005573553)  
is published quarterly by LifeWay Christian  
Resources, One LifeWay Plaza, Nashville, TN  
37234, Ben Mandrell, President. © 2020 LifeWay  
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### Brian Dembowczyk

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Answers to Learn Truth*

Jesus was born to die—a jarring statement  
indeed, but one that is quite true.

Christmas and Easter are fused together,  
linked hand-in-hand in such a way that each is dependent on  
the other for its meaning. The theology of such a statement is  
solid but incomplete, for Jesus was not born to die immediately  
but rather some thirty years later. Jesus' life, then, was not  
utilitarian—existing just so it could be taken away and picked  
up again—it had greater meaning and purpose. What Jesus  
did during those thirty years of walking the earth mattered; He  
lived a life of perfect obedience to the Father. He satisfied the  
demands of righteousness that we could not so He might take  
away our sin when we trust in Him and so His righteousness  
might be credited to us, making us fully pleasing to the Father  
(2 Cor. 5:21).

In this volume we delve deeper into the marvelous truth of the  
incarnation to see still further glimpses of Christ's glory on  
earth. His righteousness did not occur in a vacuum but rather  
among people, ordinary people like you and me. In each unit  
of this volume, we will look at Jesus' interactions with people  
as through a prism, making slight turns to see different yet  
equally brilliant perspectives of Jesus' works. In Unit 22, we  
will see Jesus' power to heal coupled with His deep compassion  
for people, even those who were marginalized in society. In  
Unit 23, we will see Jesus' riveting teachings empowered  
by His divine authority. And finally, in Unit 24, we will see  
Jesus' miraculous power over nature, revealing His identity as  
Creator God.

Each ray of light we will see points to the same truth: that Jesus  
is the Messiah, the Son of God given for our salvation. Jesus  
was indeed born to die, but He lived so that we too might live.

**UNIT 22****SESSION 1**

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