



Metro Calvary – Roseville CA
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John 5:1-17

Lessons From A Lame Man Or Do You Want To Be Healed?

Related Topics: Going Up To Jerusalem; Jesus in Jerusalem; Pool of Bethesda; House of Mercy; Sheep Gate; Physical Healing; Desiring the Touch of God Upon Your Life; Grace; Mercy; Pharisees; Principles and Methods; God's Word and Man's Traditions

¹After this there was a feast of the Jews,

Now, it doesn't tell us what feast. Some commentators say it was Purim, some say it was Passover, some say it was the feast of Tabernacles — nobody really knows.

and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

Wherever you were in the land of Israel — you always went UP. That was the orientation spiritually and physically. You went UP to Jerusalem because it was the center of worship for the nation. You went UP physically. Jerusalem is 2500 ft. above sea level. Much of the Jordan Valley is 695 ft below sea level. The Dead Sea is 1385 ft below sea level (lowest place on the planet.) So if you traveled south to Jerusalem from Galilee — , you're still going up to Jerusalem. Everybody goes up to Jerusalem.

²Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda,

The *sheep gate* is still there. It's at the northern end of the temple mount on the eastern side of the city — north of the east gate. They still have the sheep market

there. You'll see a Bedouin shepherd pull up in a Mercedes Benz, open up the back doors and drag 10 sheep out of the back of his Mercedes and then open the trunk up and get 5 more out.

It's also called the **Lion's Gate** (built by Suleiman in 1517 — he carved two stone lions there) It's called **St. Steven's** gate because some say that's where Steven was martyred.

Inside that gate — as you enter in — on the right hand side is a courtyard. St. Ann's Cathedral is there. It was built in the 11th century. It's was built upon the foundation of a 5th century church that was there. It is a remarkable place. When we go to Israel, we go there and worship the Lord with *a cappella* songs. The acoustics are staggering. You stop singing a line and the church sings by itself for a while.

Outside of St. Ann's Cathedral is the *pool of Bethesda*. They've excavated several of the pools from the day of Jesus — they are about 60 ft. deep.

Bethesda = the House of Mercy.

It was essentially a **big pool** full of water — and over it were **five overarching colonnades**. They were intended to provide shade for the people who were there in the heat of the sun — keeping them from dehydration or heat stroke. These were necessary because it tells us in **verse 3**

³In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed.

To get the picture here — try to imagine a multitude of people piled on top of each other that are physically incapable of getting themselves to the restroom. They sit there for days or weeks or months waiting to get healed. This must have been one really stinky place!

HOW MANY of you don't even have a **verse 4** in your Bible — it goes from **verse 3** to **verse 5**?

It is omitted because the earliest manuscripts that we have do not contain **verse 4**. The reasoning goes like this — the OLDER the manuscript, the CLOSER it is to the original manuscript — and thus the most accurate copy.

Many versions include the verse in a footnote which explains why these people were there.

The KJV has verse 4 — ⁴For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had.

Now you know why there is this **multitude** of lame, blind, paralyzed people around the pool.

⁵One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years.

We don't know this guy's name. All we know is that he's been an invalid for 38 years. We don't know how long he has been at the pool. He may have been there for a really long time, he may have been there for the entire 38 years. We just don't know.

⁶When 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?”

At first glance that seems like pretty odd question. It would be like going into the hospital — seeing a man hooked up to an IV — and asking him — *Do you want to get better? No thanks — I love surgery, general anesthesia, and big hospital bills!*

The question — “Why would Jesus ASK that question?” is answered by another question — *Do you think that everyone who was there actually wants to get healed?* Before you think I've lost all touch with reality — I want you to think to think of this scene at the Pool of Bethesda (house of mercy) as being not all that different from the scene in virtually every church. Not everyone who shows up at a church has come to be healed — to have their lives transformed!

In that light it's reasonable to think that there were some benefits of hanging out at the Pool of Bethesda — Money being one of those benefits. Soft hearted people with big wallets!

QUOTE: One commentator points out: "*An eastern beggar often loses a good living by being cured of his disease.*"

Today in India, parents will mame their children so they can get income through their begging!

Solomon said — *There is nothing new under the sun (Eccl. 1:9)*. In every society there are certain people who get labeled as victims. As soon as you get labeled as a victim you get benefits for being a victim. You get money, you get help, you get friendship, and you get all kinds of opportunity. So it is to your advantage to get yourself recognized as a victim. There is a huge segment of our culture that claims victimhood.

There are tons of churches that have numerous ministries that are founded on the premise of victimhood. When they gather — many of those attending really don't want to get healed — they just want to talk about how terrible their life is. Reality is that some people don't want to get well — they love to come to groups where they can whine and dine!

PLEASE DON'T MISUNDERSTAND ME — There are some people that are legitimate victims in the world. Things happen to them that are tragic, they deserve mercy and compassion. There are legitimate victims listed in scripture. At the top of the list are widows and orphans — single moms and little kids. God has a special heart for them and He commands His people to deal with them in light of the special place they have in His heart.

If you are a woman that has been raped, if you were molested as a child, if a drunk driver plowed into you — **that** is legitimate victimhood. Special attention is more than understandable.

BUT — Some people's lives are wrecked by virtue of their own sin and they try to portray themselves as victims because of the benefits.

So Jesus comes to **this** guy! Of all the people there (multitude) — Jesus comes and speaks to one guy. He doesn't preach to the whole crowd, he doesn't heal everybody — He just talks to this **ONE** man!

Jesus asks **this** guy **this** seemingly peculiar question — **do you want to be healed?** This is a great question — because if Jesus heals him — his whole life changes. He has to get up, he has to get a job, he has to buy his own food, and his whole life is going to change. He **might** not like that.

Let's bring this into our lives — this room — church culture — in 2010.

1.) WHY ARE YOU HERE? As we sit in this place — there are multitudes of others sitting in church as well. **People come for a whole variety of reasons.**

Many of them would say (perhaps to themselves, perhaps to others) — *I am not here to be healed!* Some people are in church saying — *I'm religious — It's Sunday — this is what I do.* Some guys are in church looking for chicks — Some women are in church looking for men. . Some people are in church saying — *I like to whine and I'm looking for an audience — I'm a victim looking for a handout.* This room (I hope in only a small degree) is going to have some resemblance to the crowd at the Pool of Bethesda. Not every one was there to get healed. Some truly want God's power demonstrated in their life. Some have other reasons, other motives. Something else is fueling them.

2.) DO YOU WANT TO BE HEALED? Do you want things to change?

HERE'S THE PROBLEM COMMON TO THE HUMAN CONDITION — Every person wants things to change — but they don't want to change. We don't want to change — we just want the consequences to change. We want to be able to do the same things and have different results / outcomes. ***Do you want to be healed?*** Do you want to change? Not just have things change — but do you want to change?

I know many people today who do not want to be healed. They do not want to receive divine help — a divine remedy — for their problems. They do not want to be helped out of their weakness. They love their weakness, their helplessness. I have even seen people turn their backs on a way of deliverance because they did not want to be healed.

Some don't want the power of God to change their lives because as bad as their current situation is — they are at least familiar with it — comfortable in it. For example, there are some women who on the one hand desperately want their

husbands to be saved — yet on the other hand, they dread the idea because they know it would bring so many changes into their relationship.

We can be more comfortable in our present misery than walking with Jesus — We can be more comfortable in our present misery than denying our selves, taking up our cross and following Jesus — and THAT is the ONLY way to be really free!

ILLUSTRATION: *In 1993, it was reported that a small order of Franciscan nuns in Prague decided to subsidize their convent by opening the downstairs of their facility - formerly an underground detention center used by the Communists to imprison and torture their enemies - as a hotel. For \$33 a night, you could stay in a former prison cell. The proprietors say they try to achieve a middle ground between comfort and authenticity in the "hotel."*

Many people are really looking for just that - a comfortable prison cell.

Do you want to be healed? That's the question of Jesus to this guy! Of course the guy would like things to change — but does he want to change? Does he want to experience God's power? Does he want to have his life transformed?

It a beautiful question. One that you should have in your quiver — ready to draw on when someone is consistently, incessantly whining at you.

Most likely — ALL of us know exactly who that person(s) is in our own lives. People you work with — people you go to church with — people in your own family. Just ask them — ***Do you want to change?*** That question stuns a lot of people.

Over the years we have seen and met with people trapped in destructive behaviors and attitudes — SIN! They say that they smoke too much — drink too much — involved in sexual sin — Do you want to change? This morning — be honest — *What are you doing at church?*

So this question of Jesus is amazing — and so is the guy's response!

7The 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."

I don't have any friends — I'm down here all by myself. This was a YES or NO question! Again — We all know this person! (More on this in a few moments!) Some of you are thinking — *Know Him? I married him!*

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

This is awesome on a couple of levels!

1.) He doesn't say — *Go to physical therapy and rehab for the next 2 years.*

Anybody here who's in the medical profession or does any kind of therapy, imagine how atrophied this guys limbs are after being immobile for 38 years. If you know anything about anatomy and physiology — imagine the miracle that needs to take place for Jesus to say to a man who's been crippled or lame for 38 years *Get up, take your bed and walk.* DON'T MISS THIS — It follows so wonderfully from the end of Chapter 4. The authority and power of Jesus to heal instantaneously — by power of His own Word. *“At once the man was healed”*

2.) He doesn't say — *Get up and join a support group.*

Instead Jesus says — *Get up, pick up your mat, go home, and move on with your life.* The mat has been carrying you — now you carry your mat. It's like Paul in his letter to the Philippians — *“Forgetting what lies behind I press forward”*. Get over it, move on. People have been carrying you for years — God has touched your life — it's time for you to carry them for a while.

Amazingly — somebody got really upset about this.

Now that day was the Sabbath. ¹⁰So 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.”

I can imagine this guy thinking — *I've been crippled for 38 years, you're telling me this is the wrong day? Not in my life. This is the right day.*

They look at this guy and they're more concerned about the burden that he's carrying than the burden that God had lifted from him. Typical of religious people!

It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful — We've talked about this in some detail in regards to Nicodemus. There were 39 different categories of Sabbath breaking and each of them had long detailed definitions.

The religious person — the legalistic person makes one core error — it is a fatal one. They cannot distinguish between **principles** and **methods**. This was the bottom line of the problem with the Pharisees.

PRINCIPLES — God tells us *do this, do this, and do this*, — very clear.

Love your neighbor

Read your bible

Pray

METHODS — There is for the most part a lot of freedom on **how** we do those clearly defined things. Those who are legalistic in nature elevate **their methods** as equal with **God's principles**.

EXAMPLE: The Bible says that we **need** to study scripture. The legalist will say — *You get up every morning and have a quite time in the Word for an hour.* I don't see anything about that. I don't see anything about an hour or a half hour, fifteen minutes. **PRINCIPLE** — Study the Word. If I read at night am I in sin? If I read at lunch am I in sin? If I read for an hour and five minutes am I in sin? Obviously not — the point is — read your bible.

EXAMPLE: PRINCIPLE — Husbands love your wives. We know that He lays out the essential character of that love — it is to be sacrificial — just like Jesus loved His bride, the Church, and gave Himself for her.

METHOD — it depends upon HOW that sacrificial love looks relative to

your wife? There's no method to do that. Peter does say — *Husbands dwell with your wife according to knowledge*. There's no three steps, four steps, just add water simple solution. "Love your wife by giving her flowers." Well, if she's allergic to flowers, you're gonna kill her! Not loving. "Love your wife by taking her sailing." Well if she has a fear of open waters — it's torture. By the Spirit of God and the grace of God you got to figure out the **methods** to implement God's **principles**. God gives a lot of freedom there.

These legalistic religious leaders did not see that. Their man-made method's trumped God's Word. They say — *It's not lawful* — by their methodology — but not by God's Word.

DON'T MISS THIS — This man has just been healed — he's *walking* home after 38 years of paralysis — and they're ticked off because God worked outside of their methods — and in so doing violated their religiosity.

I might also add that people who have a liberal theology take the methods and the principles — and they toss them both. That is why Jesus told His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of the Sadducees. Leaven rots from the inside out. The practice of the Pharisees that will rot your life from the inside out was adding to the Scriptures. The practice of the Sadducees that will rot your life from the inside out is taking away from the Scriptures.

A good solid Christian takes the principles and enforces them strongly and takes the methods and leaves a lot of flexibility. The leaders in this day could not do it. They created a methodology — rules that made it unlawful for this man — who had been healed by the power of God — to OBEY Jesus and carry his mat. They carried this out so far that if you had a needle for sewing — and you're carrying it in your pocket on the Sabbath — then you were in sin. It didn't say that anywhere in the Scriptures.

So here are these religious leaders saying — *Somebody broke our methods*. It happens to be God who broke their rules — but that's irrelevant to them.

¹¹But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’”

WOW! He blames it on Jesus. *Hey look I'm a victim. I was healed against my will. I didn't ask for healing I was just sitting there and the next thing I know some guy shows up, tells me to go home. I thought “Well gosh he is so overbearing and rude I felt I should. I've been violated. This is terrible what's happened to me.*

IT GETS EVEN BETTER!

¹²They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk’?” ¹³Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place.

Who healed you? — Duh, I should have asked, huh? I should have said thank you, huh?

You know our world is filled with people just like this man.

They're getting healed — they're getting grace — they're seeing the power of God — and they don't even know its God. They call it karma They call it good luck — They call it chance — happenstance — ANYTHING but the God of the Bible.

***James 1:17** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.*

Here's how we can keep it nice and simple — Everything that's bad — I get credit for / mankind gets credit for. Everything that's good — God gets credit for it.

Later on here's what Jesus does.

¹⁴Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.”

Besides telling this guy to pick his mat — move on with his life — he also tells this guy to *stop sinning so that nothing worse would happen to him.*

NOW WE KNOW why the question — *Do you really want to be healed? Do you really want your life to change?* — was so pertinent.

IN THIS MAN'S CASE — his physical malady was a consequence of his own sin.

HUGE CONCEPT HERE — If you sin, you will have consequences. We live in a world that does not believe that. The wisdom of man says that we deserve only good all the time — and if anything bad happens then I've been victimized. The Bible tells us that sin kills! The Bible says that *the way of the transgressor is hard!* If you drink too much you're going to wreck your liver and you're going to wreck your car. If you do drugs all the time you're going to end up blowing your mind and you're going to blow your money — you're going to end up wasting your life. Sin ALWAYS lead to death — sin ALWAYS begins the process of robbing you of life. Either you put the sin to death — or the sin puts you to death.

This body belongs to God what is done with it is supposed to be to God's glory and if I go against those things that God has instructed I could **very easily** have physical infirmity.

EXAMPLE: STDs — Life-long, monogamous, heterosexual union NEVER yields a sexually transmitted disease! Imagine that!

I AM NOT SAYING — and please hear me clearly — that everyone who is in physical pain, or is blind, or paralyzed, or crippled is in that condition because of their own sin. We live in a fallen world. Before Genesis 3 and the first sin — God looked at the world he had created, with man and woman in it, and He said — "It is very good." Turn on the News at 10:00 — News flash — it is not very good any more. THAT is because*sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin...* **Romans 5:12**

Some people are just hurting — physically falling apart because of Genesis 3 and the sin of Adam and Eve. BUT — some people are in that condition because of their own sin. **Jesus was able to distinguish the two.** Jesus looks at **THIS** guy — heals him — but doesn't relieve him of his responsibility for those 38 years.

HUGE OBSERVATION — Jesus tells this guy — *stop sinning* — or, what? *Something worse will happen.* Have you ever seen God show up in a radical and powerful way in someone's life — heal them — save them — love them —

forgive them — and they take the strength and life given to them and go right back into their sin — and something worse happens.

Proverbs 26:11 Like a dog that returns to his vomit is a fool who repeats his folly.

2 Peter 2:22... “The dog returns to its own vomit, and the sow, after washing herself, returns to wallow in the mire.”

Our sin makes us sick — spiritually, emotionally, physically — and after we have been touched by God we say — *Wow that looks delicious — I think I’ll go back to that vomit and eat some more.*

For Jesus to make that statement would indicate that this guy fully intended to take his restored health and strength and use it to sin. As long as I was I was crippled I couldn’t sin — but now that God’s healed me I can really get back to work.

It is insanity to think that God would heal me so I could continue in my sin. **AGAIN** — That’s why Jesus’ question is so pertinent. *Do you want to be healed — Do YOU want to change? If not you’re going to continue in that pattern and something worse will happen.*

15The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him. 16And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.

HAVE YOU EVER met someone that was so self-absorbed — so completely and narcissistic — that after you have poured into them — poured yourself out for them to help them — they turned on you?

I hate you.

Why?

You told me I was sinning.

Were you sinning?

Yes — But you shouldn’t have said that.

Well why?

Because you're supposed to be merciful and compassionate to me.

Oh — I thought telling the truth to you was merciful and compassionate. I didn't think that letting you self-destruct and go to hell was going to be helpful or loving or kind or merciful. I thought the truth would be more helpful.

AGAIN — We are brought back to the prologue. *“We beheld His glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

GRACE — He heals this man. **TRUTH** — You're healed — stop sinning.

I need to tell you why you might have gotten the impression that this guy really bugs me — Why I've been a bit hard on this guy. The worst part about this guy is that I've seen him when I look in the mirror. **THAT** is why he annoys me so much. If there was no possibility that we would even remotely resemble this man — we wouldn't find him in the Scriptures.

HERES THE BIG POINT — There was a ton of stuff beneath the surface of this man — who at first glance would seem deserving of our sympathy; stuff that makes him so unworthy of being touched by the power of God. Jesus could have gone to anyone else at the Pool of Bethesda; someone who loved God. Someone whose horrible illness was no fault of their own — just the byproduct of living in this fallen world. But He didn't! This guy was pretty much a loser. And it appears he was a loser even at the end.

The hero in this story is Jesus. The religious leaders aren't heroes — they are legalists. They have no concept of grace. They have placed their rules above God's Word. This guy is certainly no hero. He never asked to be healed. We're not told that he had any faith whatsoever. Some of you have been told that if you have enough faith you will be healed — this guy discredits that error. This guy doesn't seem to have any faith.

The hero in the story is Jesus. If you were Jesus would you have gone to the stink tank known as the Pool of Bethesda?

EXAMPLE: Growing up in Anaheim my mom was the charge nurse at a convalescent home. When I was in High School there were times I need to go to her work to ask her something. I had to hold my breath and run in to the break room — because the odors made me want to vomit.

If you had one person to heal — would you grab this guy?

And if you had healed that guy — and he didn't thank you or even ask your name — would you track him down to tell him to stop sinning, lest something worse come upon him?

GOD DID! How do we know that? Jesus IS God manifest in the flesh. In the Bible we are told that God is holy — not just moral perfection. It means that God is totally SEPARATE from His creation. The **OTHERNESS** of God!

Jesus uses this man as an opportunity to extend grace and mercy in the House of Mercy — Bethesda!

Jesus does what I would never do.

As we see ourselves in this guy — take heart!

He's not seeking God — God's seeking him. He's not crying out and praying and waiting in faith — he is whining, and complaining. Jesus comes he doesn't even respect Christ enough to ask his name. Jesus heals him and the guy's not even grateful.

This guy is no different than any of us. And when we see Jesus dealing with him, we can see how Jesus will deal with us.

We just HAVE to love Jesus for it. What Jesus has done for this man He has done for all who have come to Him.

In this story I want you to remember God's grace and how Christ is ultimately, completely and totally different than you and me.

If we were God — we would not have sought the likes of us. **If we were God** — we would not have spoken to the likes of us. **If we were God** — we would not have healed, loved, forgiven, and renewed the likes of us. **If we were God** — we would not continue to chase down the likes of us to speak the truth to us.

BUT GOD has done that for us in Christ.

None of us asked for it, none of us were seeking it, none of us were anticipating God's love, God coming to us, God giving us his power, God giving us new life,

God giving us new opportunity to pick up our mat and walk on in a completely new life, but God has done that for us in Christ.

It's unbelievable. God's grace — completely and utterly OTHER THAN anything we can imagine. Don't you just love Jesus?

WORSHIP is RESPONDING to Jesus.