

UNLIKELY HEROES: THE INVALID AT THE POOL

APRIL 16, 2017

INTRODUCTION

In John 5, we read the story of the invalid at the pool of Bethesda, a man who believed his hope for healing was out of reach to him. Steven Furtick, Lead Pastor of Elevation Church, stated, “We always think God’s presence is provided to fix our problems, but what if God’s presence is more about fixing your perspective....?” From the invalid man’s perspective, his hope for healing was focused on a pool of water. When Jesus approached him, He challenged his perspective with a simple question, “*Do you want to get well?*”

GROUP QUESTIONS

1. How do you behave when you are not feeling well? How do you treat those around you?
2. Read John 5:1-9. Picture the scene in this story, and discuss as a group what the sights, sounds, and smells might be like surrounding the pool. Though Bethesda was considered a pool of healing, I imagine the environment filled with misery and longing from people desperate for healing. Have you ever prayed for something that went unfulfilled for years? Did this affect your view of God?
3. Jesus walks into the middle of this scene, and focuses on a man who “*had been an invalid for thirty-eight years*”. Jesus asks him, “*Do you want to get well?*” What reasons could the man have for NOT wanting to be completely healed? Why do some people choose to continue to live in brokenness even when they have the opportunity for healing?
4. Jesus tells the man, “*Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.*” He did not have to get to the pool, he just had to obey Christ’s command, and was instantly healed. Jesus commanded the man to do three things he could not do on his own – get up, pick up his mat, and walk. The power was not in the pool, nor in the man, but in Jesus. Is there something that God is calling you to do, but you feel you are not capable of doing it? If so, does this story encourage you to move forward in faith?
5. The man didn’t do anything to deserve to be healed. He didn’t even know who Jesus was and didn’t even ask to be healed. Why do you think Jesus chose to heal the invalid at the pool?

APPLICATION

Have you been carrying around a deep hurt, emotional or physical, or sickness for a long time? Do you want to get well? Is there something you have felt God calling you to do, but are too afraid to do it because you’re focused on doing it in your own strength? Jesus is able to heal! Ask Him to meet you where you are, to give you

Study Questions for Community Groups

healing and/or strength. If you feel comfortable, share your story with your group, and ask them to walk alongside you as you get up, pick up your mat, and walk.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

1. There were many other people beside the pool who were in search of healing. Why do you think Jesus did not heal any (or all) of them?
2. Read John 5:10-18. Instead of praising God that a man was healed, the Jewish leaders were angry that Jesus encouraged him to break Sabbath rules by doing “work” (see also Matthew 12:1-14). Considering that the invalid at the pool would likely have lived another day, why do you think that Jesus healed him specifically on that day?

SCRIPTURE

¹Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. ²Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. ³Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. ^{4*}⁵One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. ⁶When 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?” ⁷“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.” ⁸Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” ⁹At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath. John 5:1-9

*In many Bible versions, verse 4 is omitted, because it is not in early Greek manuscripts of John. The verse reflects a traditional explanation of the cause of the stirring of the waters. Many commentators believe it was added by a scribe, not written by John.

¹⁰and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.” ¹¹But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk’.” ¹²So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?” ¹³The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there. ¹⁴Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” ¹⁵The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well. ¹⁶So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. ¹⁷In his defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” ¹⁸For 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. John 5:10-18