



FIRST LIGHT CHURCH

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

Date: 9/25/22

Series: Who is this man?

Text: John 5:1-17

BIG IDEA: Jesus brings restoration to the broken.

ICEBREAKER: What is something that you have wanted for a long time? (Either as an adult or child)

CONTEXT: John is trying to show us that Jesus is, in fact, the Messiah, the Son of God. In the first half of his Gospel account, John shows several signs that demonstrate who Jesus is. However, as Jesus begins to show who He is, He begins to experience pushback and rejection from religious leaders. This will not stop Jesus from doing what He came to do, to bring restoration to the broken.

PASSAGE: Have some volunteers read John 5:1-17.

DISCUSSION:

1. How do verses 1-5 help us understand the context of what is about to happen?
2. Imagine you were the person who had been disabled for 38 years. What would be going on in your mind before you met Jesus?
3. What strikes you about the question Jesus asks in verse 6?
4. What do we learn about the man from how he answers Jesus' question?
5. There was a legend that the first person into the waters after an angel stirred them would be healed. There is no biblical support for this, however. How can people look for supernatural or superstitious healing today?
6. What do we learn about Jesus so far from these verses?
7. What was wrong with the Jews response in verses 10-13? How were they missing it?
8. How can we be tempted similarly today to miss the point?
9. Why was it significant for Jesus to have the follow-up conversation He did with the man in verses 14-17?

APPLICATION:

10. How can you be like the lame man who is looking for healing in the wrong places?
11. Where are you needing healing in your life?

K4 CONNECTION:

Sin is hurting people and damaging families in our community. People are looking for healing, whether that's in a political party, a substance to consume, or the pursuit of the "good life." Just like the lame man in today's story was putting his hope in a faulty cure, so, too, are our neighbors. The hope and healing that people are ultimately longing for can only be found in Jesus. He restores broken people. This is why we go as God's people to declare and demonstrate the hope of the Gospel with our neighbors.

CARE AND PRAY:

- Take some time to share prayer requests with one another.

COMMENTARY

[v.1-5] John has thus introduced the setting: in Jerusalem, at the pool of Bethesda. He has also introduced the people involved: Jesus and the man thirty-eight years in his weakness. The scene is now set for the key figures in the drama to encounter one another.

[v.6-9] The two individuals John has introduced now connect: "Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time" (v. 6). Jesus then speaks to a man whom most in his position would have overlooked, saying, "Do you want to be healed?" (v. 6). This question could be a way for Jesus to ask if the desire for healing is why the man is lying there beside the pool. It could also be a prompt for the man to consider whether lying there at the pool is likely to result in such healing.

The ESV footnotes verse 4, which was most likely not originally part of John's Gospel but sought to explain why people were at the pool. (The information in verse 4 could be inferred from verse 7.) The man apparently hoped to be healed by being first into the waters after an angel stirred them. By means of waiting and watching for something he had no reason to think would happen, he sought the restoration of his own health.

Make no mistake about it: this man deserves our pity. The Bible nowhere indicates that God set up pools in Jerusalem so that people could be healed in this way. The Bible nowhere teaches that angels came down and stirred up waters so that the first person into the pool would get better. John endorses no such belief. We are to understand, then, that this poor man has vain hopes based on ignorant superstitions, and when Jesus gently prods his vain hopes, he is so immersed in them that he does not question their validity.

How has Jesus prodded him to recognize the vanity of his hopes? Imagine someone happening upon a child huddled over a mud puddle, Matchbox car in one hand, washcloth in the other. He dips the washcloth in the mud and furiously scrubs the car. One might ask, Are you trying to clean that car? The question is both an inquiry and an invitation to the child, asking him to examine his actions and evaluate whether they will be effective. The question indicates there are better ways to clean toys. In this way, when Jesus asks in verse 6, "Do you want to be healed?", it seems to indicate that Jesus is not impressed with the method of waiting by the pool, seeking to be first into the water when it ripples.

The sick man answers the question in a way that reminds us of other replies to questions from Jesus in John's Gospel, times when Jesus has not been understood: "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'" (v. 7). John, however, shows what brings true healing, and the only remedy for the man by the pool is the only remedy for us: "Jesus said to him, 'Get up, take up your bed, and walk.' And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked" (vv. 8-9a). The man did not need to be the first into the water in order to be healed. He needed the one who spoke the world into existence to say the word and make it so. He did not need some false tale about angels doing a trick with the water. He needed Jesus to say the word. That is all it took.

[v.10-13] How should people respond when they see God perform a surprising and generous work of joyful restoration? Should not hearts soar to see God's love in action? Or should the authorities start thinking about rules, policies, commandments, and regulations? Jesus has in 5:6–9a just healed a man afflicted with a debilitating illness for thirty-eight years, but look at the response: "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'" (v. 10).

Why do they respond this way? Their concern for law-keeping, which is a good concern, has eclipsed their concern for this poor, sick man. Their impulse is to quote commandments first and ask questions later. The greatest commandment is to love the Lord; the second is to love people. These Jews are suspicious of Jesus, and John probably intends his audience to associate them with the Pharisees, who sent priests and Levites to question John the Baptist in 1:19–24. For these Jews, the big idea is not love for God and neighbor, but strict obedience to the letter of the law. The Jews do not love this man and rejoice in God's work in his life. They love conformity to what the law requires, at the expense of regard for people and their situations. This poor man was afflicted for thirty-eight years, but they are worried merely because he has taken up his bed (5:10).

The man answers them, "The man who healed me, that man said to me, 'Take up your bed, and walk'" (v. 11). This could be rendered more literally, "The man who made me whole" (cf. KJV, NASB). Jesus did not simply heal this man; Jesus made him healthy. The "making" here is significant because Jesus made the man well in the same way God made the world: by speaking it so. The one through whom all things were made (1:3), who spoke the word and it was so (5:8–9a), commanded this man concerning what to do on the Sabbath. The man was right to do what Jesus said. As the one who made the world, as the one who made this man well, Jesus has authority to command obedience on the Sabbath.

The Jews respond, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Take up your bed and walk?'" (5:12). Notice that these Jews, fixated as they are on the law and its demands, do not ask about "the man who healed me" (v. 11a) but about what Jesus told the man to do on the Sabbath: "Take up your bed and walk" (v. 11b). They are more concerned about regulation than about restoration. They are more concerned about adherence to the law than about the healing of the body. They care more about the letter than about the Lord. They care more about obeying commands than enjoying the presence of the one whose character the commands convey.

[v.14-17] Verse 14 mentions a slightly new time and place for the interaction to follow: "afterward" provides the time and "in the temple" describes the place. Under the old covenant, those with physical deformity could not serve as priests (Lev. 21:17–23), and those with certain conditions had to remain outside the camp. Any kind of physical imperfection was a result of the fall, the ramifications of which could not be tolerated in the presence of God. But now this man who had been physically debilitated for thirty-eight years could enter the presence of God at the temple. He had been restored to wholeness by Jesus, and he entered God's presence to worship at the temple.

Jesus found him in the temple and exclaimed to him, "See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you" (John 5:14). Sin is cause for exclusion from God's presence, and those who continue in unrepentant sin are eternally separated from God. Jesus made this man whole,

enabling him to return to God's presence, and now Jesus warns him not to continue in unrepentant sin lest he experience everlasting separation from God.

What is ironic and tragic about this is that the Sabbath itself concerns the wholeness God meant for His image-bearers to enjoy in His completed creation. Jesus exposes this irony: "My Father is working until now, and I am working" (John 5:17). He asserts the fact that God the Father continues to work, and the context seems to imply that even though the Father rested on the seventh day of creation, Jesus is not constrained on the seventh day of each week. After all, the universe continues to be held together by God's power on Sabbath days. Jesus adds to this that He, too, is working.

The man then went into the temple in his restored state. The Jews, meanwhile, used God's law to attack God's Son. The Jews sought to persecute and kill the one John's Gospel has identified as the Word incarnate. Clearly the Jews loved the commandment more than they loved the man who had been healed, and they clearly loved the commandment more than they loved the God who gave the commandment.

Commentary used from the ESV Expositors Commentary - John 5:1-18

WHERE'S THE GOSPEL

The fact that Jesus healed the lame man on the Sabbath is both intentional and significant. Jesus has authority over Israel's Sabbath, for He is the Lord of the Sabbath (Luke 6:1-11; Mark 2:23-28). The Jerusalem temple had become a house of commercial business (John 2:16), but God meant it to be a "house of mercy" (the meaning of "Bethesda"; 5:2). Only through Jesus can we find God's mercy and grace, and enter into true Sabbath rest (Heb. 4:1-10)—ceasing from our futile efforts to save ourselves, as we trust in Jesus' perfect work on our behalf.

Though Jesus cares about our whole being, this man's greatest need was not healed legs but a redeemed heart. When Jesus pursued him and spoke the words, "Sin no more," he wasn't calling him to sinless perfection but to live in response to the mercy of a perfect Savior. The entire Christian life is a life of growing in grace (2 Pet. 3:18). Though we are perfectly forgiven, we await the perfection of eternity with Christ. And yet as those swept up into and toward the latter-day kingdom of God, we are called to "sin no more"—to live out our new, radically transformed identity.

Commentary used from the ESV Gospel Transformation Study Bible - John 5:10-17