

# MIRACLES | Take up Your Bed and Walk

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## Introduction

Last week we started a brand new series called Miracles that's going to carry us through the Easter season. Throughout this series, we're looking at the many miracles Jesus performed and hearing stories from individuals in our Grace Chapel family where the Divine intervened in impossible situations and turned them into miracles.

**MIRACLE:** *an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs.*

—Merriam-Webster's Dictionary

Our hope is that

- God will **STRETCH YOUR FAITH** like it's never been stretched before;
- God will **FILL YOU WITH HOPE** that you've never had before;
- and you will **TRUST HIM MORE** than you've ever trusted Him before, regardless of what He does or does not do, because He is worthy of all of our trust.

Last week we looked at the story of a father pleading for the life of his son. He said to Jesus, "I believe, help my unbelief." This prayer told Jesus he believed while asking Jesus to make up for whatever faith he lacked. And Jesus responded in a big way by restoring his son to life!

Today we encounter a fascinating story that happened at the Pool of Bethesda.

### John 5:1–9

After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. 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. Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. 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?**" 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." Jesus said to him, "**Rise, take up your bed and walk.**" And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath.

**The Pool**  
**The Problem**  
**The Possibility**

## The Pool

### Historical Context—

The pool of Bethesda was an interesting place. We learn in this passage that it was near the sheep gate in Jerusalem and was divided into two parts: half the pool was used to clean sheep and the other half was for people. There was a divider in the middle of the pool, which had five colonnades or covered porches.

The Bible says there was a multitude of invalids at the pool waiting and hoping for a miracle. John tells us that people waited for the moving of the water, believing an angel stirred the water and whoever went in first was healed of their infirmity. Most commentators believe that John wasn't trying to communicate what was actually happening; rather, he was trying to convey a first-century superstition about the pool.

**For the skeptics**—In the 18th and 19th centuries, when historical scholarship was beginning to develop, a lot of historians argued that the Bible was filled with unreliable information. This story of the Pool of Bethesda was widely used by historians as proof of Biblical inaccuracy and error because there was no other record at the time of any pool with five porches in Jerusalem near the sheep gate. Years later, archaeologists dug up the pool—it was under a church that had been built on top of it to mark its location—and they discovered that the pool did indeed have two basins with four porches on the exterior and one porch right down the center.

“It may be stated categorically that no archaeological discovery has ever controverted a Biblical reference. Scores of archaeological findings have been made which confirm in clear outline or exact detail historical statements in the Bible.”—Dr. Nelson Glueck<sup>1</sup>

**If you can't trust the historical accuracy and authority of the Bible, it's much more difficult to trust the spiritual accuracy and authority of the Bible.**

**As we talk about the miraculous  
wonders that Jesus performed,  
remember that these aren't fables or fiction.  
*These are actual events that took place in human history.***

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## **The Problem**

John tells us that the multitude of people gathered around the pool had something in common—all were waiting and hoping for miraculous healing. A certain man had been waiting for *38 years!*

**Question**—Have you ever noticed how people love to find others who have the same problems they do?

In this story, the phrase “misery loves company” comes to mind. Whether it's infirmity, rejection, offense, or some other relational wound or emotional trauma, people love to gather around common problems. Often, there's no desire to solve the problem—people just want to complain while sitting around hoping some superstitious event will occur to make it better.

Thirty-eight years the man in the story had been waiting. How long have you been waiting for your circumstances to change?

**Most of the time it's not our circumstances  
that need to change—  
it's us who need to change.**

**Problem**— People would rather be affirmed than challenged.  
They would rather be victims than overcomers who take personal responsibility.  
They would rather blame others or make excuses than do the hard work of changing.

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<sup>1</sup> Glueck, Nelson. *Rivers in the Desert*. New York, Farrar, Straus and Cudahy, 1959, p. 136.

**What did Jesus not do in this story?** He didn't look at the man and say, "I'm so sorry your life has been so hard. It's been so rough, and you've been in misery for so long. It must be awful."

**What did Jesus do?** He asks the man if he wants to be healed!

### **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?**"

Jesus would've been canceled so fast in our culture today! Consider how some modern responses to Jesus's words would have looked:

- "Jesus refuses to affirm man's suffering and hardship."
- "Jesus completely ignores hundreds of suffering people at the Pool of Bethesda."
- "Jesus refuses to share in the misery of #poolsideparalytic."
- "Jesus asks if lame man wants to be healed instead of affirming his victimhood."

**What did the sick man do?** Pastor Robert Morris points out that he offered excuses instead of saying, "Yes!"<sup>2</sup>

### **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."

- The sick man had no idea who Jesus was. He called him Sir, not Rabbi, Teacher, or Lord.
- The sick man wasn't looking for Jesus. **He wasn't pursuing Jesus, but Jesus was pursuing him.** Jesus had to bypass lots of people for this one man, who was oblivious to who Jesus is.

**There's always a multitude,  
but Jesus always finds the one!**

#### **1. Excuse**

In answering Jesus, the sick man made excuses by saying, "I have no man to put me into the pool . . . another steps down before me."

This is what that may sound like for us today:

- "I believe God heals marriages, but let me tell you why that won't work for me."
- "I believe God can deliver people from addiction, but my situation is different."
- "I know God did that for you, but let me tell you why I'm the exception to His power."
- "It may work for everyone else, but it won't work for me."
- "My life would be better if this hadn't happened to me."
- "If someone hadn't betrayed me, or hurt me, or abused me, or failed me, things would be better."

**Application**—What in your life have you been making excuses about? Have you decided that you are the exception to God's power? God's healing? God's care and compassion?

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<sup>2</sup> Morris, Robert. *The Lame Man's Story*. Southlake, TX: Gateway Church, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tw07qLKbIS0>.

**Regardless of what you tell yourself,  
you are not the exception.  
*But you are the only person who can hinder the plan of God for your life.***

## **2. Effort**

Sometimes God's power shows up in a moment, and sometimes it's a longer process.

### **John 5:8**

Jesus said to him, **"Rise, take up your bed and walk."**

- Jesus moves right past the man's excuses. He doesn't even acknowledge them.
- Instead, Jesus goes straight to the solution, and in the process He asks the man to participate with Him.

**Application**—Many of us get comfortable in our infirmities, and we don't want to put in the effort required to get better. Often the pain of recovery is worse than the pain of the thing that put us in the situation in the first place. The pain of changing is harder and takes longer than the thing that caused the pain. So many people choose to stay victims because they become comfortable in their pain.

This is why Jesus asked the sick man, "Do you want to be healed?"

- The question is not, "Do you want *your circumstances* to change?"
- The question He asks is, "Do *you* want to be changed?"
- Because if YOU don't change, neither will your circumstances.

**Take up your bed and walk.  
Be changed.  
Be made whole.  
You have to make a decision.  
You have to put in some effort.**

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## **The Possibility**

### **Jesus says:**

Take up your bed and walk.

The thing you've been laying on for the last 38 years, I want you to pick it up. It's no longer an excuse. It's no longer a justification of your victimhood. It's no longer the thing you use to get attention or pity.

Pick it up and carry it with you in order to testify to what I have done for you.

**Take up your bed, and walk.**

VIDEO—watch online to see Tahliah Peek's miraculous testimony. If anyone had a reason to stay on her bed by the pool, it's Tahliah. But she chose to take up her bed and walk.

Tahliah is on staff at Grace Chapel, and she's making a Kingdom impact every single day. But what if she had refused to get up? What if she made excuses instead?

Because Tahliah encountered the power of God in the person of Jesus, she's holding that mat above her head and using what the enemy meant for evil for the good of others and for the good of the Kingdom.

**Question**—What might be possible in your life if you did the same thing?

**You can't do anything to change the past,  
but God wants to do something in you to change your future.  
Everything that was previously impossible  
is made possible the moment Jesus walks up.**

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## **Conclusion**

Maybe today Jesus is asking you, “Do you want to be healed?”

Maybe you're the one He's looking at while saying, “Take up your bed and walk!”

Maybe today you're the one who needs to stand up and say . . .

- I'm not making any more excuses!
- I'm not going to be a victim any longer!
- I'm not going to let the enemy of my soul rob me of my destiny!
- I'm going to pick up my bed, hold it high above my head, and let the world know what God has done for me!

If you need God to break the chains of addiction in your life, **come to Jesus.**

If you need God to deliver you from depression and anxiety, **come to Jesus.**

If you need the miracle of salvation, **come to Jesus.**

If you need healing, **come to Jesus.**

If you need God to meet you in the middle of your grief, **come to Jesus.**

If you need the God Who makes all things new to intervene in your life, **come to Jesus.**

If you need a fresh start today, **come to Jesus.**

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## **Discussion Questions**

1. Is it possible to trust the spiritual authority of the Bible without trusting its historical authority? Why does it matter that we remember that the miracles of Jesus are historical fact, not fable or fiction?
2. Discuss: People would rather be affirmed than challenged. They would rather be victims than overcomers who take personal responsibility. They would rather blame others or make excuses than do the hard work of changing.
3. Talk about what Jesus did and didn't do when He saw the man lying by the pool. Why do you think Jesus responded the way He did? Why do we so often respond differently to our pain or the pain of others?
4. Have you ever made excuses about your circumstances? Have you ever believed that you are the exception to God's power and love?
5. Why does Jesus ask us, like the sick man, to participate and put in some effort? What would it look like for you to “take up your bed and walk”?

# NOTES