

## When I'm Stuck

On Sunday we looked at a dramatic encounter between Jesus and a man who was stuck at the pool of Beth-zatha seeking healing.

1. Warm-up Question: Did you ever get something stuck in your nose? If so, what? If not, share a story of a time when you did get physically stuck in one way or another.
2. Getting stuck physically is bad enough; getting stuck in life is even worse. You know the feeling; something needs to change, but nothing is happening. That's exactly where the man in our Bible story found himself, until he encountered Jesus and Jesus showed him the way out.
  - a. As you look back over time, when have you felt most stuck in life?
  - b. Read John 5:1-9, as printed on p. 3. Ancient people believed the water in the Pool of Beth-zatha had special healing properties, especially when the water stirred. Lots of religions have healing shrines. Do you believe there are certain places that are especially conducive to healing? Why or why not?
  - c. Imagine the scene at the Pool of Beth-zatha when the water stirred and desperate people competed to see who could be the first in the water. The man featured in our Gospel story had been ill for 38 years and had been waiting at the Pool of Beth-zatha for "a long time" (vs. 6). Is there anyone here in our Oasis Group who has long struggled with chronic illness? If so, tell us how it feels? Also, how do you think the man in our story felt each time the water stirred, but someone else beat him to the water?
3. Verse 6 says, "When Jesus saw [the man] lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, 'Do you want to be made well?'" On Sunday, Jeff noted what an odd question that was. After all, this man had been sick for 38 difficult years and had waited by the healing pool for "a long time." So why would Jesus ask if he wanted to be healed? Jeff suggested that, when we get stuck in a bad situation, we have an amazing way of adapting to our circumstances and settling into the comfort of the familiar. We might act like we want to change; we might even believe we want to change, but often subconsciously we fear change more than we fear the difficult situation itself.
  - a. Therapist Virginia Satir says, "People often prefer the certainty of misery to the misery of uncertainty." What do you think she means? Have you seen an example of this phenomenon at work in someone you love and care about?
  - b. Heart bypass patients are routinely advised to make significant lifestyle changes, such as eat better, quit smoking, reduce alcohol intake, reduce stress, and exercise more. Basically, their doctors tell them, "Change or die prematurely." Yet studies

show that, two years after their bypass, 90% have made no lasting change in their behavior. Why do you think that is? Why is change so hard for us?

- c. We all have places of stuckness. In your life right now, where do you feel most stuck? Suppose Jesus asked you, “Do you really want to be well? Are you genuinely willing to face the uncertainty and difficulties of creating meaningful change?” How would you answer?
4. When Jesus asked the man if he wanted to be made well, he responded, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; and while I am making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me.” John 5:7. So basically the guy was saying, “Yes, I want to be made well, but there’s no one to help me.” That leads to the second key insight in this Gospel passage. We have a tendency to outsource our power. We want somebody else – God or someone else – to solve our problems for us. This is another powerful human tendency.
    - a. Jeff told a story about a time he wanted God to dramatically intervene to create change, when he already had the power to create the change himself but didn’t want to do the hard work. We do that a lot. We say, “God, why do you let me be stuck in this dead end job?” God says, “Why do you?” We say, “God, why do you allow my diabetes to rage out of control?” God says, “Why do you?” We say, “God why do you allow my relationship to be stuck?” God says, “Why do you?” Tell us about a time in your life when you fervently wanted God to intervene to solve a problem you already had the power to solve.
    - b. Read the words to the hymn “Waiting for You” as printed on p. 3. How do you feel about the last line in the hymn?
    - c. What are some of the factors that keep us from exercising the power God has given us to create change?
  5. When the man in our Gospel story says that he wants to be healed, but has no one to help him into the healing water, Jesus fixes his gaze on him and simply says, “Stand up, take your mat, and walk.” John 5:8.
    - a. In other Gospel stories Jesus reaches out and touches people. In this story, Jesus doesn’t even extend a hand to help the man up. Why? What was Jesus trying to teach this guy?
    - b. The message of our Gospel story is not, “You can do it all in your own strength.” Nor is the message, “Leave it all to God.” The message is, “You and God can do it together.” Philippians 4:13 doesn’t say, “I can do all things,” period. It says, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” In Question 3.c. above we were asked to identify where we feel most stuck in life right now. What might it look like for you to “stand up and walk” in that situation? What are some bold, concrete steps Jesus might be calling you to take? Are you willing to do it?



## John 5:1-9

After this there was a festival of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

2 Now in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate there is a pool, called in Hebrew "Beth-zatha," which has five porticoes. <sup>3</sup>In these lay many invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed, waiting for the stirring of the water;<sup>4</sup> for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool, and stirred up the water. Whoever stepped in first after the stirring of the water was made well from whatever disease that person had.

<sup>5</sup>One man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. <sup>6</sup>When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be made well?" <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 making my way, someone else steps down ahead of me." <sup>8</sup>Jesus said to him, "Stand up, take your mat and walk." <sup>9</sup>At once the man was made well, and he took up his mat and began to walk.

### Excerpts from the hymn "Waiting for You"

The earth cries out, nothing feels right.  
The world cries out, no justice in sight.  
Fires burning everywhere,  
Too many, too hot, too bright.

The child cries out, "Don't turn out the light."  
Broken hearts cry out, no end of hurt in sight.  
Greed and guns rule everywhere,  
Too many, too strong to fight.

We are waiting for you. (repeat)  
We are waiting for that  
Gloria in excelsis Deo.

We are waiting for you.  
You are waiting for us, too.