



### John 5:1–15 (NLT)

*Afterward Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days. Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda, with five covered porches. Crowds of sick people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches. One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, “Would you like to get well?”*

*“I can’t, sir,” the sick man said, “for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me.”*

*Jesus told him, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!”*

*Instantly, the man was healed! He rolled up his sleeping mat and began walking! But this miracle happened on the Sabbath, so the Jewish leaders objected. They said to the man who was cured, “You can’t work on the Sabbath! The law doesn’t allow you to carry that sleeping mat!”*

*But he replied, “The man who healed me told me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”*

*“Who said such a thing as that?” they demanded.*

*The man didn’t know, for Jesus had disappeared into the crowd. But afterward Jesus found him in the Temple and told him, “Now you are well; so stop sinning, or something even worse may happen to you.” Then the man went and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had healed him.*

### Understanding the Biblical Story

#### Verses 1 and 2

*Afterward Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days. Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda, with five covered porches.*

- We do not know what Jewish festival Jesus was attending, but there are three feasts where attendance was mandatory for every Jewish male living within fifteen miles of the city: Passover, Pentecost and the Feast of Tabernacles.
- For centuries there was no physical evidence that the Pool of Bethesda existed until a construction project unearthed what archeologists proved to be the Pool of Bethesda in the exact location described in the Gospel of John.

#### Verse 3

*Crowds of sick people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches.*

- The legend of the day was that, “from time to time an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. The first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease they had.”

### Verse 5

*One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years.*

- The man was disabled and unable to walk. For years he hoped to be the first in the pool in order to be cured.

### Verse 6

*When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, "Would you like to get well?"*

- It seems strange that Jesus would ask the disabled man that question. Maybe it was not as odd as it appears. The assumption is the man had been at the side of the pool for years. It had become his "home" where he lived off the charity of others. If he were healed, where would he go? What would he do? Where would he live? Had he become "comfortable" in his current situation?

### Verses 7–9b

*"I can't, sir," the sick man said, "for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me."*

*Jesus told him, "Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!"*

*Instantly, the man was healed! He rolled up his sleeping mat and began walking!*

- Jesus healed the man.
- He didn't ask the man if he believed or had faith. He didn't lecture him for believing in the urban legend of being first in the pool when the water stirred. Jesus simply healed him.

### Verses 9c–10

*But this miracle happened on the Sabbath, so the Jewish leaders objected. They said to the man who was cured, "You can't work on the Sabbath! The law doesn't allow you to carry that sleeping mat!"*

- Jesus heals the man on the Sabbath. Since Jesus was in Jerusalem for a Jewish festival, he would have been in the city for at least one week. Why did he choose to heal the man on the Sabbath when he knew he would be under the watchful eyes of the Pharisees? He could have cured the man on another day of the week.
- Did you notice that when Jesus healed the man he said, "Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk"? Why did Jesus tell the man to pick up his mat? Jesus could have simply told him to stand up and walk.

### Verse 11

*But he replied, "The man who healed me told me, 'Pick up your mat and walk.'"*

- The man shifts the blame to Jesus. He claimed it wasn't his fault that he was carrying the mat. He was simply doing what he was told.

## **The Healing Stories of Jesus in Perspective**

- How many healing stories are recorded in the Bible?
- How many sick or disabled people do you believe Jesus encountered during his ministry?
- How many sick and disabled people were laying by the pool of Bethesda on the day Jesus healed the man?
- How many of those by the pool were healed by Jesus?

God never promised a physical, earthly healing to everyone,  
but He promised a spiritual healing to all who seek it.

Physical healing is always \_\_\_\_\_.

Spiritual healing is \_\_\_\_\_.

