

# PICK UP YOUR MAT

## JOHN 5:1-18

(Prepared by Gene Thompson using LifeWay material ETB)

1. What is the difference between pity and compassion?
  - Pity is defined as the feeling of sorrow caused by the suffering and misfortunes of others. Many times, we simply feel pity for someone but do not take any action to help them.
  - Compassion is defined as sympathetic concern for the suffering or misfortunes of others.Compassion is usually followed up by action to help the individual in need

Compassion moves us to action because our focus is on the person, not the situation.

2. Can a person express both pity and compassion simultaneously?

In our passage today Jesus showed both pity and compassion as He interacted with an unnamed lame man.

### CONTEXT! Read John 5:1-4

We don't know what Jewish festival Jesus was attending.

1. Did Jesus do anything by happenstance? (No. Everywhere He went and every action He took had a purpose.)

Jesus came in through the Sheep Gate and went by the Pool of Bethesda with a mission on His mind.

2. What was so special about the Pool of Bethesda? (The people believed that an angel came down from time to time and stirred the water. When this happened to the first sick person to get into the water was healed. In our text Jesus neither denied nor confirmed that belief.)
3. Who was at the pool? (People with all kinds of illnesses.)

As we study our passage today, think about how Jesus shows compassion to you and how He calls you to show compassion to others.

### COMPASSION EXPRESSED! Read John 5:5-9a

1. There were a good number of sick people at the pool that day. Why didn't Jesus heal them all? (God is sovereign and it is not His will that everyone be healed. Paul is a good example. Jesus healed a lot of people, but He didn't heal everyone.)

Sometimes God can work through a sick, lame, blind or deaf person in ways He can't use well people.

2. Does Jesus have compassion on everyone?
3. When Jesus asked, "Do you want to get well?" what do you think this man was really thinking? (He didn't know who Jesus was so he might have thought "why else do you think I'm lying here by this pool?")
4. Does everyone who is sick want to get well? (Unfortunately, there are people who in a twisted way enjoy the attention.)
5. When Jesus commanded him to "get up, pick up your mat and walk!" what did the man do? (I believe he felt a surge of strength and energy in his legs immediately that he had never felt before.)
6. What did this miracle reveal about Jesus? (He has the power to heal no matter how long one has been ill.)
7. Are you ready to follow wherever, go whenever, and do whatever He is asking of you?
8. How does a person's obedience to Jesus serve as a statement of faith? (When Jesus commanded the man to get up and walk, he stopped making excuses. He responded with obedience and was healed instantly. Taking his mat with him underscored the permanence of the man's healing. He would not be returning to Bethesda. We can't see very far down the road but through our obedience others can see we are trusting God no matter what.)

There are more questions than we have answers for. This man did not know Jesus, so we know he did not put his faith in Him as God's Messiah. But he did obey Him.

In the middle of the most important moment of his life, the man faced some stiff opposition from a group that was more concerned with holding their own power and enforcing manmade Sabbath laws than they were in celebrating the power that had changed this man's life.

### **LEGALISM EXPOSED! Read John 5:9b-13**

1. What made the Sabbath such a sticking point to the Jewish religious leaders? (It was a list of rules they could keep, and they would feel more righteous and holy than others. They were much more concerned with outward signs than they were with the heart of worship.)
2. How can religion become an excuse not to show compassion to hurting people? (I can't help you right now, I've got to go to church, or that is my prayer time, or I don't do anything on Sundays but rest and watch football.)

In carrying his mat, the man violated a Jewish Sabbath rule about "carrying goods," This rule was not really part of the Mosaic law, but it was included in the *Mishnah*, a collection of teachings about the law attributed to various rabbis.

John noted that Jesus healed the man on the Sabbath. His Sabbath healings would lead to increasing tension with the Jewish religious leaders.

3. How would you describe the compassion the religious leaders had for this lame man?
4. Why might Jesus act in a person's life even when they do not recognize Him? (Perhaps an act of compassion will lead the individual to come to know Him.)

The healed man told the truth, he didn't know Jesus. Incredibly, the healed man had shown no interest in asking Jesus' name either before or after his healing. Overwhelmed by the miracle, he had forgotten the Miracle Worker.

5. Is every person who is healed done so by God?

"Sometimes God chooses to heal supernaturally, without human intervention. At other times, God uses doctors, medicine, and other physical implements. Behind all healing is the Great Physician. In His divine providence, God determines who and how to heal, but in every instance, we recognize the Lord at work."—PSG pg. 69

### **IDENTITY EXPOSED! Read John 5:14-16**

It appears Jesus searched for the healed man to talk with him.

1. Is there always a cause-and-effect relationship between suffering and disobeying God? (No. Sometimes it is so that God might receive glory through mighty works—John 9:3.)

However, in Deut. 29 the Lord promised blessings for those who obeyed His commands and curses on those who disobeyed. We don't really know why this man was lame and we don't know exactly what Jesus meant when He told the man to not sin anymore lest he suffer something worse, which most likely referred to eternal judgment.

2. What do you find interesting about the man's reaction to his healing by Jesus? (John doesn't record anywhere that the man was thankful and gave praise to God for what Jesus had done.)
3. What did the man do when he did find out who had healed him? (Reported Jesus to the Jewish leaders! This seems almost like betrayal.)
4. Why is it sometimes easier to find fault than to celebrate Jesus' work in a person's life? (We have to be careful that we don't have the attitude that says "that person doesn't deserve what God did in his or her life. Like the Jewish leaders, rather than rejoicing we respond with disapproval and opposition.)

This healing marks a shift in how John reported Jesus' signs. With this sign, His miracles become points of contention with the Jewish leaders and their motivation for persecuting Him.

## **THE FATHER AT WORK! Read John 5:17-19**

1. What did Jesus say the Father was doing? ("The Father is still working.") Henry Blackaby wrote one of the best-selling Christian books of all time based on this passage—Experiencing God.
2. What did Blackaby see in this passage?
  - The Father has been working up until now.
  - Now God has Me working.
  - I do nothing on My own initiative.
  - I watch to see what the Father is doing.
  - I do what I see the Father is already doing.
  - The Father loves Me.
  - He shows Me everything that He is doing.
3. What was the Jewish leaders' response to what Jesus said?
4. What should we be doing? (What we see the Father doing.)

### **SUMMARIZE AND CHALLENGE!**

1. What responsibility do we have for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless and the sick? (See James 1:27.)
2. In your regular errands and outings, where are you likely to encounter people who are hurting or who have been marginalized? (In the streets outside our church is one of the most likely places.)
3. Recognizing those potential encounters, what can you do to prepare to minister to them and show them compassion? (Pray asking God to open your eyes to see where God is working and join Him in what He is doing?)
4. Does our responsibility to minister to these individuals depend on how and why they are in need?
5. Do we have a hard time ministering to people who are not "like us?"
6. In what areas has God blessed you because of your obedience to Him?
7. How can you express your gratitude toward Him this week for what He has done in your life?