

SMALL GROUP • GOSPEL OF JOHN

Week 5 Preparation Guide

Do You Want to Get Well?

John 5:1-17 | Christian Standard Bible | For Thursday

BIG IDEA*Jesus invites us to move beyond excuses into healing.*

Study overview

At Bethesda, Jesus sees a man whose suffering has lasted thirty-eight years. He speaks, the man is healed, and a dispute over the Sabbath reveals a deeper question: Who has the authority to give life? Come ready to notice Jesus' compassion, examine your own response, and take one faithful step.

Read the schedule's language about excuses as an invitation to honest self-examination, never as a verdict on someone's disability. The passage does not say the man caused his condition, wanted to remain ill, or earned healing by having enough faith.

The three scheduled key points

Jesus sees people everyone else overlooks. Notice the particular person Jesus sees within a crowd of suffering people.

Healing often begins with honest surrender. Bring your need truthfully to Christ; surrender is not a technique that guarantees a cure.

Obedience follows faith. As disciples, we respond to Jesus with trust and action. In this account, Jesus' power takes the initiative; the man's faith is not presented as the cause of healing.

Prayer before study

PRAY

Father, open my eyes to your Son. Help me read with compassion, confess what I need to own, and bring you what I cannot change. Guard me from judging another person's pain. Give me courage to receive your grace and obey your Word. Amen.

Use this guide in several short sittings. Keep John 5 open beside you, and leave space for questions as well as answers.

1. Jesus sees the person at Bethesda

John 5:1-5 • A long history of suffering

After the encounters and healings in John 4, Jesus goes to Jerusalem for a Jewish festival. John does not identify which festival. Near the Sheep Gate is Bethesda, a pool with five colonnades—covered walkways where many people with disabilities are lying. This is a crowded place of need, yet Jesus’ attention becomes personal.

John tells us the man has been disabled for thirty-eight years. He does not say that the man has spent all thirty-eight years beside the pool, name his diagnosis, or explain how his condition began. Let that long span deepen compassion without inventing a biography. Jesus sees him and knows that his suffering has continued a long time.

John 5:6 • A question that invites a response

JESUS’ QUESTION

“Do you want to get well?”

John 5:6 (CSB)

The question addresses the man directly. It gives him room to speak about his need. We should not turn it into an accusation that he enjoys being dependent or is responsible for his disability. John does not tell us his hidden motives. Jesus’ decision to approach him is the first movement in the encounter.

For personal application, the question can invite us to name what we long for and where we resist change. That is an application to our hearts, not a diagnosis of this man. Being honest with Jesus can include grief, confusion, exhaustion, and a request for help.

John 5:7 • “I have no one”

THE MAN’S ANSWER

“Sir,” the disabled man answered, “I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I’m coming, someone goes down ahead of me.”

John 5:7 (CSB)

He describes a real barrier: he cannot reach the water ahead of others and has no one to put him in. His answer focuses on the help he believes he needs. We can hear the isolation in his words without dismissing his explanation as an excuse. Jesus will help in a way that does not depend on winning a race to the pool.

A note on verse 4: The CSB main text moves from verse 3 to verse 5. Its footnote records an explanation about an angel stirring the water found in some manuscripts. Keep that textual note distinct from the main narrative. The clear point is that Jesus heals by his word, without using the pool. See the CSB footnote to John 5:3.

Reflect: What need can I name honestly? Whose lack of help have I overlooked?

2. Jesus speaks and the man walks

John 5:8-9 • Grace makes a new response possible

JESUS' COMMAND

"Get up," Jesus told him, "pick up your mat and walk."

John 5:8 (CSB)

Jesus does not arrange a faster route into the water. He commands the man to rise, carry his mat, and walk. Verse 9 says the man gets well instantly, picks up his mat, and begins walking. The source of this change is Jesus' authority, not the man's strength of will.

Notice the order: Jesus speaks; the man is made well and acts on the command. The mat he had been lying on now travels with him. We do not need to assign the mat a hidden symbolic meaning. Its ordinary presence makes the changed situation visible and becomes the focus of the controversy.

The schedule's point, "Obedience follows faith," is a sound discipleship application: trusting Jesus should shape what we do. But this story does not record a confession of faith before the healing. In verse 13, the man does not even know who healed him. We must not make his recovery a formula in which sufficient faith purchases a miracle.

Reflect: Where do I need to respond to what Jesus has clearly taught, while depending on his grace?

John 5:9-13 • A mat becomes a controversy

The healing happens on the Sabbath. The authorities object to the man carrying his mat, and he explains that the person who healed him told him to carry it. They then ask who gave that instruction. The man cannot identify Jesus, who has slipped away into the crowd.

Sabbath rest is God's good command, not a bad idea Jesus needs to abolish (Exodus 20:8-11). The dispute concerns what faithfulness to God requires and who has authority to interpret it. These opponents focus on a perceived violation while the extraordinary restoration of a suffering neighbor receives no celebration in their recorded response.

This exposes misplaced religious priorities: we can become so absorbed in policing others that we fail to recognize God's mercy. The application is to examine our own hearts, not to dismiss God's commands or condemn Jewish people. Jesus, the healed man, and the first disciples are themselves Jewish; the conflict is with the opponents described here.

Reflect: When have I cared more about being right or keeping a routine than helping a person?

3. Mercy calls us to a changed life

John 5:14 • Take sin seriously without blaming the sick

JESUS FINDS HIM AGAIN

“See, you are well. Do not sin anymore, so that something worse doesn’t happen to you.”

John 5:14 (CSB)

Jesus later finds the man in the temple. His concern extends beyond physical recovery: the man is called to turn away from sin. Grace does not make obedience unimportant. Neither does this warning authorize us to assign a hidden sin to every person who suffers.

What the text says: Jesus warns this particular man about continuing in sin and about something worse. John does not identify a specific sin, explicitly explain the original disability, or tell us exactly what the worse outcome will be.

Interpretation: Some Christians understand the warning as implying a connection between this man’s conduct and suffering. Others emphasize the greater danger of final judgment, especially in light of John 5:24–29. The passage warrants a serious call to repentance; it does not settle every question about the man’s past.

Read alongside John 9:1–3: Jesus rejects the disciples’ assumption that a man’s blindness must be traced to his own sin or his parents’ sin. Scripture does not teach that every illness results from a specific personal sin. We may confess sins we actually know, while refusing to accuse ourselves or others simply because illness continues.

John 5:15–17 • The Son shares in the Father’s work

The man reports that Jesus healed him. John does not explain his motive, so we need not label the report either a courageous testimony or a deliberate betrayal. Opposition intensifies because Jesus is doing these things on the Sabbath.

JESUS’ ANSWER

“My Father is still working, and I am working also.”

John 5:17 (CSB)

Jesus grounds his action in his unique relationship with the Father. His answer is much larger than permission to carry a mat: his work belongs to the Father’s life-giving work. The next verse, John 5:18, explains that his opponents understand him to be making himself equal to God. Verses 19–23 develop the unity of the Father and Son and the Son’s authority to give life and receive honor.

John’s signs lead us toward faith in Jesus as the Messiah and Son of God (John 20:30–31). Bethesda points beyond one recovery to the One who gives life. We can pray for healing and trust him while we wait; this account does not promise immediate physical recovery to every believer. Our ultimate hope includes the redemption of our bodies (Romans 8:23).

Reflect: What do I need to repent of—and what suffering do I need to bring to Jesus without self-blame?

4. Prepare your own answers for Thursday

Prepare an honest answer rather than an impressive one. You may share a small part of your story, ask for prayer, or keep sensitive details private. Listen to others before offering explanations or advice.

Question 1 • Where do you feel stuck?

Begin with one specific place: a repeated conflict, an avoided apology, loneliness, a habit, uncertainty at work, or a season of suffering. Describe what is happening before judging yourself. John 5:7 reminds us that practical barriers and a lack of support can be real.

Then distinguish what you cannot control from what you can responsibly do. If the issue is sin, name it plainly. If it is grief, disability, another person's decision, or a limitation you did not choose, do not treat the situation itself as disobedience. You may need support as much as a challenge.

Ask yourself: How long has this felt stuck? What have I tried? What help do I need? Am I postponing a step that is actually available to me? Who could walk with me?

BEGIN YOUR ANSWER

"I feel stuck in _____. A real limitation is _____. My part to own is _____. I would value help or prayer for _____."

My answer to question 1

Question 2 • Why can change sometimes feel scary?

Change can expose what we have hidden, require an apology, disrupt familiar routines, or move us into uncertainty. Sometimes we fear another disappointment after trying before. Those are possible experiences we bring to the discussion; John does not tell us that fear of change caused this man's condition or response.

Examine the fear gently but truthfully. Is it wise caution, weariness, a need for safety or support, or a desire to keep control? What do you fear losing? Which part of Jesus' character helps you bring that fear to him? Courage can begin with asking someone trustworthy to help you take a small step.

BEGIN YOUR ANSWER

"Change feels scary because I fear _____. I see Jesus' _____ in this passage. A supported step I could take is _____."

My answer to question 2

5. Trust Jesus in one concrete area

Question 3 • What is one area where Jesus is asking you to trust Him?

Choose one area of life and connect it to something Jesus has actually taught. This question invites discernment through Scripture, prayer, and wise counsel; it does not require a private message from God or certainty about an impression.

You might need to speak truth without harshness, admit a wrong, ask for help, make room for a person you overlook, or entrust an outcome you cannot control. In a season of ongoing illness, trust may include receiving care and allowing your church to support you. Trust is not measured by whether symptoms disappear.

Prepare three details: the situation, the biblical truth guiding you, and the next action within your responsibility. Be specific about the difference between obeying Christ and trying to force the result you want.

BEGIN YOUR ANSWER

"I need to trust Jesus with _____. His Word directs me to _____. My next faithful action is _____, and the outcome I must entrust to him is _____."

My answer to question 3

An additional deeper group question

DISCUSS TOGETHER

How can our group call one another to repentance and faithful action while also becoming the people who help someone who says, "I have no one"?

Hold both parts of the passage together: Jesus takes suffering seriously, and he takes sin seriously. Which details show his initiative? What practical support could our group offer? Where might our assumptions or routines make it harder for someone to receive care? Avoid diagnosing another person's heart from the outside.

Practical application for this week

Choose an action that fits your actual responsibility. Offer an apology without defending yourself. Tell a trusted believer where you need support. Make the call you have delayed. Ask a lonely neighbor what would help. Put a clear boundary around a habit that leads you into sin. Choose one, and make it small enough to begin.

Before acting, pray for humility and wisdom. If another person is involved, listen to their needs instead of deciding for them. Afterward, reflect on your faithfulness and what you learned, even if the situation has not changed yet.

6. Between now and Thursday

Use these four short readings in order, about 10–15 minutes each. If Thursday is close, combine the first two sittings and finish with the final reading before your group meets.

First sitting • See the encounter

Read John 5:1–17 in the CSB without stopping. Then reread verses 1–7. Notice what Jesus knows, what he asks, and what the man says. Write one observation about Jesus and one honest need you want to bring to him.

Second sitting • Notice grace and response

Read John 5:8–17. Mark Jesus' commands and the different responses to him. Prepare your answers to "Where do you feel stuck?" and "Why can change sometimes feel scary?"

Third sitting • Read the difficult words in context

Read John 5:14–24 and John 9:1–3. Compare the call to repentance with Jesus' rejection of simplistic blame. Prepare your answer about trusting him. Optional: read Romans 8:18–25 for hope while healing is still awaited.

Before Thursday's group • Come ready

Reread John 5:1–17. Bring one insight about Jesus, one question, and one personal response you are comfortable sharing. Pray for someone in the group who may feel alone. Begin your chosen step before the meeting if possible, or set a clear time this week.

SCHEDULED CHALLENGE

Take one practical step you've been avoiding.

My step: _____ **By when:** _____

Support I need / the person I will ask: _____

Closing prayer

Lord Jesus, thank you for seeing people others overlook. Forgive my resistance where I know I need to obey. Meet me with grace in what I cannot change, and teach me to receive help. Give me courage for one faithful step and compassion for those who suffer. I entrust the outcome to you. Amen.

One insight or question to bring on Thursday

Sources: Small Group Schedule.txt, Week 5; CSB Bible.txt, John 5:1–17 and cross-references. Schedule wording is preserved; explanations and prompts are study commentary. Verse-numbering note: CSB footnote to John 5:3 (Bible Gateway).

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