

102. False Promises from Water, Real Love from God (John 5:1-15)

In the last two studies (John 3 and 4), we saw God's promises in water: the gifts of eternal life and the Holy Spirit. In the waters of baptism, God washes us clean from sin and He gives us new birth so we are members of His family. Some water has false promises. John 5:1-15 shows how one man trusted that false promise and false hope, but Jesus gave him what he really needed.

John 5:1-6. Jesus went to Jerusalem for a Jewish feast. In Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate, there is a pool of water. In the Hebrew language, that pool is named Bethesda. Five covered porches surround the pool. Many disabled people, the blind, lame, and paralyzed people all would lay there. One person was there for 38 years. Jesus saw him lying there and found out he was there for a long time. Jesus asked him, "Do you want to become healthy?"

- Why would Jesus ask him if he wants to become healthy? Shouldn't that be obvious?

John 5:7 The man answered, "Sir, when the water begins moving, no one will help me get in. I try to get in the water first, but someone else always gets there before me."

(It seems that people thought an angel came down and stirred the water. They thought the first person to get into the water would become healed.)

- What did the man believe in?
- We usually call that man's faith "superstition." Was his faith or superstition really able to help him?
- Some people say it is important for you to have faith. It doesn't matter what you believe in, you just need to have faith, because faith is what is important. What should we learn from this man's example?

John 5:8-9. Jesus said to the man, “Stand up! Pick up your mat and walk.” Immediately the man became healthy. He picked up his mat and walked.

- Did the man ask Jesus to heal him?
- Did Jesus tell the man he had to have “enough” faith to get healed?
- Because Jesus healed the man without the man asking, without requiring faith, what does that say about Jesus?

John 5:9-13. Jesus healed the man on a Sabbath day. So the Jews told the man who got healed, “Today is the Sabbath day. The law says you can’t carry your mat.” But the man said, “The man who healed me told me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”

- What day did Jesus heal the man?
- In Matthew 22:37-40, Jesus said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself. All the Law and Prophets depend on these two commandments.” Again and again, the Jews got mad at Jesus for healing people on the Sabbath. They said Jesus broke God’s law. The Jews said, “God’s law says don’t work on the Sabbath day.” How was Jesus obeying God’s law?

John 5:12-13. The Jews asked the man, “Who is the man who told you to pick up your mat and walk?” The man whom Jesus healed didn’t know. Jesus had walked away through the crowd of people and was gone.

- Which was more important to the Jews: that a man who couldn’t walk for 38 years was now healthy, or that they thought Jesus broke the law?

- Why did Jesus leave so fast? What does this say about Jesus and why He did this miracle?

John 5:14-15. Later Jesus found the man in the temple. Jesus told him, “Look, you are healthy again. Stop sinning or something worse might happen to you.” The man went and told the Jews that Jesus was the one who made him healthy.

- Why did Jesus tell the man to stop sinning? What could be worse than losing your health?
- Each time we see Jesus do something, we learn a little more about Him. Jesus looked for the man and found him in the temple. Why would Jesus go look for him? What does that say about Jesus?
- How did the man respond? What did he do? Why do you think he did that?