

We often treat Sabbath as our offering to God rather than His offering to us. Sabbath was given as a perpetual gift to continue through our lives. God intended us to enter and never have to leave. Sin interrupted that until Jesus came to offer a lifestyle of rest in God's provision. What Jesus did on the Sabbath is mostly about provision - providing for needs in the lives of people.

John 5:2-17 *Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew Bethesda, having five porticoes. In these lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, lame, and withered, waiting for the moving of the waters; for an angel of the Lord went down at certain seasons into the pool and stirred up the water; whoever then first, after the stirring up of the water, stepped in was made well from whatever disease with which he was afflicted. A man was there who had been ill for thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a long time in that condition, He said to him, "Do you wish to get well?" The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me." Jesus said to him, "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk." Immediately the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day. So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet." But he answered them, "He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.' " They asked him, "Who is the man who said to you, 'Pick up your pallet and walk'?" But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, "Behold, you have become well; do not sin anymore, so that nothing worse happens to you." The man went away, and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well. For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath. But He answered them, "My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working."*

People were gathered at the pool for a specific reason - believing their healing was one move away. The crippled man had been laying there for 38 years. Imagine the frustration of being close to your deliverance but not able to experience it. This group of people had issues and they congregated together as defined by their issues. We tend to congregate and identify with our issues the same way.

The Bible tells many times of others' issues but not their names. Sometimes our issues and weaknesses become bigger than our names or how God sees us. We need to remember what God says about us instead of our past. Jesus saw the one man and knew what it was about him. Jesus could have healed all of them but Jesus asked one man, "Do you want to be made well?" Jesus was looking for the one. Jesus was saying that there is a responsibility to healing - you cannot stay the same. Jesus goes to the heart without pity, validation, or joining him in his pain. It begins with a question of being done with the miserable life that I am living.

To heal means to make whole. What in our lives needs to be made whole? Brokenness? circumstances? This was about the man's desire. Jesus asks him about his desire to leave it all behind. Be honest - do you want to remain the same? or move beyond it? You can't become whole and remain a victim - either we hold on to the past or move on into the future. There is a responsibility to being healed. Jesus was creating something new in the man so that he would not come back.

Verse 7 - *The sick man answered Him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me."* This man had been there so long that he could only see one solution to the problem. When Jesus asked the question, the man answered with an excuse, pointing to others for his circumstances. Have you considered that there may be more than one way to find wholeness? The man's healing was standing right in front of him - Jesus. Have we given up on an alternative solution to a struggle?

Isaiah 55:8 *"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways," declares the Lord. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts."*

Psalms 50:21... *You thought that I was just like you...*

Have you been paralyzed by an issue in life? Do your own solutions fall short of God's deliverance? Aloneness and pain are deep and held captive by our focused solutions. Some of us are not saying yes to Jesus because we identify to the past or to an unfair experience. Jesus wants to make us whole. Your past does not have to define your future. Your past doesn't get to dictate who you become.

Jesus reveals Himself as the solution and is not distant from our struggles, grief, or pain. Jesus didn't wait because of the man's excuses and came to bring the solution. Jesus says those issues will not carry you anymore. You begin to carry them as Jesus carries us. The issues don't define us. The moment you move into that kind of life, others will try to talk you out of it, like the Pharisees did to the man on the Sabbath. Reminders of the past will come to steal but Jesus finds you and you become well. You are not defined by those things of the past but of who you are in Christ. This means finding peace and rest and finding freedom that God gives to those willing to ask. Find rest in God's abundant provision.

What does that mat represent to you? Unforgiveness? bitterness? abuse?

Have you been so focused on one solution that you were surprised when God offered another solution?

What can you choose to let go of that you're holding on to so that you can receive what God wants to give you this week?

What do you find new about Jesus' rhythm for the Sabbath?