

TOUGH LOVE

Introduction

This Bible story is about a disabled person who waited hopefully at a pool that had a reputation of healing the first person who got in when the water was stirred. Jesus stopped to talk to this man and asked him a very interesting question: "Do you want to get well?"

Listen to this story as it is read. Then, move into groups of 4 and discuss the questionnaire.

1. How would you feel if you had been disabled for 38 years like the man in this story?
 - helpless and dependent
 - bitter and angry
 - discouraged and depressed
 - accepting of my condition
2. How would you have felt when Jesus asked you, "Do you want to get well?"
 - insulted
 - challenged
 - hopeful
 - cared for
 - mocked
 - cynical
3. Where is the "watering hole" for the dropouts in your school or community?
4. If Jesus asked these people, "Do you want to get well?" what would they say?
 - "I want to get well, but my friends won't help me."
 - "My parents have ruined my life."
 - "I have a learning disability."
 - "I was abused as a child."
 - "I can't break my addiction."
 - "My gang would kill me if I left."
 - "I'm not sick!"

THE HEALING AT THE POOL

5 Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. ²Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. ³Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. ⁴One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. ⁵When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

⁶“Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

⁷Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.”

⁸At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, ¹⁰and so the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.”

¹¹But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”

¹²So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?”

¹³The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

¹⁴Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” ¹⁵The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had made him well.

John 5:1–15

5. Who has shown you “tough love”?
- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> my father | <input type="checkbox"/> a teacher |
| <input type="checkbox"/> my mother | <input type="checkbox"/> a coach |
| <input type="checkbox"/> my brother / sister | <input type="checkbox"/> a friend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> another family member | <input type="checkbox"/> a counselor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a pastor / group leader | <input type="checkbox"/> a group like this |
6. How well do you accept tough love? How well do you show tough love to others?
7. What is the closest Jesus has come to saying to you, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk”?
- when I turned my life over to him
- when I experienced his healing
- when I had a self-pity problem
- when I was overly dependent on others
- when I lost my will to get better
- other: _____
8. If Jesus were to stop by the “watering hole” where you hang out, what would he probably ask you?
- “Do you want to get well?”
- “What are you doing with your life?”
- “Are you satisfied with what you are doing?”
- “Are you looking for the real thing?”
- “When will you quit complaining and be content?”
9. When you go through something that leaves you feeling like a cripple, what have you found helpful?
- time alone with God
- talking things over with a friend
- getting back into a spiritual discipline
- being in a group or church like this
- listening to music
- getting a good night’s sleep
- admitting I have blown it and getting on with life
10. What connection between your physical and spiritual health have you noticed? When do you find yourself getting physically sick over problems in other areas of your life?
11. What ailments—physical, spiritual or otherwise—does Jesus need to treat in your life?