

him!” The doctor had no clue about who or what needed to be forgiven, but it was clear that the woman was crippled from her *unmet need to be forgiving*.]

3. “*Let go and let God*” is a divine prescription for receiving healing and an *attitude* we need in mind in coming to Holy Communion.
 - a. We can’t accept *grace* when holding on to *disgrace*. (We must clean out our souls by confession to make room for forgiveness.)
 - b. We can’t hold on to *old hurts and wounds*, if we want to receive *healing for them*. (Leave them on the Table of the Cross, where *our Lord took them into His own body and soul*.)
 - c. We cannot receive *God’s wholeness* for our *own broken souls* if we have a tight grip on the sins that touched us from other broken lives. (From that Cross, Jesus showed us how to pray, “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.” Yes, *let go and let God*.)

CONCLUSION:

–**God’s desire for our wholeness, our ultimate wholeness, starts with our minds** and manifests in our wills. By His grace, we can choose wholeness of spirit by *new birth in Christ*. That’s the first st ep. But for an *ongoing, healthy, victorious soul-life*, we must *keep in step with Christ*, through the Holy Spirit. It isn’t automatic: we *choose to receive our new life in Christ*, and we *choose to live out* our new life in Christ. –God is a *God of healing*. The life and ministry of Jesus attests to that. The fact that we’re all physically here tonight shows that we’ve felt His healing touch again and again. Even now, He’s at work on more that needs healing in our lives, and it will take going to Heaven to find the final healing of some things. But, as we go to the Lord’s Table, let’s be attentive to where He wants us whole and healthy in our hearts and minds at this stage of our journey. He’s asking, “*Do you want to get well?*”

43-05-01-Do You Want to Get Well?

illness, perspective, healing

John 5:6

God desires our wholeness, starting with our minds.

INTRODUCTION:

–We want to know things, so we ask God questions. Often, they’re *why* questions: “*Why did You let that happen?*” Or they’re *what* questions: “*What do You want me to do?*” Many of our prayers are essentially yes-or-no questions: “*Please, will You do this for me?*” But Bruce Larson, in *What God Wants to Know*, said that God has many questions for us.

–I want to talk about one of them, so listen for in this passage, John 5:1-9 (NKJV), ¹After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ²Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, which is called in Hebrew, **Bethesda**, having five porches. ³In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water. ⁴For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then whoever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had. ⁵Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. ⁶When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he already had been in that condition a long time, He said to him, “**Do you want to be made well?**” ⁷The 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.” ⁸Jesus said to him, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.” ⁹And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath. *Did you hear it? What was it?* Listen again to the full verse in the NIV translation– John 5:6, *When 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?” That’s actually the title for this message.*

–[The subject of healing and the human mind is like the pool the angel stirred up: only occasionally. But lately I’ve stepped deeper in that pool by studying more about *psychology and counseling*, even though I’m still wading at the shallow end!]

–[When working ER & Psych (still an “RN”–*retired nurse*), I saw many *failures* in medical treatments of *physical and mental illnesses*. That skewed my perception of people getting well. But 35 years ago, we started coming to CFO camp, which had an emphasis on *healing*, and eventually my perspective on healing got healed!]

–Perspective guides focus; it narrows our perceptions and expectations. Bruce Larson’s daughter told him of a vacation her sister-in-law’s family had in Florida. Driving along the coast, they saw a sign: *Naturalist Camp*. What they thought meant *naturalist camp* actually meant *nudist camp*. After they parked on the beach, a naked group on bicycles passed by them. Their little 5-yr old boy exclaimed, “*Look, Mom and Dad, they’re not wearing safety helmets.*” The little boy viewed things by his expectations: if you ride a bike you have to put on your safety helmet!]

–God asks questions not for His learning but so that we can learn about ourselves. He asks “*Do you want to get well?*” to help us move our focus from what’s wrong in our lives to a focus on our attitude. **God desires our wholeness, starting with our minds.** *Why there? It’s because of...*

I. Where Our Thinking Can Bring Us

- A. The “man... [with] an infirmity thirty-eight years” thought, “*I’m helpless.*”
1. We see this in his evasive answer to Jesus’ question (**not** a direct, expected answer: “*Of course! Absolutely! When do we start?*”)
 2. Not a *positive* answer but an explanation: “*I have issues to talk about before ‘getting well.’*” (also **not** a direct response to Jesus)
 3. BUT although Jesus saw his condition (“lying there” *helpless*), and knew his circumstances (paralyzed “38 years”), He aimed a **special question** at the **most important target**: the man’s *mental attitude*.
- B. Verbalized mental complaints usually have an unhealthy focus:
1. a victimization perspective– “*I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred.*” (“*Family, friends, and society have failed me! I’d be doing fine by now, if only others had done their part!*”)
 2. or a focus on dashed hopes and shattered dreams– “*While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.*” (As victims, we say...
 - a. “*I did ‘try harder, as I was told, but it got me nowhere!’*” OR
 - b. “*Others get all the breaks! God’s must be against me!*”– such an attitude reverses God’s question: “*Do You want me to get well?*” and reveal the doubt that our healing is God’s will.)

TRANS: God’s answer to that reversed question is a 100% “YES!” But our “yes” to His “*Do you want to get well?*” is not always said with 100% confidence. This is why, **in bringing us to wholeness, He starts with our minds**. This paralyzed man was also paralyzed by a mindset of victimization and hopelessness that led him into despair. But it also led him to a place called *Bethesda* [“house of grace”]. In his perspective, acts of grace came to others, but never to him. Then he met Jesus...

II. Jesus Brought Grace in His Question, “Do you want to get well?”

- A. His question offered this man much more than a miracle:
1. People seeking miracles aren’t always seeking God. (Some healed at the Bethesda pool went home happy but *without the Healer*.)

2. God wants His miracles to create in people a thirst for Him.
 3. Jesus offered personal interaction that no healing pool could give, and this same question offers us today that same interaction!
- B. But His question also validates the power of human free-will:
1. Psychology & psychosomatic medicine testify that our *thoughts* affect the *body*. (Our *self* is a union of “spirit, soul and body.”)
 2. Human wills can collaborate with health or work against it [**Bruce Larson**’s relative was told he’d die in 6 months if he didn’t stop smoking and drinking. He said he’d rather die in 6 than live 50 abstaining. He died in 3.]
 3. By addressing the will, Jesus’ question puts the responsibility for wholeness back into the hand of all those who need it:
 - a. It calls us to abandon blaming and complaining [**Carl Rogers**, so successful in small group therapy, said that *only one kind of counselee was hopeless: the one who blames others for his or her problems.*”]
 - b. It holds us accountable for a choice between positive or negative thinking [**Martin Seligman**, in *Learned Optimism*, says that we all have in our hearts a *yes* or a *no*. We respond to life either negatively or positively. If we can learn to put the *yes* into practice, it will change the course of our lives.]

TRANS: Those healed at the Bethesda pool finally died, as did the man in this story. Until Jesus returns to establish “a new heaven and new earth,” physical healing is temporary. God’s full restoration of the body comes on Resurrection Day. But **His desire for our wholeness starts with our minds right now!**

III. Do We Want the Wholeness God Offers Us Now?

- A. God’s question “*Do you want to get well?*” leads us to ask ourselves...
1. *Will we trust His diagnosis of what needs healing in us?*
 2. *Will we agree to the treatment He prescribes for our special case?*
 3. *Will we stay on His healing regimen? Will we follow the Great Physician’s orders?* (If we won’t, we have a poor prognosis.)
- B. If we’re serious about wanting “to get well,” there’s another *crucial* question to ask ourselves: *Will we make room for God’s healing?*
1. Jesus told us, “Give and it shall be given unto you.” (Are we ready to give *wholeness* to others in our *thoughts, words, and deeds*?)
 2. Jesus taught us to pray, “Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.” [One doctor asked a lady with a sudden onset of crippling rheumatoid arthritis, “*Has anything unusual happened to you recently?*” “*Oh, yes,*” she replied, “*I know exactly what you mean, and furthermore, I have no intention of forgiving*”