

The Healer & Life-Giver

John 5:1-30, 31-47



The Healer

- ❑ Read [John 5:1-18](#).¹ At a pool in Jerusalem, Jesus approached a man who had been disabled for thirty-eight years. Jesus asked him, “Do you want to get well?” (5:6)²
- ❑ The pool supposedly had healing powers when the water was stirred. In response to Jesus’ question, the man said he lacked opportunity to benefit from these powers. He did not realize that Jesus had the healing powers he really needed. In any case, Jesus healed him.
 1. Jesus’ physical healings were commonly connected with faith. However, faith is not evident in this story. The man did not even know the identity of his healer (5:13). What does this indicate about Jesus’ abilities and purposes?³
- ❑ The significance of the man’s healing was missed by the Jews (i.e., the Jewish religious authorities). Instead they focused on the man’s supposed violation of the Sabbath law (5:9b-10).⁴ In response, the man shifted the blame to his healer, but he did not know who he was (5:11).
- ❑ Later, Jesus found the man at the temple. Jesus told him, “Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you” (5:14).⁵ The man needed to repent (turn from his sin and turn to God). He needed much more than physical healing.
- ❑ After the man identified Jesus as the healer (5:15) the Jewish leaders began persecuting Jesus because of his actions on the Sabbath (5:16). Jesus responded, “My Father is always at work to this very day, and I too am working” (5:17).⁶
 2. Why were the Jews so angry toward Jesus? (5:18)
- ❑ Was Jesus really “making himself equal with God?”



¹ ‘one of the Jewish festivals’ (v. 1) – perhaps Passover, Tabernacles, or Trumpets. ‘invalid’ (v. 5) – disabled, maybe paralyzed (a loss of power to move or feel parts of the body) or lame (leg or foot problem affecting ability to walk). ‘learned’ (v. 6) – Greek *gnous* – ‘having come to know’ or ‘knew’ (ESV) perhaps indicating supernatural knowledge.

² We would normally expect a disabled person to want healing, so Jesus’ question may seem strange. John does not tell us why Jesus asked this question. Perhaps the man needed to acknowledge his need and indicate his desire and will for healing. Maybe he was okay with being a beggar, which could be a profitable way of living. In any case, Jesus initiated contact with the disabled man, who apparently did not regard Jesus as a possible healer (v. 7).

³ It should be noted that this story clearly talks about physical healing but not necessarily spiritual salvation. Jesus often healed in response to a needy person’s faith (*Matthew 9:21-22; Mark 10:52*) or to the faith of an advocate (*Matthew 8:13; 15:28*), but faith was not clearly evident in all of Jesus’ physical healings. The main purpose of his healing activity was to direct attention to Jesus’ mission and identity, not to the faith of the person being healed.

⁴ The Law said, ‘you shall not do any work’ on the Sabbath [which normally means Saturday] (*Exodus 20:10*). Actually, the man did not violate the Law according to the Scriptures, but rather the Jew’s over-strict interpretation of the law. Other Sabbath controversies are recorded in *Mark 2:23-3:6* and *Luke 13:10-17* and *14:1-6*.

⁵ Though suffering is often *not* connected to a particular sin, it may have been in this case. ‘Something worse’ may refer to the eternal consequences of sin, which are much worse than physical illness and disability.

⁶ All agreed that God is continually working (providence), but God is not violating the Sabbath because he is above the Law. For Jesus to apply this to himself, he must be saying that he also is above the Law. Because of his close relationship with the Father, he could connect his work to the Father’s work. Jesus’ reference to the Father offended the Jews. Jews might refer to God as ‘our Father’ in corporate worship, but Jesus’ use of ‘my Father’ was uniquely personal. Elsewhere Jesus said he was ‘Lord of the Sabbath,’ indicating his authority over it (*Mark 2:27-28*).

The Life-Giver

- ❑ Read John 5:19-30. Jesus continued to describe the unique closeness of his relationship with God the Father (5:19-30). The Son (Jesus) cannot act independently of the Father. He is one with the Father. The Son does only the Father's will (5:19).⁷
 3. What particular activities of God does Jesus claim to do? (5:21-23)
- ❑ The Jews would agree that only God can raise the dead and give them life. But Jesus claimed that "the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it" (5:21).⁸
- ❑ The Jews would agree that God is "the Judge all of the earth" (*Genesis 18:25*). But Jesus claimed that God the Father has given "authority to judge" to the Son (5:22, 27).⁹
 4. What does Jesus say is needed for "eternal life"?¹⁰ What is needed to "cross over from death to life"?¹¹ Why is this needed? (5:24-26)
 5. Jesus talked about "hearing [his] word" (5:24) and "hearing the voice of the Son of God"? (5:25) How can we truly "hear Jesus" today, and help others "hear"?

Witnesses to Jesus

- ❑ Jesus spoke of several witnesses that give testimony about him (*John 5:31-47*). These witnesses include: John the Baptist (5:33-34; 1:7-8, 15, 19, 32-34; 3:26), Jesus' works (5:36); God the Father (5:32; 37-38); and the Scriptures, including Moses (5:39, 45-47).
- ❑ These witnesses, and others, testify that Jesus is who he claims to be. But Jesus said to those who rejected him, "yet you refuse to come to me and have life" (5:40).

The Light & You

- Jesus is the Healer and the Life-Giver. Do you want what Jesus offers? Actually, everyone *needs* what Jesus offers. Have you heard his word, and believed? Have you accepted the testimony about Jesus? If not, seek to know more about Jesus. Seek to hear his voice.
- Brothers and sisters, are you focusing on Jesus – the Healer and Life-Giver? Are you praising God for the gift of eternal life? Are you giving testimony about Jesus?

⁷ "Jesus' claim that 'the Son can do nothing [by himself]' taken with vv. 17-18, affirms two themes: (1) Jesus is equal to God, i.e., he is fully divine (vv.17-18); (2) the Father and Son have different functions and roles (v. 19), and the Son is subject to the Father in everything he does, yet this does not deny their fundamental equality." (*ESV Study Bible* [Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008], 2031). This teaching needs to be understood in the context of the 'Trinity.'

⁸ When Jews thought about God raising people from the dead, they thought of the future resurrection (in the age to come). The Gospel of John reveals that Jesus' voice will call forth the physically dead in the future, on the last day (5:28), but his life-giving also includes the giving of eternal life here and now (5:24-25; 3:15-16, 36).

⁹ The Father has given Jesus the authority to judge 'because he is the Son of Man' (5:27), which alludes to the 'son of man' in Daniel 7:13-14, who was 'given authority, glory and sovereign power.' The Father has given Jesus this authority 'that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father' (5:23). This claim implies Jesus' deity.

¹⁰ 'eternal life' (*zōē aiōnios* – 'life pertaining to an age') – It is the 'life of the age (*aiōn*) to come,' which is endless. Thus the adjective *aiōnios* means 'without end, everlasting, or eternal.' However, 'eternal life' is not mere endless existence. It is life in union with the only true, eternal God who 'has life in himself' (5:26). God is *the* Source of life. We are united with God through faith in Jesus Christ. 'Eternal life' is the ultimate quality of life.

¹¹ 'the [spiritually] dead' (5:25), which includes all of us in our fallen condition, need 'the life God has in himself.'