

For thirty-eight years, a lame man has lived at the [Pools of Bethesda](#). It sits near the Sheep Gate, or market, outside the temple. A place bustling with life, health, and wellness. The people hurrying through, turn a blind eye to the suffering, broken outcasts who lived at the nearby pools.

They are unmoved by what they see, jaded by the normality of walking past it so often. Immune to the brokenness that lives within this place known as [The House Of Mercy](#). They avoid it, because they are whole. They scurry past, full of life as they go about their day.

Did the Lame Man, living inside the walls of this place, grow discouraged? Did he think life would change, that it would ever get better for him? Had he given up hope that he could be whole again?

And then one day, perhaps on his way into the temple, Jesus arrives on the scene. He notices the hurting, the sick, the lame, the broken. He pauses and doesn't rush past. He doesn't avoid eye contact. He's not frightened of their ailments. He walks among the suffering.

Does Jesus see a loss of hope in the Lame Man, or is it a sense of hope? What caused Jesus to pause in the chaos of those who yearned for healing to single this one man out? Jesus came as the answer to what the Lame Man most needed, but Jesus asks him the question all the same.

This Lame Man is broken, and he's been that way for thirty-eight years. So Jesus gives him the choice to remain in the discomfort of the brokenness that the Lame Man has always known, or to be healed. The choice is his. And when Jesus asked him, "Would you like to be made whole?"

The Lame Man doesn't say yes. He doesn't cry out, "Heal me if you are able, I believe." Instead, he says, "Sir, I have no one to help me get into the water." A simple excuse. Permission to stay just as he was. Broken. Unhealed.

"When I try to get into the water myself, people get in the way," he finishes.

How defeating that sounds, to want to be healed, and incapable of reaching the one thing you believe will make you well. But then, this Lame Man has been living here by the pools for thirty-eight years. Four hundred fifty-six months. Thirteen thousand eight hundred seventy days. And I wonder, did he ever think to put himself right there by the edge of the pool?

Did he ever ask anyone to be ready to throw him in the minute the waters begin to stir? Did he consider that even if it took him a year to make his way up to the edge of the pool, he could have laid there, waiting, watching, and rolling in the minute the waters stirred?

Or did he give up and accept that this was his fate? It seems unlikely since he's still living by the pools seeking healing, yearning for wholeness. But was he actively pursuing the dream of being healed, or was he too busy relying on his ready excuses?

This man is laying there waiting for the angels to stir the water, and Jesus shows up instead. But it's the wrong time. There's no stirring of the water. Yet God didn't let him miss out on the blessing that was sitting right there. Offering him the chance of a lifetime.

Jesus doesn't tell him to get in the water. He doesn't offer to stay with him until the waters stir. He doesn't lay a hand on him. Instead, he simply says, "Get up, take your bed and walk."

I wonder what the Lame Man was thinking at that moment?

He must have a sense of belief that it's possible, since he'd given thirty-eight years of his life living near the pools, knowing that if he could just touch the water, he would be healed. And then, with those words, it happens. Instantly, the man is whole again. He believed, despite the bold challenge to walk when he was formerly incapable.

Despite his earlier statement that he couldn't get in the waters before others, that no one would help him. When Jesus said, "Get up and walk." The man didn't say, "Well, you see, I can't, because I'm kinda lame, and the waters aren't rumbling, and..."

He doesn't wait for the perfect moment. He doesn't wait for help. He doesn't mention the crowd of people being so thick that they'd be in his way if he tried to move. He simply got up

and took a step, accepting Jesus' statement.

Is it a shaky step after so many years of immobility? Does he run on the spot in joy at his newly gained freedom? Does he feel a change inside to know he can walk, or does he just believe, in that moment?

And then, right there in the midst of wholeness and joy, an even more bizarre thing happens.

For thirty-eight years, this man has lived with some form of ailment that prevents him from leaving the hope that the pools of Bethesda offer. He's laid there, hoping, yearning, wanting. But never being healed.

People pass him by every day. Maybe on their way to the market. Maybe family members who came to offer support to their loved ones. Maybe people who'd been healed and gone home. Either way, no one's given this man much consideration in the thirty-eight years of his brokenness. No one stood at the ready to help him into the pools.

And then, suddenly, he comes out carrying a sleeping mat on the Sabbath, and the **Jewish Leaders** notice him. The same people who, had they really known the God of Moses, would have cared about those living by the pool. Maybe they would have known their names, known their ailments. Maybe they would have helped them get into the water before thirty-eight years passed by.

But these leaders were about their rules. Some man-made and some God-given. They were missing the bigger picture: a man who'd been lame for thirty-eight years and now he's healed by someone claiming to be the Son of God. But they're offended. Offended that the Lame Guy is carrying a mat. That this Jesus had the gull to heal someone on the Sabbath.

The Jewish Leaders are so busy trying to fit in and win everyone else's approval they left themselves outside of their own miracle. Of witnessing and understanding that the One they'd waited so long for had finally arrived. Not with sword and stallion, but with loving kindness. Plain, simple, and overflowing with compassion for others. He's seen the God these people claim to worship, and calls him Father.

And Jesus, he doesn't take it personally. Instead, he says, "I say these things so that you can be made whole."

These Leaders who don't know they're broken, who can't grasp that they're wrong. They're offended that someone sees their spiritual brokenness. And they reject the One who can heal them, too. They wallow in their own brokenness because they can't accept the challenge.

The challenge, so bold, that it disrupts their false beliefs and calls them out of the comfort of their sin. And yet, they turn a deaf ear to it. They close their minds and hearts a little tighter, wallowing in their own infirmity of unbelief, which keeps them from the redemptive healing of their Holy God.

That Lame Guy, who's now whole. Does he know that the Jewish Leaders had it out for the man who healed him? Does he recognize the Son of God? Does he become a follower of Jesus? Does he return to the pools in the House Of Mercy to help others? Does he share the story of his own miracle? Does he become a chain reaction of people who believe simply because he's now made whole?

And what about me? Do I accept the wholeness that God has freely given? Yearn for it every day and actively pursue it? Do I look to God to heal my hurt and make me whole? Can I boldly say, "I'm ready to walk with you, Lord?" and slip my hand in His as I set about my day?

Let it be so.



Author's Note:

This is something I wrote back in April and shared with a small group of women from my church. At the time we were studying [John chapter 5](#) on our own, and then presented our findings to each other on [Thursday mornings](#).

I was struggling to sum up my thoughts, and decided to just start writing and see what happened, and this was the result. I debated for days about trying to summarize it, or finding a more formal way to present it, but in the end I shared what was on my heart.

Stretching myself outside of my normal comfort zone isn't always easy. In fact, it's often quite difficult for me, especially sharing my heart with people. I often hold my cards close, and only a very limited number of people know what they look like.

So, here I am, stretching myself again as I share this small piece with you. It's different from what I normally write, and I admit I've argued with myself about posting it. But this has been a week full of appointments, [ambiguous grieving](#), and lots of emotional highs and lows. In order to share something here, I had to pull from the vaults, and this is the selection I made.

I hope you enjoyed it.

The Reluctant Author 