

Title: What Do You Want?
Text: John 5:1- 9
Key Word: Conditions for God's Miracle
Proposition: Everyone can experience God's miracle by meeting these biblical conditions.

When you look around at the people who attend church on Sunday, what do you see? Do you see impressive people, dressed in fine clothes, who have it all together? Or do you see hurting people in need of comfort; troubled people in need of peace; sick people who need healing?

When you look at this church family what do you see? A downtown church with a rich history of community involvement, diverse worship styles, warm and friendly people, dynamic children's and student ministries, and a heart for suffering people around the world? Do you see a church with financial challenges?

When you look at our world what do you see? A world filled with abundant resources, diverse cultures, creative and compassionate people? Or do you see a world where natural disasters leave behind a wake of destruction, homelessness, and death, a world where greed and materialism has raped human dignity and the environment; a world filled with violence, war, and prejudice; a world paralyzed by hopelessness and fear. What do you see around this "pool of Be-thes-da?"

Marshall Hayden wrote an article a few years ago entitled, "Would Every Non-Hurter Please Stand Up?" He wrote, "Over here is a family with an income of \$550 a week and an outgo of \$1,000. Over there is a family with two children who, according to their dad, are "failures." He constantly tells them, "You're stupid. You

never do anything right," The lady over there just found a tumor that tested positive. The Smith's little girl has a hole in her heart.

"Sam & Louise just had a nasty fight. Each is thinking of divorce. Last Monday Jim learned that he was being laid off. That teen over there feels like he is in the middle, pulled in both directions. Parents & church pull one way, peers & glands pull another.

"Then there are those of us with lesser hurts, but just as significant: an unresponsive spouse, a boring job, a poor grade, a friend or parent who is unresponsive ...on & on the stories go. The lonely, the dying, the discouraged, the exhausted, they're all here."

The same could be said of the church and world. We're all hurting. We're all looking for solutions for our problems, remedies for our challenges. We're all looking for hope and healing. We're all looking for a miracle. Or what we're really looking for is the God of Miracles.

Out of his love, God both shouts and whispers, *"Hey there! All you are thirsty come to the water! Are you penniless? Come anyway—buy and eat! Come and buy your drinks, buy wine and milk. Buy without money—everything's free! Seek Me while I'm here to be found, pray to me while I'm close to hand.* (Isaiah 55:1ff)

He may not heal every problem immediately. Jesus said that we will have trouble in this world. But He can resolve life's serious problems if we actively, obediently trust in Him. Sometimes He resolves the problem immediately, even

miraculously. Other times, He grants the power to endure the difficulty & triumph over it.

John tells us story of a lame man at the pool of Be-thes-da where we see Jesus perform a miracle. This man had been unable to walk for 38 years. He had lost all hope and his self worth.

Out of compassion, Jesus healed him. Let's see how Jesus moved this man from a hopeless situation to a hopeful witness. Let's see how this man met some biblical conditions for a miracle. If we want a miracle then we too meet the same conditions.

First, Anticipate a “stirring” before the miracle. (v. 7) John tells us that hundreds of sick people—blind, crippled, paralyzed—were in this area. They were all expecting, anticipating the waters to be stirred by an angel, for they believed that once the waters were stirred all they needed to do was to immerse themselves in the stirring and then healing, transformation, a miracle would occur. They were all looking for the stirring because they knew that when the water was irritated a miracle would be initiated.

Friends, let's imagine that we're by the pool of Be-thes-da, anticipating a stirring which proceeds the miracle. Would we like to see an improvement to your cash flow? Would you like to see your parents offering encouragement? Would you like to experience a healing? Would you like to see your life free of addictive behaviors? Would you like to see yourself secure in whom you are as a Child of the

King? Would you like to see this church set free to expand our children's and student's ministries? Would you like to see this church providing bricks for an orphanage in Tanzania or meals to starving Mexicans? For every dollar you give to the Miracle offering, \$.10 will go buying bricks for Tanzania and meals for our brothers and sisters in Mexico.

Would you like to see this church increase its worship attendance? Would you like to see our church free from our debt so that we can fully pursue God's dream for our lives? Friends, the water is stirring, but like the lame man we need someone to help us into the pool.

We must let go of our excuses. We must surrender any complaints. How often do we hear people say things like, "I'd stop drinking if my wife would quit nagging me!" "I'd work harder, but no one appreciates my effort." "I'd make better grades, but my teacher doesn't like me." "I'd be more generous if I didn't want to buy this or that?" I too have wrestled with these excuses. We all have a difficult time taking responsibility. We blame heredity, environment, and circumstances - everything except ourselves. Yet the Lord says I have something better if we accept responsibility for our lives. Paul wrote, *"Each of us will give an account of himself to God."* (Romans 14:12) Heredity & environment play a part in influencing us, but we can rise above that if we want to. Some of the world's best people had terrible pasts. Some of the most privileged people wind up being complete failures.

Maybe it's time to quit blaming others & say with the old spiritual, "It's me, it's me, O Lord, standin' in the need of prayer. Not my brother, not my sister, but it's me, O Lord, standin' in the need of prayer."

Second, Aim your attention on Jesus who identifies your need. It seems to me that Jesus and this man had a connection. I strongly suspect that this man knew that Jesus penetrating question came out of His love. Love always precedes a miracle. Love draws faith out. Love compels us to let go all that is keeping us from knowing God's power. Love initiates transformation. Love moves our attention from our problems to the One who offers infinite possibilities.

As we open up our lives to God and aim our attention on Him, he knows what to put right and what to repair. After all, he formed us and fashioned us in the first place. Jesus the great physician knows the right remedy because he is able to diagnose the exact problem. So let's aim our attention on Him.

Third, Acknowledge ones need. (v.6) *"Do you want to get well?" "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred..."* Jesus encouraged the man to identify what he wanted. That sounds like an absurd question. Of course this man wanted to get well! You wouldn't ask a starving man, "Do you want food?" would you?"

Actually, it was a very valid question, for there are people, churches, and even nations who, if given an opportunity for healing, renewal, or recovery, might actually choose to remain sick or paralyzed in the status quo. Right now they're free of some

unpleasant responsibilities. They get sympathy by complaining about their sickness. They feel safe staying the same, getting the same predictable results. They can manipulate people by being sick, or punish themselves if they feel guilty.

So when Jesus asked, "*Do you want to get well?*" He seems to be saying, "You have friends who bring you here. You've developed friendships with others who come here regularly. If I heal you, your life will do a complete turnaround. You'll be free to get a job & relate to people on a different basis. Are you ready for that change? Are you ready for a miracle? Do you really want to get well?"

That's a question we need to answer. What do we want? Do you want to lose weight? Do you want to get along with your spouse? Do you want your kid's to have confidence in God? Do you want to be free from addictions? Do you want financial freedom? Do you want kids and students of this community to know the love of Jesus Christ? Do you want orphans in Tanzania and Mexico to have a safe and secure home? Do you want starving people all over the world to have food? Do you want this church to have the financial resources to fulfill our vision to develop radiant followers of Jesus Christ? Let's echo the words of Paul, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me*" Philippians 4:13.

Finally, Attempt the impossible. (v8,9) "*Jesus said, 'Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.'* *At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.*" Jesus frequently required a dedicated effort on the part of a person requesting healing. Not always, but often, He required a response of faith before He would heal. He said to

the 10 lepers, *"Go show yourself to the priests,"* & as they went they were healed. He said to the man with a withered hand, *"Stretch forth your hand."* When the man made the effort, his hand was healed. Jesus put clay on the eyes of a blind man & said, *"Go wash in the pool of Siloam."* When he washed, he could see.

Jesus said to this man, *"Pick up your mat & walk."* This was a test of his resolve, & of his willingness to help himself. Jesus asked the man to attempt the one thing that he hadn't done for 38 years. When the man made the effort, he was healed at once. He had to attempt the impossible. If we want to experience a miracle, we must respond with such active faith.

Do we want it so intensely that we're willing to work long hours & endure pain? It may mean doing vigorous exercise & following a disciplined program. It may mean swallowing pride. It may mean getting up earlier to read the Bible or denying a golf game to attend a church function. It may mean that you quit wallowing in self-pity. It may mean saying "No" to pleasure or terminating a tempting relationship. It may mean selling something for the sake of others. It may mean sacrificing several meals out so others may be free. It may mean giving our most precious commodity, our time, in the service of others. It may mean trading in our gas guzzler for a gas saver. It may mean continuing ones level of giving, trusting God to provide in the midst of an unknown future.

We see how wonderful Jesus was to this man. He saw the whole man, not just a fragment. He saw his possibilities, not just his handicap. He was concerned about his soul, not just his body. Jesus made him completely whole.

We are all handicapped by sin. We can't heal ourselves. All the suggested cures of this world are futile. But the blood-stained hands of Jesus reached out to us.

"He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, & by His wounds we are healed"

[Isaiah 53:5].

There is healing power in the touch of Jesus. He is reaching out to us today church. He wants to set us free from our debt so that we can be free to generously, sacrificially love. He is standing by our pool of Be-thes-da. What do we want? Its time to take up our mat and walk.