

## Living The Good Life, Part 4

- The writings of John are unique among the four gospels:
  - **MISSING FROM JOHN:** Jesus' genealogy, birth & childhood, baptism & temptation, transfiguration & ascension, parables!
  - **UNIQUE TO JOHN:** the wedding at Cana, the conversation with Nicodemus, the woman at the well, the woman caught in adultery, the raising of Lazarus, and the man at the pool of Bethesda (today's subject)
- Could you imagine sharing the gospel without resorting to terms like 'born again' or being able to quote this verse?

**John 3:16** For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

- Could you imagine funeral services without access to this verse?

**John 11:25** Jesus said unto her, I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live:
- We have John alone to thank for these things! In fact, 90% of the material in John is unique to him; that is, it is not duplicated in any form in the other three gospels.
- Why is John's gospel so different? Because he has the perspective of more than a half-century of "Spirit-filled living" ... (1) he wants to prove that Jesus is Almighty God in flesh, (2) he wants to portray the teachings, ministry, actions and reactions of Jesus in a way that shows us how to also "walk in the Spirit." When John includes a story, he does so to teach a very definite spiritual truth. We need to pay special attention to the words and actions of Jesus in this gospel – they are "snapshots" of what a Spirit-filled man looks like!
- **John 5:1-6** After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. For an angel went down at a certain season into the pool, and troubled the water: whosoever then first after the troubling of the water stepped in was made whole of whatsoever disease he had. And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he saith unto him, Wilt thou be made whole?

- At this time, Bethesda has obviously become somewhat of a healing shrine. But, before we criticize this primitive belief, remember that many people in our world today flock to very similar places. Some seem to receive help; sadly, the vast majority of them do not.
- The problem with Bethesda was that it seemed to work for some, but not for most. The FIRST person into the water was cured. That's the way it seems to work in life – there's always someone first and someone last, and that's why we so jealously guard our number one status in the human family – and in the church. "Do it my way, let me be first!" we cry, hoping that if we can just get in that ideal service where everything feels just right, we can be made whole.
- We are exactly like those at Bethesda; some of us have come to services for years, always waiting for that "ideal" moment. We've watched others get blessed, others get saved, others get healed ... and we're still laying around waiting for some help.
- We hear the Word of God preached and our reactions are typical:
  - **BLIND** – "we don't see it like you do"  
Word is also translated "opaque, smoky, self-conceit, high-minded, proud."
  - **HALT** – "we know you're right, but we're powerless to do anything about it"  
Word is also translated "limping, crippled, lame"
  - **WITHERED** – "we would like to, but we've been hurt in the past"  
Word is also translated "dry, shrunken, wasted"
- John uses a "summary word" to describe the whole miserable mass of humanity around the pool – they are IMPOTENT (feeble, weak, without strength). Like us, they've tried so hard to be self-sufficient, but they are completely powerless to change their lives under their own power. That's why they flocked to this promised cure!
- If you've ever looked at church, worship, prayer, healing, salvation like it was "for THEM" there is hope for you!
- **Romans 5:6** For when we were yet without strength (impotent, feeble, weak), in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

- Into this atmosphere of frustration walks Jesus (the son of God!), and He heads directly to one of the most senior members of the Bethesda fraternity. His question cuts straight to the chase: “WILT THOU BE MADE WHOLE?”
- The answer seems so obvious, and yet consider this: The man had not asked Jesus for help, and a beggar of that day could lose a sometimes profitable and easy income if he were cured. He would have to lose his “victim mentality” and his “comfort zone” in one fell swoop, and that’s not always easy to do!
- Look at his answer – it’s an EXCUSE! “I don’t have anyone to put me in the pool!” For 38 years, I’ve been a victim of the carelessness, indifference and inefficiency of my family, my friends and even the church. They have all these special meetings where the waters are troubled, but it always seems like someone else gets the help! I’m just left sitting here while it happens all around me.
- JESUS KNOWS THAT THE MAN’S “FOCUS” IS PRECISELY THE PROBLEM! So He bypasses the man’s excuse and offers him a solution. Imagine this man staring intently toward the waters of Bethesda while the Son of God stands beside him offering healing! “Get out of my way, Jesus – don’t block my view of the pool!”
- WILT THOU BE MADE WHOLE? There is no attempt by Jesus to judge the man’s worthiness or even his faith level. Jesus just needs to know one thing – ARE YOU WILLING? But my condition is not my fault! That’s not the issue – ARE YOU WILLING? But you don’t know how long I’ve felt this way! That’s not the issue – ARE YOU WILLING? But you don’t know what I’m hiding! That’s not the issue – ARE YOU WILLING?
- Jesus is still asking, “WILT THOU BE MADE WHOLE?” It’s like the choice Moses gave to the people he had led for 40 years when he was on the verge of death ...
- **Deuteronomy 30:19** I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:
- Moses knew like we do that many, if not most, of our circumstances in life are chosen. We make unhealthy, unrewarding choices and then blame others for our situation! So, we can either consider ourselves the victims of the insensitivity of others, or we can just square our shoulders and make better choices! CHOICE IS THE ISSUE. CHOOSE LIFE BY CHOOSING GOD!
- The unspoken message in Jesus’ question is that we sometimes must pay a price to be well. There are benefits to having an illness, an excuse. The man by the pool didn’t have to work, and someone carried him around every day. He may have had other perks, but all of them paled in comparison to just becoming well!
- Over the years, we’ve built up a SUPPORT SYSTEM to excuse our behavior – it’s called our BED! It is what we have been laying on all these years. But Jesus says, “Rise, take up thy bed, and walk!”
- Have you ever fought “the battle of the bed?” Sometimes it’s just plain hard to get up! Like this prayer posted at one of the teller wickets at my bank ...  
Dear Lord, So far today I've done all right. I haven't gossiped. I haven't lost my temper. I haven't lied or cheated. I haven't been greedy, grumpy, nasty, selfish or overindulgent. I'm very thankful for that. But in a few minutes, Lord, I'm going to get out of bed. And from then on, I'm probably going to need a lot more help! Amen.  
Or like the title of a book by Karen Scalf Linamen I saw this week ...  
Sometimes I wake up grumpy ... Sometimes I let him sleep
- There came a point in Israel’s history when they had conquered the entire promised land except for one giant. He had a “king sized” bed! All they had to do to get victory was to win the battle of the bed!
- **Deuteronomy 3:11** For only Og king of Bashan remained of the remnant of giants; behold, his bedstead was a bedstead of iron; is it not in Rabbath of the children of Ammon? nine cubits was the length thereof, and four cubits the breadth of it, after the cubit of a man.
- Jesus’ command is clear – take up what you have been laying on and walk! Say to your sin, your sickness, and your symptoms – “You had me, but now I have you!”
- Just like the man at the pool, when Jesus gives a command, there is power in the command to fulfill the command. IT’S NO LONGER ABOUT YOUR POWER, BUT ABOUT HIS POWER! Genesis 1 – “Let there be light” / Revelation 22 – “Let him come” / that’s a command to hell to release anyone who is willing! **WHY WAIT?**
- **Ecclesiastes 8:4** Where the word of a king is, there is power: and who may say unto him, What doest thou?
- John’s fourth snapshot of a Spirit-filled man: He looks at Jesus rather than circumstances!