

## If You Want to Win Life's Lottery, You've Got to Lean on the Lord

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### Introduction:

Unemployment in Tennessee has reached the highest rates in over 20 years.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, lottery sales continue to increase. According to a USA Today article, instant lottery sales were up \$8 million in Tennessee for the first fiscal quarter of this year.<sup>2</sup> Why on earth would those two numbers increase at the same time? I think it indicates as a society we have some terrible fears, we have anxieties, we have doubts, we have struggles. But we want serenity, peace, joy, security, and comfort. The problem is, we're looking for it in all the wrong places. We hope for some lucky break to make everything right. We want some quick fix. We long for an escape. Sadly, this issue with financial fear and trying to find security through the lottery is merely one example of how broken people are looking for healing in the wrong places. If you know what it feels like to be broken, whether it revolves around finances, health, family, discipline, sin, or whatever, I want to share a story of hope with you today. I want to introduce you to a man who was broken like you. He was looking for a lucky break, but he found true healing and deliverance. You can find the story in **John 5:1-17**.

### Discussion:

- I. The world is full of broken people.
  - A. When Jesus visited Jerusalem because of the Passover feast, He came to a pool named Bethesda. Around this pool were five porches in which lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed (**John 5:2-3**). Just as these porches were full of physically broken people, our world is full of spiritually broken people. When Jesus traveled from city to city, **Matthew 9:36** says He had compassion on the people because they were like sheep without a shepherd, harassed and helpless. This is the state of the world outside of Christ.
  - B. If you are hurting, I know you believe you are on your own. It is easy to believe you are the only one. Every one else looks like they have it together. It is especially easy in a setting like we have this morning to think you are the only broken person among us. I know this, because I have felt it. However, it just isn't true. The world is full of broken people. We are surrounded by folks who have fit this bill—spiritually blind, lame, paralyzed.
- II. Many broken people are looking for a lucky break.
  - A. According to **John 5:3-4**, the reason all these broken people were laying around the pool of Bethesda is because at certain times the hand of an angel would stir the waters and the first person into the water would be healed. I do need to explain that there is some disagreement about exactly what is being said here. Some of the ancient manuscripts do not contain this explanation. Therefore, we are not completely sure if this is God's statement explaining what actually happened or if this was a scribal footnote explaining a legend that had grown up around the pool. In either case, we see the same point.
  - B. A multitude of broken people surrounded this pool, hoping for healing. Yet, at any given time only one could be healed. Additionally, those with the most debilitating illnesses had no chance of getting to the water. Think about the blind folks laying around the pool who wouldn't even know the water had been stirred until they heard folks start moving toward the water, they were already two steps behind.
  - C. This is what broken people do. They look for lucky breaks. They buy lottery tickets hoping to fix their financial woes. They drink thinking it will drown their sorrows. They shoot up hoping to soar above their problems. They try to find healing, contentment, security, hope in ways that really just don't work. In **Ecclesiastes 2:1-11**, the wisest man who ever lived talked about his pursuit for meaning. He looked for it in pleasure, alcohol, work, possessions, and money. Whatever he wanted, whatever he thought might fix his life, whatever he guessed might fill the void, he tried. Do you know what he found? Vanity. He felt just as empty, just as broken, just as hopeless.
  - D. Broken people often look for solutions to life through lucky breaks, but they are all empty. They never work.

<sup>1</sup> <http://tinyurl.com/tennesseunemployment>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2009-01-11-lotterysales\\_N.htm](http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2009-01-11-lotterysales_N.htm)

III. Lucky break seekers are selfish.

- A. When Jesus asked the man if he wanted to be healed in **John 5:6-7**, the man said he had no one to put him in the water. Someone else would get there first. Yet, there was a multitude around him. How could he say there was no one to help? Because broken people looking for lucky breaks are selfish. Each one was looking for his own lucky break and if this man received it, they would not. There was no lining up, taking turns, helping others. There was clawing, grabbing, shoving. Instead of trying to help each other find healing, they hindered each other.
- B. Isn't that our world? What competition we have among each other because we often have the idea if someone else gets some lucky break then we are losing out on ours. If someone else receives money, health, fame, influence, we are somehow cheated. Sadly, because of this selfishness we can easily end up no longer looking for our own healing, but simply trying to keep others from healing because we are jealous and selfish.

IV. You have to want healing.

- A. Interestingly, Jesus didn't simply walk up to the man and heal him. He asked Him, "Do you want to be healed?" Jesus understood something. There was no need trying to help someone who didn't want to be healed. Some folks, despite their brokenness, just aren't ready yet. They don't want healing. They want to continue trying to make it work their own way.
- B. Most of us have heard the story of the prodigal son in **Luke 15:11-19**. When the young man had money, he was a broken man, but he didn't want healing. When he was going through his money, he was a broken man, but he didn't want healing. When he lost all his money, he was a broken man, but he didn't want healing. When he lost his friends, he was a broken man, but he didn't want healing. When he started working for the citizen, he was a broken man, but he still didn't want healing. It wasn't until he recognized he had hit rock bottom, as he sat there among the pigs, finding his supper from their scraps that he decided he wanted healing.
- C. Sadly, this is a big problem with many folks. I imagine even some here today are struggling with this lesson because they just can't relate to what I'm talking about. They know they've had pain. They know they've had struggles. But really, it is not all that bad. They've still got some plans up their sleeves. They've got some other options. Besides, even though the lucky breaks haven't panned out yet, they are sure one will soon. They've come so close in times past. Therefore, they'll just keep hanging on, pursuing their own course. Too many are like those in Laodicea in **Revelation 3:17**. They are wretched, blind, naked but think they are rich, prosperous, and needless. Until you really see how bad your situation is and really want healing, you just can't get it. What makes me most sad is I know I can't force you to see it. You have to see it on your own. When you do, you can move to the next step.

V. Recognize your own inability.

- A. **John 5:6** says Jesus found a man who had been there a long time. Why didn't He go to the most recent poolside resident? Jesus understood the new residents still had hope in the pool. They still had faith they would be next. They still thought they were going to get the lucky break. Jesus picked out a man who had finally realized the lucky break had nothing to offer him.
- B. The man's answer to Jesus' question about healing in **John 5:7** demonstrated his recognition of complete inability. The man couldn't heal himself and he knew it. Even if the miracle of the pool was real, he would never enjoy it. He couldn't beat everyone else to the pool. He had to rely completely on someone else. He was hopeless, powerless, unable.
- C. Jesus began the Sermon on the Mount with this statement: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (**Matthew 5:3**). This is what poverty of spirit is all about, understanding our inability to heal, deliver, or save ourselves. In **Romans 7:14-25**, Paul expressed this very feeling. On his own, he couldn't be righteous enough to be saved. The only place for deliverance was Jesus. As long as you think you can somehow deliver yourself, you'll never have healing. If you think you can rely on your own think sos, your own plans, your own agenda, you won't get victory. As long as you continue to think you will somehow get yourself into the pool, you'll never find freedom. Only when you come face to face with your inability to overcome, your powerlessness to win, your complete hopelessness in self will you start the path of healing.

## VI. Just do what Jesus says.

- A. Put yourself in this man's shoes. You've been crippled, unable to walk for 38 years. You've been laying by this pool for a long time, waiting for the water to ripple, seeing it, getting your hopes up, trying to get in, but being pushed back and missing out on healing. Hopelessness and despair have set in. You'll never walk again. You are certain. Then some man says, "Get up, take up your bed, and walk" (**John 5:8**). What do you do? You laugh at him, that's what you do. How ridiculous. But that is not what this man did. He obeyed.
- B. I recognize this man did not yet know who Jesus was. But He did what Jesus said. That is the key. If we want healing we need to surrender to Jesus. We need to just do what He says. We don't need to add our ideas into it. We just need to recognize that Jesus' way works. Sadly, so many people seeking deliverance are giving lip-service to Jesus, but they add what they want to do into it. That will always fail. This is really what Jesus meant in **Matthew 7:13-14** when He said we should enter by the narrow gate and follow His strait and narrow way. He was not telling us we need to follow the strait and narrow to earn salvation, deliverance, healing. He was telling us His way is the only path to salvation, deliverance, healing.
- C. Friends, listen to this point carefully. Many of us are struggling. Many of us are hurting. Many of us despairing. Yet, we'll turn anywhere but Jesus.
  1. "Don't tell me turn to Jesus," some of us cry. "That's a joke. He's not real. He can't help. I don't believe in Him." I don't expect you to believe me just because I say it, but you've tried everything else and it hasn't worked, why not examine Jesus? Why not look a little closer? What have you got to lose? If you just do what Jesus says and that doesn't work either, you aren't any worse off.
  2. "Don't tell me to turn to Jesus," others are saying. "I know it doesn't work. I've been going to church for years." You didn't hear me properly. I didn't say try church. I said try Jesus. Oh yes, if you're surrendering to Jesus, you will be part of a local church. But there is a big difference between going to church and surrendering to Jesus. All kinds of people go to church every Sunday but have only given their Sundays to the Lord. If you want healing, victory, deliverance, quit relying on lucky breaks, your own strength, or quick fixes, start leaning on the Lord.
  3. "Don't tell me to turn to Jesus," others mumble. "His way may provide deliverance, but I don't think it will give me what I really want." Sadly, some of us won't surrender to Jesus because while we want healing, we want fame, riches, power, pleasure, or some other thing more. If we knew that healing through Jesus would provide those things as well, we'd take it. Until we are sure of that, we keep holding back on full surrender.

## VII. Jesus may not deliver you the way you expect.

- A. When Jesus asked the man if he wanted healing, the man didn't simply say, "Yes." He was so stuck on being healed in the pool, he couldn't even answer the simple question. He had to explain that he needed someone to help him in the pool (**John 5:7**). He isn't asking Jesus to heal him. He's asking Jesus to wait with him and get him in the pool.
- B. Here is a problem we often have even in turning to Jesus. We've spent so much time trying to find healing, deliverance, and victory through a lucky break that when we turn to Jesus, we expect Him to save us through a lucky break. We've wanted to win the lottery so long that we don't ask Jesus to heal us His way. We ask Him to let us win the lottery. It doesn't work that way. We want Jesus to put us in the pool. Jesus just wants to heal us. If you can find Jesus telling you to find victory through the lottery, then by all means, go buy a lottery ticket. I'm still waiting to find that verse. Jesus wants to provide us with real healing, real contentment, real deliverance, real victory. That won't come through a lucky break even at Jesus' hands. Let's not put Jesus in the box of our expectations. Rather, let's just turn to Jesus and do whatever He says. That is where healing is.

## VIII. Others will try to stop you.

- A. In **John 5:9-10**, the man took up his bed (which would have been more like a mat he could roll up than a bed on which we often sleep) and walked. Some of the Jews came to him and said, "it is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed." One of the laws God gave the

Jews was they were to do no work on the Sabbath day, which was Saturday. It was to be a day of rest. Yet, this man was hauling his bed. The no longer crippled man explained, "Look, the guy who healed me told me to do this."

- B. Here is the amazing thing. The Jews were so bound up in their opinions about God's rules, they couldn't even be amazed at the miracle going on in the life of this crippled man. This man understood. Anyone who could empower his crippled legs to walk had the authority to tell him to carry his bed even if it was the Sabbath. So he did.
- C. The point we need to see is that when we are surrendering to Jesus, many people will be against us. They will try to get us to stop. They'll tell us it won't work. They'll tell us we're doing it wrong. They'll make fun of us. They'll mock us and say we think we are the only ones who can have healing. They will say we are being too extreme. Who needs to go so far, they'll ask. Sadly, you would think everyone would jump on this path of healing and victory. But they won't. Be prepared for folks to try and get you to quit. You're just going to have to keep on keeping on.

#### IX. Don't go back to sin.

- A. In **John 5:14**, Jesus gave the no longer crippled man a plan. "Sin no more." Sadly, many people turn to Jesus, find deliverance, start recovering, head down a path of healing, only to think they've got it all under control. They begin to think they don't need to lean on Jesus any more and they turn back to sin.
- B. As **I Corinthians 10:12** says, when we think we are standing, that is when we are in danger of falling. The moment we think we've started getting things under control, we subtly turn back to thinking we can heal ourselves. That is when we turn right back to our own brokenness. Leaning on Jesus is not a momentary choice. It is a journey.
- C. Within the Biblical context, we must not take this to mean that if we ever sin again we have lost our hope in Jesus. That is not the case. Certainly, we are striving to overcome sin, but leaning on Jesus is about progress not perfection. As **II Peter 1:5-8** says, we are growing in virtue. Jesus' point is not that we have to be perfect from now on to be with Him. His point is we must not go back to our old way of life. Healing is a lifelong journey.

#### Conclusion:

Many of us are hurting. We are broken. We are crippled spiritually. We need healing. We want healing. Sadly, too many of us are looking for it in all the wrong places. We hope a lucky break will fix us. What is your pool of Bethesda? What are you relying on to provide your fix? Has it actually helped? Have you found victory, freedom, deliverance? Jesus wants to heal you? Will you let Him?