

Dear Msn

## Putting Faith Into Motion

John 5:1-9a

Key verse: John 5:8 “Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.”

### Part I: Get Up!

At this time, Jesus was walking by a pool that was believed by the Jews to have healing power to whoever got in the pool first when the water was stirred. Many people who had physical ailments were around the pool, and there was a man who was an invalid for 38 years. Jesus met him and asked him if he wanted to get well, but the man responded with saying that there is no one to help him into the pool. Jesus then just said to him “Get up, pick up your mat, and walk” and the man got up, picked up his mat, and walked.

It’s an interesting situation when Jesus meets this man who’s been an invalid for 38 years. I think in a lot of ways, Jesus had pity on the man. We hear a lot in the Bible how “Jesus was moved with pity”, and ended up healing the person who he had pity for. But it was a different kind of pity for the invalid man. Yes, he probably felt bad that this man was an invalid for 38 years, but he also realized that the man didn’t do anything about it except probably just sit in the same spot, waiting for someone to help him into the pool. There’s a similar story in the Bible, where Jesus meets a paralyzed man right by the temple, and says to the paralytic “Your sins are forgiven.” The Jews saw this and questioned Jesus how anybody other than God can forgive sins, and Jesus responded with saying “Is it easier to say to this man ‘your sins are forgiven’ or ‘get up and walk?’” and then Jesus went back to the paralytic, said to him “get up and walk” and the man did. In a lot of other healings that Jesus performed, Jesus just simply said “Go. Your faith has saved you.” But he did something different with the invalid man in this story. First, he asked him the question “Do you want to get well?”, because Jesus knew in the invalid man’s heart that the man wanted to, he just didn’t know how to get well. He was at the moment of complete helplessness both physically, mentally, and maybe even spiritually. So Jesus just said to him “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” He didn’t just say “Your sins are forgiven”, or “Your faith has saved you”, but told the invalid man to get up...to actually do something about it, and then he’ll be healed. The invalid man must’ve known Jesus was not just some ordinary man, because he trusted in this words, and when he tried to get up, he was able to.

It says in James, that faith without works is dead. In numerous cases, the people who wanted to be healed by Christ, came to him, having faith in this healing power. Their faith moved them so much, that they actively sought out Christ. The invalid man had faith that he *could* be healed, but he wanted someone else do the work for him, because he believed he couldn’t do it on his own. He could’ve just crawled up to the edge of the pool, and just used his arms to jump into the pool when it was stirred, and that would be the end of the story. But he felt so helpless, that he thought he needed someone’s help, and was willing to wait 38 years for it to happen. Not only did Jesus want to heal the man, but he wanted the man to put faith into action. He challenged the man to do more than he thought he could do. But, through faith, doing the will of God, all things are made possible.

## Part II:

I'm very open about my faith. I'm willing to talk about it with anyone, whether they're Christian or not. All my friends know this. And I'm not trying to say I'm better or worse than anyone else, but I like to challenge people in what they believe in, and I like to be challenged myself. I want my faith to greatly effect what I say and what I do in my life. I don't want to be "paralyzed" anymore by fear and doubt, but I still see plenty of my friends who are still "stuck in neutral", much like the invalid man in the passage. In their mind, the things they can't do outweigh the things they can do, and even the things they can do aren't enough to make them better. I use to be the same way, so I know exactly how they feel, which is why I believe in my mind that I can help them get through it.

I was baptized at an age where I have to look at pictures to know that it actually happened...and I just grew up in a pretty spiritual family, so I've been a Christian ever since I can remember. And ,even though I've had "faith in God" for most of my life, it wasn't until I actually started doing something about that when I could truly say that what I had was faith. I remember there was a moment...for several years actually, that I felt like I was in "neutral". I knew I didn't want to go backwards, because I've been down that road before, and I didn't want to go down it again, but I didn't want to go forward, for fear that I would have no idea where that road would lead me. So I just...stood there. Yes, I went to church, yes I was active in my youth group, and did all of these church activities, but...somehow, it wasn't enough. I still didn't feel this...connection with God yet. I thought I did, and I got so aggravated with myself that I made myself believe, but the truth was...I had faith without works. I wasn't actively seeking God for myself. I was either doing because I felt "I had to", or I was doing it because my parents wanted me to do it, or a friend, or whatever. The motivation was never from me genuinely. I've been on numerous church retreats, and every single one of them, I go in thinking that this retreat is going to make my faith stronger...but it seems like it never really does anything to my faith. I am like the invalid man, sitting in the same spot for 38 years....I kept doing the same thing but kept expecting something different would happen...eventually. I wanted have someone "push" me over the edge of that "leap of faith", because then it'd be so much easier. If God just tells me what to do, then I'll go do it. I thought it was so easy. But this is when the change happened: Bible Study. It's the first time when I did something because I wanted to, and God wanted me to. I'm not saying that God didn't want me being active in the church, but I went not for God, but for selfish reasons. Most of the time, it was just an excuse to be social with people, since I didn't have many friends growing up. But here at Bible Study, I don't come here just to socialize, or sing music, or whatever. I come here, because I want to be closer to God. Every time I come to Bible Study, I actively seek his voice through Scripture, and the words of my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. This is where my faith is put into motion. The experience that I keep having here at Bible Study is similar to when the Holy Spirit came to the Apostles. In a similar way, the Apostles where in a room with all the doors locked, in fear of the outside world, until the Holy Spirit came upon them, and then they were encouraged to spread the Gospel from that moment on. I needed something similar in the sense, in which I needed the Holy Spirit, not to tell me what to do and do it well, but to do well in anything I do. I once was that invalid man, until Jesus came into my life, and I listened to his voice, and was able to get up and walk through faith.

I want to actively pursue God with everything I do, not because I feel like I have to, but because I want to, and I know God wants me to as well. I don't want to just read the Bible, but I want to live the Bible. I don't want to just go to church, but I want to bring church with me wherever I go. As a song lyric goes "What good is a prophet if he's alone?". I had a strong faith, but I was alone, and did nothing about that for the longest time. I thought just having faith was good enough for me to get to heaven, but I look around, and there's millions of people who "have faith", but not everyone who has faith actually does something about it. I was just trying to "save my own skin", but that's not what God wants me to do. He wants me to spread the Gospel, not just by what I say, but in what I do. How I act around people, how I treat people, and how I love people, including my God.

Lord, I thank you for healing me, and telling me to "get up" like you did with the invalid man, as I made all these excuses and blamed other people for why my faith wasn't strong enough, but through your words of scripture, I was able to hear you say to me "get up", and I was able to get up from my "state of confusion and frustration" and live in joy and love that I serve a great and merciful God. I pray that I'm able to be your hands and feet, and to spread the good news, not just with what I say, but in what I do. Help me to consistently focus on you, whether in the valley or on the mountain, and may my life be a testament to other people of your great power and love for us. I ask this in Jesus' name. Amen.

One Word: Love is the "move"-ment