

# Forgetting Your Past Life of Sin



SABBATH—JANUARY 31

**READ FOR THIS WEEK'S STUDY:** John 5.

**MEMORY VERSE:** “Later Jesus found him [the paralytic<sup>1</sup>] at the temple and said to him, ‘See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you’ ” (John 5:14, NIV).

**IMPORTANT THOUGHT:** Jesus is not satisfied to just heal a person physically or spiritually. He wants to restore<sup>2</sup> the entire person. True faith involves the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual parts of our lives.

**NEW LIFE IN JESUS INCLUDES** “putting the past behind you.” This means “forgetting your past life of sin.” In John 5, we read a story about a man who was one of the worst sinners. Paralyzed in body with his mind and heart full of sin, he did not even ask Jesus for healing. But Jesus chose to make the man a Sabbath-day example of His great power to bring life to the worst of sinners. Jesus restored the man physically. But also He challenged the man to cooperate with the healing of his entire self.

The religious leaders challenged Jesus about His “failure” to keep the Sabbath holy. But Jesus showed the Godlike nature of His behavior. In healing the man on the Sabbath, Jesus offered shocking proof about where He came from and His work. He is more than just a man. He is the Creator and Life-Giver. So the story of the healing at the Pool of Bethesda becomes another living parable<sup>3</sup> of the Creator who became a human and lived among us.

\*Study this week's lesson to prepare for Sabbath, February 7.

<sup>1</sup>paralytic—a person who has paralysis in the body.

<sup>2</sup>restore—to make healthy.

<sup>3</sup>living parable—a story of things that really happened. We use a living parable to teach a truth.

SUNDAY—FEBRUARY 1

**THE POOL OF BETHESDA  
(John 5:1-4).**

**Read John 5:1-4. In what ways is this scene a symbol of fallen humanity?<sup>4</sup> What is the condition of people by the pool? Where are they looking for help?**



The name *Bethesda* may be interpreted as “House of Mercy.”<sup>5</sup> So Jesus shows mercy at the place where people looked for mercy. The pool of Bethesda was just north of the temple. The pool was fed by a stream that flowed into the pool from time to time. This may explain the troubling (movement) of the waters.

<sup>4</sup>humanity—all the people of the world.

<sup>5</sup>mercy—kindness we do not deserve.

**What happened at the pool? John 5:3, 4.**

Your answer to this question may depend on which version of the Bible you use. In English, many older translations, such as the King James Version, say that an angel of God moved the healing waters. But the older copies of the Bible do not have this part of the story. This means there is no John 5:4 in many translations. Ellen G. White usually used the King James Bible. But she did not accept the suggestion that angels were involved in troubling the waters.

“At certain seasons (times), the waters of this pool were caused to move. *Many people believed that an angel made the water move. They also believed that after the moving of the water, whoever stepped into the water first would be healed of whatever disease she or he had.*”—Adapted from *The Desire of Ages*, p. 201 (italics given). Only people who were not very sick could get into the waters, so if an angel did move the waters, it is strange to think of God favoring healing for people who were not very sick over really sick people. Jesus showed that God is not like that. Jesus showed the most mercy by picking out the person who was the sickest of the people to receive healing.

**All around us we see large crowds of people like the people at the pool of Bethesda. They are sick, damaged,**

hurt, and suffering from life's problems. They are waiting without hope for help that does not come. As Christians, we who may be suffering too have one thing they need. What is that thing, and how can we share it with them? Romans 8:24; Colossians 1:5; Titus 2:13.



The blessed day we hope for is Jesus' second coming.

MONDAY—FEBRUARY 2

### HEALING THE PARALYTIC (John 5:5-15).

Read again the story of Jesus healing the paralytic. Tell in your own words the point of what happened. What does this story tell us about God's character?

Several parts of this story need our attention. First of all, Jesus healed the

man for a purpose. He picked one man out of a whole crowd of people. This man had not tried to find Jesus. This man did not even know Jesus. This man did not announce any faith in Jesus before being healed. The man might have attracted Jesus' attention because he was sicker than all the other people.

God is so loving! At important times in our lives, God has acted in ways we have not asked for and do not deserve. God does this, not to excuse sin, but to help us experience His grace. This reminds us how much we need to depend on Him.

A second surprising part of the story is that Jesus chose to heal the man on the Sabbath. The rabbis (Jewish religious teachers) said it was all right to do special acts of kindness on the Sabbath in emergencies. But this was no emergency. The man had been paralyzed for 38 years. Surely waiting until Sabbath was over would not have made much difference. Jesus was making a strong point on purpose. "It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath," Jesus had said in Matthew 12:12 (NIV). By healing the paralytic, Jesus was making an example of His point. "The Sabbath is not meant to be a time when we are lazy and useless. . . . The work of Jesus in healing sick people was in perfect agreement with the law."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, p. 207.

The story in John 5 became a living parable showing the truth of John 5:21: "The Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it" (NIV). Jesus can give life to anyone He wishes, because there are no limits to His life-giving power.

After healing the paralyzed man, Jesus told him not just to get up and walk but to take up his bed too. Jesus knew that this would make the religious leaders angry. What do you think Jesus' reasons were for telling the paralyzed man to pick up his bed? What message could Jesus' command have for us, who take the Sabbath command seriously?

### TUESDAY—FEBRUARY 3

#### DEALING WITH SIN AND THE RESULTS OF SIN (John 5:14).

What does Jesus tell the ex-paralyzed man when He meets him later in the temple? John 5:14.

Jesus told the man to “stop sinning” (NIV). In this way, Jesus suggested that the man's illness was caused by sin. Continued sin might lead to a comeback of the paralysis.

But there is something deeper in this story. The form of the word translated “sinning” suggests continuous action. Jesus commands the man to stop something that he had been doing continuously, right up to the time of meeting Jesus. This suggested that the man had somehow been continuing in sin, even when he was paralyzed. What kind of sin was Jesus talking about? A paralyzed man cannot rob banks, commit adultery, or kill anyone. Jesus must have been talking about a sin of the mind, the thoughts, the attitudes,<sup>6</sup> the imagination.

After offering mercy to the paralytic, Jesus told him to “sin no more.” How do the following verses say the same thing Jesus said to the healed paralytic? John 8:10, 11; Romans 6:1-6; Galatians 2:16, 17.



In baptism, we share Jesus' death and are raised out of the water to a new life in Him.

The healing of the man's body was totally an act of grace on Jesus' part. But there was something the man had to do to help himself get well. Sin separates us from God. Sin eventually destroys a person's life.

The results of sin include not only physical injuries and disease. There are emotional, spiritual, and psychological injuries too. All these injuries can and should be helped by a relationship with Jesus. A true walk with Jesus brings peace to the emotions, warms the heart, gives energy to the body and helps a Christian to be happy. This is why Seventh-day Adventist Christianity focuses on things such as diet, exercise, and attitude. True faith in-

<sup>6</sup>attitudes—how you feel and think about someone or something.

volves the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual parts of life.

Most Christians admit that all parts of their lives, especially the emotional part, can be quite unstable (unsafe) even after they accept Jesus. John 5:14 tells us we have important work to do in cooperating with Jesus in getting “well” from sin and its results.

### WEDNESDAY—FEBRUARY 4

#### JESUS THE LIFE-GIVER (John 5:16-30).

**How does Jesus defend His act of healing on the Sabbath? John 5:16-18.**

In answer to the arguments of the religious leaders, Jesus said He was simply following the example of His Father. His Father is “always” at work on the Sabbath. God’s activity gives us a good example for human activity on the Sabbath.

Jewish writers of that time recognized that God’s work on the Sabbath could be seen in births, deaths, sunshine, rain, and the continued flowing of rivers (read William Barclay, *The Gospel of John* [Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1975], vol. 1, p. 183). The Jews recognized that Jesus was claiming the same rights on the Sabbath that God has. By healing on the Sabbath, Jesus was claiming to be equal with God.

“Should God prevent the sun from doing its work on the Sabbath? . . . Must the wheat and corn stop growing? Must the ripening bunch of grapes stop blooming? . . .

“In such a case, people would miss the fruits of the earth, and the blessings that make us desire life. . . . God will not hold any person guilty for relieving suffering on the Sabbath. God’s Sabbath was made for us. Acts of kindness are in perfect harmony with the purpose of the Sabbath. God does not want His people to suffer an hour’s pain that may be made less on the Sabbath or any other day.”  
—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 206, 207.



**Part of keeping the Sabbath is doing kind acts for others.**

**List the different ways John 5:16-30 pictures Jesus as equal with the Father.**

In John 5:19-30, Jesus shows that He was doing the same work as His Father. This is the work of giving life (John 5:20, 21, 26, 28, 29) and the work of judging (John 5:22, 27, 30). Jesus was doing His Father’s will on this earth. So Jesus was showing that the Father is life. Jesus also was pointing to the truth of His own claim to be God (John 5:19-23). Jesus does not

want anyone to have the choice of believing in the Father while not accepting His claims about Himself (John 5:23).

**Here was Jesus doing a great miracle. But the religious leaders were so interested in religious rules and customs that they missed the bigger picture. In what ways can we be so interested in unimportant things that we miss the important truth Jesus wants to teach us?**

#### THURSDAY—FEBRUARY 5

### THE GREATEST WITNESSES<sup>7</sup> TO JESUS (John 5:31-47).

In yesterday's lesson, we saw that Jesus made some powerful claims about Himself as God. No other human who lived could make the same claims without lying. Jesus clearly saw the need to defend what He said about Himself.

**List everything and everyone who spoke in favor of Jesus in John 5:31-47. Which of these witnesses did Jesus think was the most important?**

Jesus admits that unproven testimony<sup>8</sup> about oneself is not enough (John 5:31). The Jewish religion teaches that truth can be established only by at least two witnesses (Deuteronomy

19:15; Revelation 11:3-13). In addition to His own testimony, Jesus used the testimony of John the Baptist, His own works, His Father, and the Bible. In this way, Jesus *doubled* the testimony required for established truth within the Jewish religion (John 5:31-40).

**What powerful rebuke (scolding) did Jesus give the religious leaders? John 5:38.**

The religious leaders were not willing to accept the testimony of the witnesses (John 5:43, 44; John 8:13, 14). So Jesus called forth the best witness within the Jewish religion. This is Moses. Moses was an intercessor<sup>9</sup> between God and Israel (Exodus 32:7-14). But Jesus' words changed Moses into a judge (John 5:45-47). Moses would judge against people who refused to accept Jesus. Why? Moses wrote about Jesus and prepared the way for Him. Jesus then gave the closing argument, " 'Since you [the religious leaders] do not believe what [Moses] wrote, how are you going to believe what I [Jesus] say?' " (John 5:47, NIV). These words started a battle between Jesus and some of Israel's leaders. This battle continues in the book of John until Jesus is arrested, suffers, and dies on the cross. In the rebellion of these people, John pictures how *all* people who reject the gospel will rebel.

<sup>7</sup>witnesses—people and things who say and do things that show who Jesus is.

<sup>8</sup>testimony—what someone says about something or someone.

<sup>9</sup>intercessor—Moses took the people's requests to God. Moses also took messages from God to the people.

**How is your understanding of Jesus influenced by the witnesses you know and admire? How would your life be different if you did not know these people? How does your witness influence other people?**

### FRIDAY—FEBRUARY 6

**ADDITIONAL STUDY:** Most Christians admit that their inner lives, especially the emotional part of their lives, can be quite unstable (unsafe), even after they accept Jesus (Tuesday's lesson). Both Christians and non-Christians have to struggle with unhappy memories, angry moments, and unclean thoughts. The story of the paralyzed man at Bethesda tells us that Jesus cares about both the inner life and the outward life.

Unwelcome thoughts and emotions can result from (1) things we have done and (2) things people have done to us. Things we have done cause feelings of remorse,<sup>10</sup> regret, and failure. Things people have done to us can cause feelings of anger, grief, and deep bitterness. Fullness in Jesus helps Christians to deal with these things. For suggestions about mental and emotional healing, see chapter 6 in the book that goes with this study guide. This book may be purchased at any Adventist bookstore.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Why do many Christians believe that accepting Jesus should stop all emotional problems? To what degree do you think this idea is true?
2. Forgiveness is an important part in dealing with sin and its results. So why do most people find it so hard to forgive?
3. The paralyzed man suffered as a result of his sins. What do you think Jesus would have told a victim of rape or physical abuse? What would He say to the person who causes other people to suffer?
4. Jesus broke human-made rules about Sabbath keeping to heal a man. Are the rules you follow made by God or yourself? How can you know the difference between rules you have made and rules God has made?

**SUMMARY:** Jesus came to this earth to show how God would act if He were a human. By healing the paralytic at the pool of Bethesda, Jesus showed that He is not limited by time or by the people He has to work with. Jesus also showed that He is not satisfied to heal a person just physically or spiritually. He wants to restore the entire person, physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

<sup>10</sup>remorse—being sorry for the mistakes you have made.