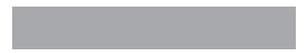


LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Are You Willing?

September 10, 2018

Imagine being sick and unable to walk for 38 years. Your only hope of being healed and made whole is a pool where it is believed that an angel moves the waters at certain times, thus providing healing for the first person who enters afterward. This is how the story of Jesus healing a man at the Pool of Bethesda begins.

John 5: 1-5

¹Afterward Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days. ²Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda, with five covered porches. ³Crowds of sick people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches. ⁵One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years.

To this man, his day probably didn't seem any different than the other 13,000+ days before. It was just another day filled with the same issues. What he didn't know, was that today was a very different day. On this day, he was going to have an encounter with Jesus, the Son of God, who has the power to heal him.

John 5: 6-7

⁶When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, "Would you like to get well?" ⁷"I can't, sir," the sick man said, "for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me."

This weekend, Ben shared with us that Jesus was a master at helping people see their issues. Some people loved him for it, while others hated him for it. In this story, when Jesus asked the question, "Do you want to be healed?" it may have seemed to be a silly question. After all, the man was there by the pool. By asking this question, Jesus was helping this man look deeper into his issues and look past his excuses.

When it comes to the issues we have in our lives, the same question applies. Do you want to be healed from your issues? Our quick emotional response is always "Yes!" but let's be honest, while we don't like our issues, we often don't want to do what it takes to fix them. We, like the man at the side of the pool, often find ourselves making excuses.

It is when we can get past our excuses and discover the real issues behind our issues that we can begin to find solutions. Ben shared with us this weekend that **Identifying the real issue is the fastest way toward REAL SOLUTIONS.**

Over the next few days, we are going to look at the steps Jesus invites us to take to live this out. Today though, there are some very important questions that we need to wrestle with first. My encouragement to you is to not skip over these questions. Pray about them and ask God to help you see the answers to them.

Questions:

When it comes to the issues in your life, what are your excuses?

Do you want to be healed? Are you willing to take steps to move past your excuses and begin identifying the real issues?

Once you identify the real solutions (this may not happen today), are you willing to do what it takes to live them out?

Next Steps:

Commit to attending each weekend of the “Issues” series. Complete this week’s *LivingItOut* and ask God to help you identify the real issues in your life.

Prayer:

Dear Father, please give me the courage to commit myself to identifying the real issues in my life that have held me back from getting up and walking. Please give me patience and wisdom to seek the real solutions needed to resolve my issues. Please give me the strength to follow through by living out the real solutions to my issues. Amen.

This post was written by Ben Bockert, Director and regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

Dig Down Deep

September 11, 2018

What do blowing up at your child for spilling milk, road rage, and the fight you had with your spouse over arriving late for dinner have in common? The circumstances in each incident are not the real issue. Most likely, you're angry at your child because you have to clean up a mess, at the other driver because you feel disrespected, and at your spouse because you had an agenda, and it was disrupted. In short, you're not getting what you want.

As a mother of five young children, I find myself losing my temper at my children far more than I'd like. It seems like sometimes I'm on the verge of an eruption, and one little thing can cause angry words to spew forth. I was contemplating this issue last weekend and came across a blog post that spoke to my heart. It was titled, "When Your Children Don't Bow Down to Your Gods." It seems like a strange title, but it strikes right at the heart of most of the issues we encounter on a daily basis. Most of our issues come down to the fact that someone else is not "bowing down" to the idols of our hearts.

So much of my anger comes down to selfishness. Maybe selfishness is not your struggle, maybe it's pride or control. These underlying issues manifest themselves negatively in almost every area of your life. Until we realize what our underlying issues are, we cannot be healed. One of the signs that we want to be healed is that we are willing to dig down deep inside ourselves to see what is really at the heart of our anger, insecurity, fear, or whatever causes us to struggle.

Proverbs 4:23 (NKJV)

Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life.

In John 5:8 Jesus told the man to stand up. He had to stop making excuses for his lameness and stand up. In the same way, you need to stop making excuses for your struggle and look into your heart. You do not need to be defined by anger or fear. You were bought with the blood of Christ and can be healed. The next time you feel yourself tempted to fall back into your old patterns of anger or fear, stand up, get a new perspective, and remember that you have been healed.

Questions:

What are the underlying issues that cause you to struggle? Give them a name.

Next Steps:

Today, when you feel the anger or pride or resentment rising up inside of your heart, stop and think about what is the real issue underlying it all. Pray that Jesus will give you the strength to “stand up.”

Prayer:

Dear Jesus, I struggle with so many things throughout my day. It seems like I'm always on the verge of yelling or saying something that is unkind. Give me the strength and wisdom to look into my heart, identify the real issue, and stand up against it. Amen.

This post was written by Julie Mabus, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

Taking Issue With the Issue

September 12, 2018

It's hard to believe it's been a year since I made a huge change in my life! I felt very strongly that God wanted me to make this move, but once I had made it, many things happened to make me question the decision. This year has been quite the roller-coaster ride, with more challenges than I could have imagined. I didn't necessarily think my new job would be a cakewalk, but because I felt strongly about my purpose, I didn't think it would be so hard, either.

Things definitely have not gone the way I planned, and I realized the other day that because of that, I had become like this man on his mat in John 5, waiting for something to change. I came in with all these great ideas and plans for changing the climate of the work place and when they got shot down, I sat back on my mat and put my head down. I have been struggling with fear. Fear that my ideas are not sound, that I really don't have what it takes, that I might even lose my job.

Now that I have recognized the issue, I take issue with the issue!

2 Timothy 1:7

For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

God did not bring me all this way to have me sit on my mat waiting for something to happen! I started assessing the situation and came up with some actionable steps that I can take. Just doing that, standing up and picking up my mat, made me feel better, more calm and sure. There are things that I can do to change my situation. Even if this new adventure doesn't work out, I know I'll be OK because my God will never leave me nor forsake me. He is always in control, and he tells me over and over not to fear. So I do what I can, I do my best, and I let him take care of the rest. Because it's not only about me taking control of what I can but recognizing what I cannot control and giving that to God. Even that is action!

Questions:

How often are you fighting with things beyond your control? How much have you done to change the things that you can?

Next Steps:

Take a look at something in your life that is feeling unsatisfactory. Make a list of factors within your control to change and those that are not. Make a plan to start changing the things within your control and pray for God to help you let go of the things over which you have no control.

Prayer:

Papa, thank you for giving me a spirit of power, love, and self discipline. Help me recognize what is within my control and give me the courage to make changes where I can. And please help me to realize what I cannot control and give me the strength to give those things to you. Thank you for being with me every step of the way. Amen.

This post was written by Kelda Strasbourg, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

Change Your Path

September 13, 2018

At one time or another, most of us have thought about going on a diet. This is a common New Year's resolution and something most women think about before the summer swimsuit season. You may not like how your clothes fit, your lack of energy, or that number on the scale. I often browse Pinterest for the latest diet trends—Keto, 21 Day Fix, Low FODMAP—all while eating a chocolate chip cookie (and not the kind made with almond flour and coconut oil)! But a quick fix is just that—quick and temporary. Until we are ready to make a permanent, long-term change to our eating habits, any weight lost will just be gained right back. The same holds true for all areas of our lives.

This week, we began a new series called *Issues*. We show that we really want to be healed when we stand up, pick up, and walk.

Stand up: Identify the real issue behind the issue.

Pick up: Take control of things that you have allowed to control you.

Walk: Set out on a path of intentional direction.

Today, I want to spend some time looking at how we can be intentional about fixing our issues—how we can change our path and mark out a new way of living.

2 Corinthians 5:17

This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun!

Changing our path starts with understanding that when we become followers of Christ, we no longer have to do life alone or with our own strength. Although changing behaviors and attitudes is difficult, God is there every step of the way. Jesus never leaves us on our own to figure things out.

Deuteronomy 31:6

“So be strong and courageous! Do not be afraid and do not panic before them. For the Lord your God will personally go ahead of you. He will neither fail you nor abandon you.”

When God asks us to start taking issue with one of our issues, and we stand up and pick up our “mat,” we start walking in a new direction with him by our side.

Questions:

What does it mean in 2 Corinthians 5:17 to “become a new person”?

Is God asking you to start walking in a new direction?

Who can you ask to help support and encourage you along the way?

Next Steps:

Take a step toward the plan you identified yesterday. And then tell somebody about it! Sharing new plans is a great motivator and helps with accountability.

We believe that one of the ways we find freedom from our issues is by having authentic relationships with people who will help us get through whatever it is we are going through. That is one of the reasons that we want everyone to be in a CedarCreek Group. To learn more about groups visit CedarCreek.tv/groups.

Prayer:

Dear God, help me be brave this week as I take a step toward confronting and fixing my issues. Help me when I stumble and get discouraged to remember that I am a new person because of you. Amen.

Breaking the Sabbath?

September 14, 2018

Have you ever wondered why Jesus specifically commanded the lame man to *“... pick up your mat, and walk!”* (John 5:8b)?

Jesus never did anything by accident or because he didn't know what effect his words or actions would have. He knew this previously lame man carrying his mat on the Sabbath would break the rules that the Pharisees had set up. God's command was to keep the Sabbath day holy (Exodus 20:8-11). Sabbath in Hebrew means “rest”. So why, knowing that the Pharisees would be in a rage when they saw the man breaking one of their rules by carrying his mat on the Sabbath, would Jesus command him to do so? Who were these Pharisees anyway?

To put it simply, Pharisees were zealous Jews and keepers of the Law. Mostly middle-class businessmen, who, although only holding a minority position in the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling council), they were popular among the people and thus wielded a tremendous amount of power. They believed the Torah, our Old Testament, was the inerrant Word of God, but they also made additions to the Law. For example, they added chapter upon chapter of rules to what it meant to keep the Sabbath. A few of the “traditions” enforced by the Pharisees are as follows: no climbing trees or smelling flowers, no selecting out bad fruit before eating the good, and no tearing paper or separating glued papers (ou.org).

Really? Yes, really.

So in reality, when Jesus told the man in John 5 to pick up his mat and walk, he was not actually telling him to break the Sabbath, at least not God's Law concerning the Sabbath. Jesus was demonstrating that God's Law trumps the laws of men. He did this on more than one occasion, such as the healing of the man with the withered hand (Mark 3) and the allowance of his disciples to pick heads of grain (Matthew 12). Furthermore, Jesus condemns their attempts to treat their traditions as equal in authority to God's Law.

Mark 7:6-8 (ESV)

“And he said to them, “Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me;’ in vain do

they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.’⁸ You leave the commandment of God and hold to the tradition of men.”

It can be easy to fall into the trap of following our own list of rights and wrongs in an attempt to obey God. Our heart may even be in the right place initially. We have to be so careful not to replace the inward submission of our hearts to God with the outward observance of rituals and traditions. God is interested in a deep, abiding relationship with us. As we pursue him, he will provide the wisdom and strength to deal with everything else.

Questions:

Have you ever been tempted to try and please God by following human traditions?

Have you ever judged someone else for not following traditions that you deem important?

Next Steps:

Pray and ask God to reveal to you any area where your heart might be far from him. Confess the times when you have held to the traditions of men over the commandments of God.

Prayer:

Lord, thank you for your patience with me. I confess that there have been times when I have developed pride in following man-made traditions when my heart is not where it should be. I want to live in a way that is pleasing to you but help me to want you more than anything else. In Jesus' name, amen.

This post was written by Martha Preckler and the LIO team. Martha is a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.