

# Abide in Me

*Mentored by the Master*  
*Discipleship in Real Time*



Volume 10 - Number 22

The Week of April 27, 2025

*Come and Follow*  
**Mercy that Backfired**  
John 5:1-18

Welcome to the final stretch in our Growth Group year! Our prayer is that your participation has enhanced your walk with God and strengthened your experience of true community.

This week's passage is a story that appears to be a straightforward healing miracle. Jesus enters Jerusalem and encounters a man who has been disabled for decades. With a few words, Jesus restores him. But this is no ordinary healing. What begins as an act of mercy unfolds with growing tension. Even Jesus' initial question is more searching than it appears: "Do you want to be healed?" As the story progresses, layers begin to peel back. The man's response is puzzling. His healing is immediate—but his reaction is far from normal. The authorities take notice—not to celebrate, but to criticize. And rather than showing gratitude or loyalty, the healed man's actions lead to an unexpected twist that reshapes how we view the entire encounter.

John invites us to look deeper. What appears to be a simple miracle becomes a turning point in Jesus' ministry—one that sparks controversy and reveals hearts. As you read, watch carefully. Not everything is as it seems.

**OBSERVATION** (*What does the passage say and how does it say it?*)

Before your group meets, read the passage and perform the following prompts:

- Place [ ] around each reference to *time*.
- Double underline what Jesus says and underline the responses given.
- Place a † over every occurrence of *Jesus* and observe how He reveals Himself.
- Place an \* over each reference to *man* and *this man* and take note how his identity remains vague.
- Draw a box around the words "healed," "whole," or "well."
- Highlight any conflict or controversy.
- In the left margin, label the movement of the passage accordingly:
  - vv. 1-9 – Interaction
  - vv. 10-13 – Interrogation
  - vv. 14-15 – Revelation
  - vv. 16-18 – Confrontation

<sup>1</sup> After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem.

<sup>2</sup> Now there is in Jerusalem by the Sheep Gate a pool, in Aramaic called Bethesda, which has five roofed colonnades. <sup>3</sup> In these lay a multitude of invalids—blind, lame, and paralyzed. <sup>5</sup> One man was there who had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. <sup>6</sup> When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he had already been there a long time, he said to him, "Do you want to be healed?" <sup>7</sup> The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, and while I am going another steps down

before me.”<sup>8</sup> Jesus said to him, “Get up, take up your bed, and walk.”<sup>9</sup> And at once the man was healed, and he took up his bed and walked.

Now that day was the Sabbath.<sup>10</sup> So the Jews said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath, and it is not lawful for you to take up your bed.”<sup>11</sup> But he answered them, “The man who healed me, that man said to me, ‘Take up your bed, and walk.’”<sup>12</sup> They asked him, “Who is the man who said to you, ‘Take up your bed and walk’?”<sup>13</sup> Now the man who had been healed did not know who it was, for Jesus had withdrawn, as there was a crowd in the place.

<sup>14</sup> Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him, “See, you are well! Sin no more, that nothing worse may happen to you.”<sup>15</sup> The man went away and told the Jews that it was Jesus who had healed him.

<sup>16</sup> And this was why the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because he was doing these things on the Sabbath.<sup>17</sup> But Jesus answered them, “My Father is working until now, and I am working.”<sup>18</sup> This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

### INTERPRETATION (*What does the passage mean?*)

1. What is the significance of Jesus asking, “Do you want to be healed?” (v.6) especially, in light of, the man’s response? How does this question uncover more than just physical need?
2. Why does John note that the man had been an invalid for thirty-eight years (v.5)? What does this detail suggest about the depth of his condition or the context of the miracle?
3. Why does the healed man not learn Jesus’ name or seek Him out after his healing (v.13)? How does the healed man’s reaction to the authorities reflect his understanding—or misunderstanding—of Jesus? (vv.10-13). Does he defend Jesus or distance himself?
4. What does Jesus’ second encounter with the man in the temple (v.14) reveal about both Jesus’ intent and the man’s condition?

5. Why does the man immediately go to the Jewish authorities to report that it was Jesus who healed him (v.15)?
6. What claim is Jesus making in verse 17? How does this statement challenge the religious leaders? Why do they shift from their concern over a Sabbath violation to seeking to kill Jesus? (v.18)

**APPLICATION** *(How does the passage apply to our lives?)*

1. When Jesus asks, “Do you want to be healed?”—how might that question apply to areas of spiritual paralysis in our own spiritual lives? Are there places where we become accustomed to our brokenness or dysfunction?
2. Like the man in the story, how are we tempted to blame others or our circumstances rather than take personal responsibility?
3. In what areas of our life can we become more interested in what Jesus can do for us than in who He is to us?
4. Is it possible to experience healing or answered prayer and still walk away unchanged in our relationship with Jesus? How do we guard against that?
5. What does it look like in your life to receive mercy and follow Jesus with loyalty—even when it’s costly?

## Sermon Notes: *Mercy that Backfired*

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