

Dr. Jerry Nelson

LEADER'S GUIDE

For discussion following the sermon on November 16, 2008

Pool of Bethesda and Opposition

In this week's passage, we find several amazing elements and teachings within the story, but no part of this story is greater than the revelation of the most amazing, intimate relationship in the universe—the relationship of God the Father and Jesus, his Son. Woven throughout the passage we find:

Key Points

- The healing of an ungrateful invalid
- The questioning of a Sabbath healing
- The persecution of Jesus
- The revelation of the ultimate relationship between God the Father and God the Son (Jesus).

In the first part of this passage, Jesus chose to enter the life of a hopeless and helpless invalid. In a demonstration of compassion and power, Jesus heals the man. After thirty-eight years of living in isolation (“I have no one to help me into the pool”), the invalid's health and his life are restored by Jesus. Is there anything else that Jesus might have done that could have possibly produced more gratitude? Yet, as the story unfolds, we find just the opposite reaction on the part of the man to be true. He is quick to disclose the name of his gift-giver to an agitated, hostile group of Jews. While there may be applications to the story portion of the passage, it is likely that John is simply using this story to set the context for the confrontation that follows.

Jesus had a mission. It was to reveal the Father. And what better way to reveal the Father than to reveal himself, for there was no better view of God than the living, breathing person (Jesus) who was standing right in front of them. If they saw the miracles, they saw God the Father. If they heard the Son, they heard the Father. If they were to be eventually raised from the dead by the Father, they would also receive life from the Son, for Jesus didn't derive life from anyone else. Jesus *is* life. And those who honor the Father also honor the Son.

Here, Jesus is revealing the intimate relationship, the relationship between himself and his Father. They are one. They do not act independently of one another. It is difficult for our finite minds to comprehend, but when Jesus spoke, the Father spoke. When he moved, God moved. They enjoy the ultimate relationship, one derived from the purest love imaginable! To place your faith in Jesus is to place your faith in God. Do you believe?

Leader's Guide

Personal Preparation

- As you consider the relationship between God the Father and Jesus, his son, what words, thoughts or phrases can you use to describe the relationship? Jot them down below.

- Later on in John (17:20-21) we are invited into that relationship that Jesus has with the Father. The result is an intimate relationship with God and with one another. Does that describe your faith walk with God? If so, thank him for the amazing gift of relationship and love!

Group Preparation

- There are many teachings and potential applications for our own lives in this passage. There are many directions you could take your group's discussion. It will be important to pray and ask God what is best for your group, and to guard against non-essential conversation that could use up valuable time.

Discussion Questions

1. Why would Jesus choose to heal the invalid knowing that the Jews would eventually turn on Jesus and build a greater hatred toward him? (Jesus wants the opportunity to have the discussion that ensues.)
2. Does healing (or any other miracle of restoration) always produce gratitude? Why or why not? Why wouldn't it?
3. Why did Jesus tell the invalid to stop sinning? What was he doing wrong? Was his disability a result of his sin? (See D.A. Carson notes on John 5:14 at the end of Pastor Nelson's sermon at www.soundliving.org)
4. In our culture it isn't popular to connect sin with disease, but that can be the case. God allows natural and logical consequences of sin to demonstrate his judgment and justice.

What advice would you give someone who is wrestling with the guilt of sin and a resulting injury or disease?

How would you help someone who is needlessly feeling guilty over an illness when there is no evidence of sin?

The point of this particular healing was to reveal the relationship between the Father and the Son. Describe that relationship.

5. What are the several things Jesus claims for himself in verses 17-23?
6. In what ways does Jesus claim to be “equal” with the Father? In what ways is he not “equal” with the Father?
7. How does Jesus describe the intimacy of his relationship with the Father in verses 19-20? What examples do you have of that kind of relationship here on earth?
8. Is Jesus claiming to be another God (one of two Gods), a lesser God, or something else? By Jews and Muslims, Christians are charged with being polytheists (believing in more than one god). In this passage, how does Jesus describe his relationship with the Father that results in neither polytheism nor in Jesus being a lesser God? And what difference does it make to us? In what ways are your understanding and worship of Jesus enhanced by this passage?
9. The Jews responded to Jesus with persecution and a desire for vengeance (“they tried all the harder to kill him”). How do you respond to the truth of the Gospel when it means that you must disregard a lifestyle or belief system that is contrary to God’s Word? How do you respond to others who are angered by the claims of Jesus? (bulletin question)