

Hey guys, I hope you're somewhere warm enjoying this weather. I know not everyone agrees with me, but I absolutely love this kind of weather. I find the hot and sweaty summers to be much more of a struggle than a bunch of snow that I got to shovel. Which just proves that we all struggle with something. Which has been the recurring theme as we've gone through the week so far in our 12 week series on hope and healing.

We all struggle with something. One of the things, things that I've done that Alan sort of directed me to was something called Struggle Finder. Had a few people do that with me, so I'm not the only one. And if you're interested, we'll have more about that next Sunday when we're back in person. But you get to go through this sort of quiz questionnaire and at the end of it they evaluate some of the things you may struggle with.

And surprise, surprise, I've got a few things I struggle with. What they came back to me with was this. These three main areas. I have issues with codependency. I have issues with people pleasing.

I have issues with control. Now, I know that shocks all of you. And when I heard them, I thought, oh, okay, those aren't too bad. I mean, codependency, what is that? I need people and people need me.

It's a little bit more involved with that. I looked it up. Codependency is an excessive emotional or psychological reliance on someone else, typically someone who needs us in some capacity. Which translated means I get my emotional needs met, helping others who have their own deep emotional needs. And it sounds pretty harmless, right?

I mean, we should help people. That's good. Yeah. And there's nothing wrong with feeling good about helping others. But the dangers of codependency, I've discovered, are manifold.

So there's, there's one this lack of self love, where my value is determined, how well I help others and how I feel about how well I help others. And if I disappoint someone, then I feel disappointed in myself and I feel this sense of worthlessness. I don't have a sense of self love. And then there's lack of boundaries. This is a big one.

People who are codependent have a hard time saying no and they give themselves and their power away to others in the hope that someone will notice them and affirm them and say they're amazing. And because they themselves have few boundaries, people who have healthy boundaries, maybe people like you who know how to say no and say it well. Well, people like me go well you're cold and heartless and selfish and mean. I have a lack of boundaries. I live with a lack of reality.

People like me with codependency have a hard time recognizing their

own dysfunction. I have a. I have a hard time containing my own truth and I tend to overshare, which I know is shocking to a lot of you. I experience lack of self care because I'm codependent. While I'm very aware of the needs of others, I'm sometimes very ineffective at meeting my own needs and wants. And weirdly, I can use caring for others as a manipulative tool to get recognition and attention to, to sort of COVID for what I should be doing, which is healthy self care.

And then all of that is just. It's a cover for a lack of maturity and a lack of moderation. I live sometimes chaotic, immaturity out of control life. I can procrastinate, I can delay doing things that are good for me. I can be obstinate, I can be stubborn.

I can act impulsively without thinking. And people with this codependency often struggle with addiction. So I'm telling you, it's not a harmless little issue. It's not a harmless struggle. Hello, my name is Tim Thompson and I struggle with codependency.

We all struggle with something. You struggle with something, I struggle with something. And that's why I share it with you. I want to be the kind of church where we can struggle together. We all struggle with something, but we don't want to struggle alone.

So many of the things that we struggle with are not our fault per se. I didn't set out to be a co dependent personality, but it does become my responsibility once I'm aware of this. And so the man that we're going to meet today in our scriptures didn't likely cause his struggle. But to move from struggle into this place of freedom and healing will require him to answer a question Jesus poses and to accept responsibility for his next steps of hope and healing. So we're going to read the scripture and we're going to dig into this and I'm going to pray first.

Heavenly Father, as we open your word, we pray that you open our heart, you open our minds, you open our willingness to step into the next thing that you call us to help us to do that. Help us take inspiration and courage from the story we're going to read today from the life of Jesus. I pray this in his name. Amen. Okay, if you've got your Bibles, open up to John chapter five.

We're going to start right there in the beginning. And John begins this portion of the scripture this way. He says sometime later now, the time that John is referring to Jesus has just healed a government official, son. And it's sometime after that. Who knows how much time?

But sometime later, John says Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. Now there is in Jerusalem, near the. A pool which in Aramaic is called Bethesda, and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. If you travel with us to Israel, that's one of our stops. It's a beautiful place.

Even now with its architectural ruins, it's an incredible place to visit. And you can see what a large place this is. This is not just a little. This is not just a little city pool. This is an enormous, enormous facility.

John writes that here a great number of disabled people used to lie. The blind, the lame, the paralyzed. And from time to time, an angel of the Lord would come down and stir up the waters. And the first one into the pool after each such disturbance would be cured of whatever disease they had. I don't want to even get into the mythology related to this belief, but let's just lay right there and keep that in the back of your mind as a

As a topic for future study. Let's go on verse five. One who was there had been an invalid for 38 years. And when Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, do you want to get well, sir? The invalid replied, I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred.

While I'm trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me. Then Jesus said to him, get up, pick up your mat and walk. And at once the man was cured. He picked up his mat and walked. And the day on which this took place was the Sabbath.

Now, as I said, the pool of Bethesda is this beautiful place with these five covered porches. It was a popular place. Crowds of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, lay on the porches, hoping for healing. And one of these guys had been there who had been disabled for 38 years. We don't know how long he had been there, but he'd been disabled.

Now, I don't know if this disability was genetic, something he was born with, perhaps. Maybe it was caused by an accident. Maybe there was some sort of injury in his youth. We just don't know. But Jesus sees the man and he inquires about him.

He asks about him, and someone there says, oh, yeah? That guy on that mat has a. Has been like this for 38 years. And Jesus goes over to him and just asks the question, hey, you, do you want to get well? And that's the question Jesus asks of all of us, because we all struggle with something.

Jesus asks us, all those of us who are interested in following him into the freedom and the hope and the healing that he's offered us. He asks us the same question. Do you want to get well? In other words, are you ready to leave this familiar but broken situation? Tim, do you want to be a codependent person forever?

Or are you interested in feeling and living and thinking and

responding to the world around you and the people that you love in a different, healthier way? Are you ready to release this now, releasing something that we've grown very familiar with? After all, this guy's lived with this for 39 years. I'm 59 years old. I'm used to it.

Even if it's broken, asking if we want to be rid of it, if we want to release it, sets off this internal struggle because it's an invitation of some sort to take action. Jesus says, do you want to get well? And we say, no. And Jesus says, okay, I'm moving on to the next person who does want to get well. Or we say, yeah, I want to get well, but I. I want to get well by.

I got it. I got it covered. You don't need to. You don't need to worry about it, Jesus. I'll get it.

I'll get it under control, and then I'll come back to you when I've got it under control and you can affirm how great a job I did getting my life under control. That's one yes. The other yes is, yes, I do want to get well, but I'm going to need some help. And this kind of yes, this admitting that we have a need is the most responsible thing we can do. It's the most responsible step in getting to this place of hope and healing.

It's the perfect next step.

Now, in this instance, the man says, yes. And then he says, but whether I want to or not, it doesn't seem to make much of a difference what I want. The truth is that I simply can't. Here's what he says exactly. Sir.

I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I'm trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me. Now, I'm telling you, I've heard hundreds of sermons on this story right here, and Every preacher I've heard says this guy goes to the excuse, he makes an excuse for his disability. Maybe it is an excuse, but if it is an excuse, it's a pretty legit excuse because he doesn't have anyone to help him. There's no indication he has any family, any supporters there.

He says himself, when I try to get in there, I'm too slow and people get in there first. I can't do it on my own, he says. And that's true. So in some sense he's a victim of his circumstances. He has been overlooked, he has been ignored, he has been passed by.

All his efforts up to this point have been fruitless. And so he eventually he just settles down on his mat and makes the best of his circumstances. Is it an excuse or is it just saying, I'm just going to deal with reality as reality has presented itself. I'm going to hang out here with my mat? We all have mats.

I think mats I think in this instance represent this place of comfort. Yes, it's a comfortable place, better than on the hard ground. It's also a place to belong. The mat sort of defines the place that we take up in the world around us. It provides an identity.

That guy over there on the red mattress, Jesus was pointed to him. That was how they identified him. And maybe that mat provides you an excuse. I'd love to help out with that, but you know, I've got this whole thing going on. I've got this mat situation.

I can't really help you. I'm not authorized to help because of my other issue. So yeah, comfort, stability, sense of identity, maybe an excuse. It's very possible this guy has gotten really, really comfortable living right there at the pool of Bethesda on his mat. Maybe he hung up a picture or got a potted plant to sit beside him.

He got comfortable on the mat. And eventually if we stay on the mat too long, we too get comfortable with the mat. This is our reality, this becomes our security, this becomes our identity and we become very high functioning mat dweller. So when Jesus says, do you want to get well?

If we pause, it's sort of understandable. Jesus doesn't really even wait for him to answer. He just says, pick up your mat and get out of this place. What are you waiting on? Pick up your mat and leave.

And this guy's response is absolutely incredible. He doesn't, he doesn't seem to hesitate. The scriptures indicate that he, he did it, he just did it in one fell swoop. He is healed and he obeys Jesus. Or maybe he starts to obey Jesus and he is healed.

I don't know. I don't know which came first, the healing or his obedience, his obedience or the healing. But in this series we've landed on. So far, we have landed on three crucial steps for healing from the things that are broken in our lives. And the first thing that we looked at, the first step, was recognizing that we are powerless to change ourselves.

And the second powerful step is that we come to believe that God alone can help us. In other words, we can't, but Jesus can. And the third step is illustrated in the picture of this guy right here where we say, I'm gonna trust Jesus enough to just do what he says. I'm going to trust him enough to just obey him. And if he says, get up off of that mat and walk, then I'm at least going to try to start moving my legs.

We stop saying, I'll follow as long as I understand what you're asking of me. And we start saying, I'll follow because I trust the one who is leading me where he leads, I'll follow. We say, your words to me are a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. So I won't lean on my own

understanding of the situation or my disability or my affliction or my struggle. I'm going to, in all my ways, acknowledge you and your wisdom and your power.

And honestly, mostly the fact that you love me. Even with my struggle, I'm going to lean on that and I'm going to acknowledge that. And then I'm going to let you just direct me wherever you want to take me. So step three is this belief that only God can heal us. And actually taking that first step of obedience declares that in a physical way.

So whatever your struggle. And again, we all struggle with something. Jesus asked the question, do you want to get well? Is that a yes? Is it a yes?

But I think I've got this. Then Jesus says, okay, good luck with that. Keep doing what you're doing. You've been so successful so far. Or is that a yes?

Saying, okay, yes, I do want to get well, but tell me what I need to do next, and whatever you tell me to do, I will do it. Now, this is important. There's this idea, I think, that we have to hear what Jesus tells us to do. And then a lot of us spend a lot of time thinking about what he's asking us to do and getting up the nerve to actually do it. This man doesn't.

And I think this is a perfect picture of the correct response to when Jesus tells us to do something, just do it. The moment matters. Oswald Chambers says that one step forward in obedience is worth years of talking about it is worth years of studying about it. Just one step forward. David writes in Psalm 119, I hasten, I hurry, and I do not delay to keep your commands.

In Hebrews, the writer says this today, if you will hear his voice, do not harden your hearts. There's this immediacy about it. Thomas A. Kempis wrote this. Instant obedience is the only kind of obedience there is. Delayed obedience is disobedience.

I kind of want to repeat that because it's so good. Instant obedience is the only kind of obedience there is. Delayed obedience is disobedience. And if you've ever told a child to get a chore done and it's three weeks later that he finally gets it, you understand? That is not obedience.

That is disobedience. We don't want to be like that child. We want to be obedient to what God tells us in the moment. And like this man, when he says, take up your bed and walk, we want to start moving our feet. We want to start moving our toes.

And in that moment, we see God begin to work. So this week I want you to listen for God's direction and insist on doing what he asks, no

matter how impossible it might seem. Why? Because he knows you and he loves you. He knows what he's doing.

He knows what he's asking of you. Because he knows what your life is going to look like on the other side of this next step. So what would it look like for you to take up your bed and get up and walk in obedience today? Even if you don't fully understand what the future is going to be, can you imagine what life will be like on the other side of the mat? Only you can answer that.

But today we pray for faith. We pray for obedience, like this man at the pool had. We pray like that old song says, that we would trust and obey. For there's no other way to be happy in Jesus but to trust and obey. And that's my prayer for you.

Let me close. And then you're going to enjoy a great afternoon of cuddling in with a warm cup of coffee and time with your family. Heavenly Father, Jesus, no matter what we struggle with, and we all struggle with something, help us to trust you. Remind us to lean on your wisdom and not ours. Remind us that we are loving, loved by you.

You gave your life because you love us. And your love doesn't end there. It didn't end on the cross. It continues with us today. You love us enough to bring us into new life and to experience the perfect plan you have for us.

So today, as we take a moment just to. Just to remember your love, give us strength to trust you and the confidence to obey you as you lead us into new life. And I pray this for everyone listening. In Jesus name, amen. Have a wonderful afternoon.