

Get Well

One of Six Decisions That Will Change Your Life

May 16 & 17, 2009

Intro:

Iris Festival. Thanks.

Prayer:

This great weather lifts us from the rainy blahs. It's spring and color has finally cut through the gray. It's like getting well after being sick. And that's how I feel. I had a terrible stomach flu for a couple days. My family asked, What did you have for lunch? Pork stir-fry. They flipped out: Oh no, the swine flu! They weren't seriously worried; they were just making fun of me! But is that how you treat someone lying on the bathroom floor?

While I was down there, I was thinking about this message. I'm launching a new series covering Six Decisions That Will Change Your Life. This first is the choice to **get well**. I thought: If it's partially up to me, I'll take healing as soon as possible! I can't imagine anyone not wanting to get well. Being satisfied with sickness is uncommon when we're talking about physical disease, but it's not unusual among those with emotional and spiritual problems.

Today we'll study two passages of Scripture, one from the OT and one in the NT, in which the main character is faced with a choice: Do you want to get well? The biblical accounts have to do with physical healing, but the principles are applicable to emotional and spiritual problems as well. With these, the key issue is not any new medical apparatus, physiological treatment, or miracle drug. It is willingness. Positive change in your life is dependent upon your willingness; it's a choice of your will! A decision. A choice I want you to make today.

1. To get well, you need to be willing to leave the life you've become accustomed to living.

John 5:1 Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for a feast of the Jews. 2 Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades.

It's been uncovered by archeologists. 360' long X 130' wide. 3 Here a great number of disabled people used to lie--the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. What a picture of our world: people with various needs all around. They're all waiting for something. These gathered because of a belief that an angel would come down to stir the waters and the first one in would be healed. This explanation was inserted in some late manuscripts and found its way into some translations. 5 One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. The story focuses in on one man, who had suffered for a long time. It doesn't say he had been there for 38 years, but the implication is that he's the worst off of the whole lot.

6 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?" I can hear both compassion and a challenge in Christ's voice. He wants to know if the guy really wants to get well. We must desire change. If you're content to stay in your current circumstances, you will. Sometimes people won't recognize the severity of their situation. They don't want their lives changed. They resign themselves to settle into a condition of complacency. It's just easier to remain as they are. But, **to get well, you need to be willing to leave the life you've become accustomed to living.**

7 "Sir," the invalid replied, "I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me." Picture a guy who says he wants work but says he can't get a job because someone always gets the interview first. Or can't get a date because all the good ones are already married. Those are

excuses, but this guy's answer may be a legitimate explanation. Jesus decided to give him the chance he needed to rise up. Later in this account, we learn that at this point the man didn't even know who he talking to. He didn't understand the power of Christ, which many of us fail to recognize as well.

8 Then Jesus said to him, "Get up! Pick up your mat and walk." The guy needed to obey this command. And Jesus gave him the power to do so. Note, in this healing Jesus didn't use any other means, medicinal water or anything else. It's the same way today. Sometimes he heals independent of what we expect.

9 At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked. The day on which this took place was a Sabbath...

The account then transitions into recording a dispute involving the religious authorities who viewed Jesus as a renegade rule-breaker. Their interaction culminates with the leaders planning an assassination because Jesus was making himself out to be equal with God the Father.

•What Jesus did for this guy physically is what he can do for us spiritually! Note, it took faith on that man's part to obey. Real faith is willing to do something; it doesn't just sit there. **James:** real faith works. The Every Man's Battle curriculum included an interesting question: what's wrong with praying for deliverance year after year? Nothing if you are persisting in faithful prayer. But it is no good to whine about your troubles if you're not willing to do something about them.

If the guy had refused to get up, then we'd learn that his problem was a way of life. I've known people whose sickness became their hobby. It works for them. They get attention and special treatment due to their disease. They are professional victims and don't want hope because that would mean change. Behaviorism, a branch of psychology advanced by the work of BF Skinner, says if the man was

getting more rewards for staying put than he anticipated for getting well, then there is no way he is going to accept an invitation to stand. Unwilling people don't change.

I get calls from people asking me to fix someone close to them: I've got this creepy husband. I'm going to insist that he comes in to see you. Or, my teenager is spinning out. As part of his punishment, I'm making him meet with you. It doesn't work that way. The prerequisite for change is willingness. If a counseling client doesn't want to be there, no one on earth can do a thing. Some people are stuck and unwilling to do what is necessary to get well. How about you? It could have been Joe's Bar instead of an ancient pool, or under the bridge, or the skate park, or a coffee shop, anywhere the needy gather. In fact, today he's here asking you to get up!

Do you want to get well so much that you're willing to get up and go to a new place? I don't mean a new location, but a new place in your head. **Yes or No?** You've got a choice to make.

We're like this guy: stuck, trapped. What paralysis has immobilized you? Is it lust or bitterness? We don't have a way out on our own power. But we do have the same chance he had - the same invitation to leave the old way of life behind.

I'm not talking about leaving your mate! I'm talking about leaving the bad habit behind, leaving the bad attitude. Step into a new place! Leave the life of sin. In the Bible, this is called repentance: leaving what was and heading in a new direction.

What do you need to leave behind? Get specific! Make a decision. There's a place to write it down.

This guy needed to leave behind his life as a beggar. That would mean that he'd have to get a job and fit in. Some people don't want to do that. The guy could've said no. I've grown accustomed to this lifestyle. My disability is

more than a physical problem; it now defines me. And I'm comfortable where I am. I get adequate food. I don't have to do anything. People feel sorry for me. I'm well known in these parts. Why ruin all that?

What will you have to leave behind? The mentality of being a victim? The satisfaction of rehearsing your bitterness? Drugs? Promiscuity? If you're hamstrung by addiction or illicit relationships, you won't be able to rise. Bad patterns will pull you down like an anchor. Today you can cut the chain. **Prayer:** May we get real and no longer hide behind a masquerade. No more excuses. [John 8:32 - the truth will set you free.](#)

2. To get well, you need to be willing to do things God's way, even when that seems crazy.

2 Kings 5:1 Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy. Everyone's got a problem of one sort or another. This was a bad one! This disease was greatly feared in their time, like AIDS is today. There were a few different forms, some were less contagious, but all were incurable. So many people are like this. So much can be said that is positive, but they have one debilitating problem.

2 Now bands from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. 3 She said to her mistress, "If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy." 4 Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. 5 "By all means, go," the king of Aram replied. "I will send a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver

750#, six thousand shekels of gold 150# and ten sets of clothing.

6 The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy." He was sent to the king, not the prophet, as the slave girl had said. 7 As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!" 8 When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: "Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel." 9 So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Quite an entourage! Must have looked funny riding into the trailer court. 10 Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, "Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed." This reception isn't what he expected. He was used to respect. Here he was being treated like a common person, and being told to do something crazy! 11 But Naaman went away angry and said, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. He was looking for something spectacular. He was proud and he saw this as beneath his status. Why did I come all the way here?

12 Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than any of the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?" So he turned and went off in a rage. Seemed crazy!!! When some people hear what will make them well spiritually, they respond the same way. Admit my sin? Ask God for forgiveness? Invite Jesus into my life to rule as Lord? Is that all it takes? Come on! There

must be a harder way! **13 Naaman's servants went to him and said, "My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed!'"** Sometimes the answer is pretty simple. It's like the gospel of grace.

14 So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.

15 Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. The text goes on to show that Naaman immediately understood that this God was not to be added to the list of various idols but that he required exclusive worship. When you come face to face with the real God, all alternatives fade away.

Now, how about you: **Do you want to get well so much that you are willing to humble yourself and obey?**

Yes or No? You've got a choice to make. It's time for a decision. Naaman was willing. He was too proud at first, but he changed. When Naaman was at the point of decision, he already knew exactly what he was supposed to do for God had communicated through his prophet Elisha - he had to humble himself and go wash in the muddy Jordan. Back home there were cleaner rivers. He was willing even though it seemed crazy. God's way often does. But what has God been saying to you? Maybe you already know also. **What has God already said?** Get specific: there's a place to write it down. He might be telling to do something counterintuitive. To let go of something you've held on to for so long or to stop doing something that has become a long-standing pattern.

Maybe God has already spoken through your mate who has given you an ultimatum: you're an alcoholic: give up

the booze or the marriage is over. You know what you need to do. Write it down. Make a commitment.

Concl: You can say yes to God, do things his way, and get well!

Remember, positive change in your life is dependent upon your willingness, which is a choice of your will. A decision.

Of course, the willingness I've been describing is just what begins the process that leads to wellness, but we're only at the beginning of our series on the Six Decisions That Will Change Your Life. You've got to come back next week!

Prayer ideas: There is hope. We receive healing from you.

Celebration prayer team available.

More Meat (unused and undeveloped ideas)

Vs 4 - Its absence from the oldest and most reliable manuscripts leaves us no doubt that it was not part of the original.

Remember, we're concentrating on emotional and spiritual wellness.

Jesus said to the fishermen, come and follow me. They left it all behind.

15b Please accept now a gift from your servant."

16. The prophet answered, "As surely as the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing." And even though Naaman urged him, he refused.

17. "If you will not," said Naaman, "please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the Lord.
18. But may the LORD forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down and he is leaning on my arm and I bow there also--when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD forgive your servant for this."

He wanted the dirt so that he would be placing his knee on Israelite soil. Naaman immediately understood that this God who could heal was not to be added to the list of Aramean gods but that he required exclusive worship. When you really come face to face with the real God, all alternatives are revealed to be mere idols in comparison.
19. "Go in peace," Elisha said. Gehazi, Elisha's servant, saw a great opportunity about to disappear. At this point the account focuses on how he followed after Naaman and got some of that money for himself then denied it to his master.