

# Grounded in Grace

## LIVING IN-BETWEEN HURT, HOPE, AND HEALING PT 3 Revealing our Heart Reliance

*“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.” John 5:7 (NIV)*

It is interesting to hear the paralytic’s response to Jesus’ question. He does not answer the question. He actually avoids the question. Here is a man who is living in between hurt and hope. He has much hope, but it is misplaced and ends up hurting him in the end. The invalid responds to Jesus’ heart question by revealing his own heart and the failure of many of the things that we rely upon in our hearts.

### **Reliance #1 The Fulfillment of Others**

The invalid cannot be healed because no one will help him into the healing pool. He is relying upon others to fill that physical need, and even more so, that need within his heart. And as he has found out for the past 38 years- no one will fill that need. People have failed him. He is ultimately left unhappy, unfulfilled, and longing for someone to satisfy his hurting heart. So he uses others to fulfill his own needs. He is more concerned for himself than about others and, in a sense, uses others to relieve his pain.

It is interesting that we also tend to do the same. Have you ever noticed how we have asked other people to appease us so that we don’t have to deal with our own insecurities? Many have paid the price for our insecurities. And many times they have been denied their own dignity to supply us with our worth and importance. Or have people in our lives failed us because we relied upon them to fulfill a need or heal a hurt that they were never intended to fulfill? If so, what patterns in our lives need to be changed, healed, and restructured?

### **Reliance #2 Filling Myself with Me**

Again, if we look at his answer, we see the second thing he is relying upon - himself. “While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.” Since no one else will fulfill his need, he takes it upon himself to get to the healing pool. The paralytic’s main objective is himself, his goals, and his needs. There is no concern for others. How can there be if others are not concerned for him? His life takes on one main meaning: “I need to do whatever I can to get to my goal, which in this case is the pool.”

The long road of filling “myself with me” leads to unfulfillment, unhappiness and dissatisfaction. I honestly think that this is where the invalid was when he replied to Jesus’ statement. Can you hear a little desperation in his voice? Can you hear the cry of frustration? “I have tried to live my life for one main purpose and I can never reach my goal because of someone or something else.” The “me-ness” led to a 38-year life of seeking something that could never be gained and never be fulfilled.

How often do we have the same mentality? Life doesn’t become about giving but about getting. Life doesn’t become a journey toward healing but a lonely road toward isolation. Life doesn’t take on the adventure of knowing God and being known by others but a misadventure in filling my needs with anything necessary to relieve my pain and fill my emptiness. Life becomes one painful, hard road of broken promises, broken expectations, and broken relationships because “self” is so much in need that it can not find fulfillment in anything but self.

### **Reliance # 3 Finding Comfort in My Circumstances**

The last thing he is relying upon is his circumstances. Look at his full answer again. “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.” The magical water is going to heal him. I wonder if he said in his heart, “If only I can get closer next time, I’ll get in.” Or “If only Zachariah from Bethesda Street would stop everyone else until I can scoot myself down there. Then I’d be ok. The water would heal me I know it. I just need to get there.”

He is relying upon circumstances to change in his favor. If only this happens then I’d be fine. He has been putting his trust in a hole in the ground filled with water. He is putting his confidence in something that will never heal his soul.

Again, as we look at his response God calls us to look at our response. Do you hear these whispers in the wind of your heart? Do we put confidence in circumstances if they only turn in our favor? Do we say to ourselves, “If only I would have been much better at this or that?” or “If only these things would not have interfered in my life then I would be joyful?” We tend to make excuses and rely upon our circumstances instead of relying upon God who is in control of our circumstances. Or we tend to blame our past for our present and then make excuses for our future.

Reliance on circumstances is one of the deadliest reliances of all because in the end it leaves us questioning, longing, and hoping. We are left with questioning our choices, longing for peace, and hoping that we will finally find stability in chaos. There is no foundation of hope and no rest for the weary for those who are constantly trying to keep their lives afloat by dodging the waves and storms of life. Indeed, the paralytic’s answer gives Jesus’ insight into his soul and gives us plenty of insight into our own.

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