

# 10

## *Help!*

John 4:46-54; 5:1-16



### **Opening**

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Do you mind asking for help or will you wear out before you will ask? Why ?

Do you mind it when someone asks you for help?

OR

When you were a child, what was the most serious illness or injury you ever had?

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1. Read John 4:43–54. How does the royal official's attitude toward Jesus differ from the response Jesus had already anticipated (see v. 44)?

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Jesus said that, "A prophet has no honor in his own country." Another way of saying this might be, "Familiarity breeds contempt."

Have you found this to be true? Why do you think this is?

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2. Read verse 48. Why do you think Jesus said this?

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Jesus would perform two other miracles at Capernaum. He healed the centurion's servant there, and raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead. He had also turned the water into wine at nearby Cana. Yet the city was not characterized by belief (See Matt. 11:23-24).

A faith built only upon miraculous signs is not a complete faith (John 2:23-25; 11:45-46) It seemed that Jesus wanted to make sure that this was not just another "test." Note that he was speaking not just to the man, but to the Galileans ("you people").

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3. Describe the faith of the royal official. What is it about his faith that we could emulate?

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4. What does this "second miraculous sign" Jesus performed (v. 54) reveal about him?

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5. What has Jesus taught you in this chapter about meeting the specific needs of those around you?

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6. Read John 5:1–15. Based on the scene and conversation around the pool, how would you describe the feelings and attitudes of the invalid?

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**Question 6.** Some manuscripts of the New Testament include a section between verses 3 and 5 about the "moving of the waters" in the pool of Bethesda. (See footnote in the New International Version.) It is generally agreed that these verses were not part of the original text of John's Gospel, but they do reflect some of the superstition that surrounded the pool. The people believed that when the water in the pool moved it was because an angel was stirring it. They also believed that whoever stepped in the water first after it moved would be healed. The paralyzed man was bitter because no one would help him get to the water first. Someone always beat him to it. In fact, the water may have been moved by the periodic bubbling of an underground spring (Morris, *According to John*, p. 302).

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7. Read 5:6. Why do you think Jesus asks this question?

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Do you think there are sometimes when we deliberately stay in unhealthy situations, or live with unhealthy schedules, etc. because we do not want to change or are scared to change? Can you think of a personal example?

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8. How do you think the man felt after his healing?

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9. The seventh commandment said: "Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy" (see Ex 20:8–11). In their zeal to apply this command, what were the Jews failing to see (Jn 5:9–15)?

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Slipping in between the Old and New Testaments, the Pharisees amplified the Sabbath law by adding thirty-nine categories of unpermitted work, along with a number of tedious restrictions. These became part of the traditional teachings of the rabbis, who then enforced them among the people. Yet these requirements stretched considerably beyond God's original intent. For example, notice how obsessive the restrictions had become in just this one regulation:

*If a man removed his finger-nail by means of his nails or his teeth, and so, too, if [he pulled out] the hair of his head, or his moustache or his beard; and so, too, if a woman dressed her hair or painted her eyelids or reddened [her face] - such a one [Rabbi] Eliezer declares liable [to a Sin-offering] (Shab. 10:6)*

The Mishnah. trans. Herbert Danby (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press 1933). p.110.

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10. When have you been more concerned about a religious activity than the reality behind it? Explain.