

Prayer & Fasting

MAKING ROOM FOR GOD'S PRESENCE

*You are good and do only good; teach me your decrees. -
Psalm 119:68*

The man lay in the exact same spot where he had lain for years. Crippled by paralysis for the past 38 years of his life, he clung to the desperate hope that somehow, some way, he would be the first person to enter the pool of Bethesda the next time an angel of the Lord came down and stirred the waters. The man knew that if he could get into the pool before anyone else, he would be healed of his paralysis. But being surrounded by a great multitude of sick people—others who were blind, lame and paralyzed—he didn't stand much of a chance.

One day, Jesus came walking by the pool and saw the man lying on his straw mat. Knowing the man had been there a long time, Jesus asked him, "Would you like to be healed?" The sick man barely looked up, but straining his voice to talk, said, "Sir, there is no one here to help me into the water at the right time. When I try to make it to the pool by myself, the others push and shove and always get in before I do. So there's no use. I'm almost ready to give up."

Jesus looked at him and said, "Get up, take your bedroll, and start walking." The man didn't even question Jesus. He just believed and started to obey the command Jesus had given him. The man stood up on legs he hadn't used in 38 years, he picked up his bedroll, and he walked away ... completely healed.

But what about the countless others who were still there—the "great multitude of sick people" who were waiting around the pool that day? Have you ever stopped to think about how they felt when Jesus walked over,

asked the paralyzed man a single question and then walked off after healing him? Consider their depth of disappointment or even envy. I can almost hear their cries, their begging, their pleading for Jesus to come their way.

Maybe you're sitting at your very own pool of Bethesda—at a do or die place in your journey—waiting desperately for the Lord's intervention. Perhaps you're struggling with sickness in your body or that of a close loved one; maybe your marriage relationship needs healing or you're waiting for your boss to recognize that you're really the one who keeps the company running. But, instead you are not healed, your loved one passes away, your spouse asks for a divorce or your boss eliminates your job. It seems like the Lord passes you by without even noticing or listening. Disappointment, discouragement and sometimes despair come knocking at your door. You're haunted by the question: "What is so *right* with everyone else and so *wrong* with me?"

Disappointment and discouragement come to everyone. Since this is true and the Bible declares the Lord is in control, my conviction and experience has taught me that the Lord uses disappointment for *His* purposes. And in doing so, He releases healing in our lives. I've discovered that there is deep abiding healing that comes only as disappointment begins to fade. I first began to make this discovery about 15 years ago at our family Thanksgiving gathering. In the midst of our feasting and celebrating, we discovered a small swelling on the thigh of my two-year-old grandson, Adam. After thorough examination by his pediatrician, Adam was sent to an oncologist to begin a yearlong battle with a rare form of cancer. As a family, we came together and began to fast and pray for Adam's healing. Our church family prayed continuously during that year, including a 30-day, 24/7 prayer vigil outside Adam's home. But at the age of three, Adam passed away.

I was seriously disappointed that the Lord didn't heal my grandson. However, as the disappointment began to subside, a healing began to take place that words cannot describe. This healing came in three stages: First, I chose to acknowledge and grieve over our loss, which helped me begin to move away from my disappointment. Then, I accepted the truth that God is

good and He always does good (Psalm 119:68). Lastly, I made the deliberate decision to trust the Lord no matter what happens (Daniel 3:16–17). As I did this, the Lord allowed me to experience a deep healing in my soul characterized by faith, peace, assurance and the awareness that God is with me. His presence overshadowed and healed my disappointment.

Perhaps you feel overwhelmed by disappointment and discouragement because of unanswered prayers— healings that didn't occur; relationships that weren't mended; needs that went unmet. My encouragement to you is to focus on the Lord and wait for His healing beyond your disappointment. You will be glad you did when His presence comes and abides with you and keeps you in perfect peace.

We have seen God intervene in miraculous ways at times, but we have also learned that God does not heal just because we want Him to heal.
He does whatever will bring Him the most glory.
~ Michael Catt

Memory Verse

Surely he took up our pain and bore our suffering, yet we considered him punished by God, stricken by him, and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was on him, and by his wounds we are healed
Isaiah 53:4-5