

*The Untold Story*  
*A Profile in Victimhood*  
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**TALK IT OVER**

Key Scripture:

**John 5:1-15 (NLT)**

*1 Afterward Jesus returned to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish holy days. 2 Inside the city, near the Sheep Gate, was the pool of Bethesda,\* with five covered porches. 3 Crowds of sick people—blind, lame, or paralyzed—lay on the porches.\* 5 One of the men lying there had been sick for thirty-eight years. 6 When Jesus saw him and knew he had been ill for a long time, he asked him, “Would you like to get well?” 7 “I can’t, sir,” the sick man said, “for I have no one to put me into the pool when the water bubbles up. Someone else always gets there ahead of me.” 8 Jesus told him, “Stand up, pick up your mat, and walk!” 9 Instantly, the man was healed! He rolled up his sleeping mat and began walking! But this miracle happened on the Sabbath, 10 so the Jewish leaders objected. They said to the man who was cured, “You can’t work on the Sabbath! The law doesn’t allow you to carry that sleeping mat!” 11 But he replied, “The man who healed me told me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’” 12 “Who said such a thing as that?” they demanded. 13 The man didn’t know, for Jesus had disappeared into the crowd. 14 But afterward Jesus found him in the Temple and told him, “Now you are well; so stop sinning, or something even worse may happen to you.” 15 Then the man went and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had healed him.*

**Deuteronomy 28:58-60 (NLT)**

*58 “If you refuse to obey all the words of instruction that are written in this book, and if you do not fear the glorious and awesome name of the Lord your God, 59 then the Lord will overwhelm you and your children with indescribable plagues. These plagues will be intense and without relief, making you miserable and unbearably sick. 60 He will afflict you with all the diseases of Egypt that you feared so much, and you will have no relief.*

**Psalms 32:8-9**

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-18**  
**2 Corinthians 10:3-5**

Start **talking**. Find a conversation starter for your group.

- If you could meet one great leader from history who would it be and why? What makes that person so inspirational or interesting to you?

Start **thinking**. Ask a question to get your group thinking.

- **Read John 5:1-7.** Why do you think Jesus asked him such an obvious question? What does his response say about his mindset?
- **Read John 5:8-13.** What do you find so puzzling about this conversation between the religious leaders and the healed man?
- Discuss this statement: “The false religion of Judaism, like all false systems, cannot change the inside, so it is left to manipulate life on the outside.”
- **Read John 5:14-15.** What did Jesus mean by this warning? Was it possible that his sin was connected to his physical infirmity? See Deuteronomy 28:58-60 as a reference.

Start **sharing**. Choose a question to create openness.

- Have you ever worked with, been friends with or lived with someone with a victim mentality? How do you think they ended up there?
- On any given day, do you say thank you more than you complain? If not, why not? How can you develop a heart of gratitude?
- As you think about some of the moral, physical or spiritual challenges in your life, do you really want to get better? What action are you taking to make progress?
- Using the comparisons from the message, are you a mule or a rhino? Why? What makes you want to be the rhino?
- True or False. Christianity is an offensive faith? Explain your answer from scripture.

Start **doing**. Commit to a step and live it out this week.

- Cultivate gratitude daily and move forward assured, knowing you are set free and empowered through Christ.

Start **praying**. Be bold and pray with power.

- Dear heavenly father, thank you for freeing us from sin through Jesus Christ. Please help us to remain grateful, to avoid self pity and to move forward obedient to you and fully trusting in you.  
-Amen

Start **digging**. For further study.

- Read the 2nd page and discuss it.

**Question: "What does the Bible say about thankfulness/gratitude?"**

**Answer:** Thankfulness is a prominent Bible theme. First Thessalonians 5:16-18 says, "Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus." Did you catch that? Give thanks in *all* circumstances. Thankfulness should be a way of life for us, naturally flowing from our hearts and mouths.

Digging into the Scriptures a little more deeply, we understand why we should be thankful and also how to have gratitude in different circumstances.

Psalm 136:1 says, "Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good. His love endures forever." Here we have two reasons to be thankful: God's constant goodness and His steadfast love. When we recognize the nature of our depravity and understand that, apart from God, there is only death (John 10:10; Romans 7:5), our natural response is to be grateful for the life He gives.

Psalm 30 gives praise to God for His deliverance. David writes, "I will exalt you, O Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths and did not let my enemies gloat over me. O Lord my God, I called to you for help, and you healed me. O Lord, you brought me up from the grave; you spared me from going down into the pit. . . . You turned my wailing into dancing; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with joy, that my heart may sing to you and not be silent. O Lord my God, I will give you thanks forever" (Psalm 30:1-12). Here David gives thanks to God following an obviously difficult circumstance. This psalm of thanksgiving not only praises God in the moment but remembers God's past faithfulness. It is a statement of God's character, which is so wonderful that praise is the only appropriate response.

We also have examples of being thankful in the midst of hard circumstances. Psalm 28, for example, depicts David's distress. It is a cry to God for mercy, protection, and justice. After David cries out to God, he writes, "Praise be to the Lord, for he has heard my cry for mercy. The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him, and I am helped. My heart leaps for joy, and I will give thanks to him in song" (Psalm 28:6-7). In the midst of hardship, David remembers who God is and, as a result of knowing and trusting God, gives thanks. Job had a similar attitude of praise, even in the face of death: "The LORD gave and the LORD has taken away; may the name of the LORD be praised" (Job 1:21).

There are examples of believers' thankfulness in the New Testament as well. Paul was heavily persecuted, yet he wrote, "Thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of him" (2 Corinthians 2:14). The writer of Hebrews says, "Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe" (Hebrews 12:28). Peter gives a reason to be thankful for "grief and all kinds of trials," saying that, through the hardships, our faith "may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed" (1 Peter 1:6-7).

The people of God are thankful people, for they realize how much they have been given. One of the characteristics of the last days is a lack of thanksgiving, according to 2 Timothy 3:2. Wicked people will be "ungrateful."

We should be thankful because God is worthy of our thanksgiving. It is only right to credit Him for "every good and perfect gift" He gives (James 1:17). When we are thankful, our focus moves off selfish desires and off the pain of current circumstances. Expressing thankfulness helps us remember that God is in control. Thankfulness, then, is not only appropriate; it is actually healthy and beneficial to us. It reminds us of the bigger picture, that we belong to God, and that we have been blessed with every spiritual blessing (Ephesians 1:3). Truly, we have an abundant life (John 10:10), and gratefulness is fitting.

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