

=THE CONVERSION=
Lesson 2
The Lame Man of Bethesda

Objects to have:

A blanket folded into an oblong shape and rolled up from a small end
A crutch or a cane
A small square of cloth
Your Bible.

Introducing the lesson:

(Let's try to help the children realize how long this man had been lame. Ask the children how old they are. After hearing their ages, say:) It's going to be a long time before you're ten and fifteen and twenty and thirty years old! I know about a man who needed help for more than thirty-eight years, but there was no one to help him. I have read about that man in the Bible. That man couldn't walk as other people could. He was a crippled man.

Some crippled people can walk (pick up your crutch or cane and demonstrate) with a crutch or a cane. Some crippled people don't stay crippled very long because their broken bones have healed. Some crippled people can walk without a crutch, but their legs do not heal. (Demonstrate how a crippled person might look, walking without a crutch.) Some crippled people cannot get up on their legs and walk at all. I have seen crippled people ride in a wagon, or sit on a cart and push it along with their hands on the ground, or ride in a wheelchair; they do this because they cannot walk.

Telling the story:

(Teacher, dramatize this story as you tell it.)

(Pick up the blanket roll. Unroll the blanket, and hold it in front of you, lower than on a level with your chin.) The crippled man that I have read about in the Bible was so sick and so crippled that he could not stand nor walk at all. He spent most of the time outside, lying on his bed. His bed was like a blanket. (Put the blanket on the floor.) He lay on his bed watching other people walk past him. Some walked slowly; some walked very fast; some people could run past him. He could only lie on his bed and watch them go by. He felt very sad. He wished that he could walk, even if he could only walk slowly. He did not have any friends who wanted to help him. He did not have any family who would help him. He would just lie on his bed and watch the people. He would listen to them talk, also.

One day someone said to someone else, "Do you know about that pool of water near the sheep's gate? It is called the Pool of Bethesda. I have heard that every now and then the waters in the Pool of Bethesda move and splash around a little."

"What's so special about water moving around in a pool?" said the other person.

"Well, after the waters are troubled in that pool, the first person who steps into the water is healed of whatever is wrong with him. If someone is blind and steps into the water right after it has been stirred, that person's eyes are healed."

The crippled man listened! The two who were talking were moving away. The man listened more carefully to what they were saying. "Yes, an angel comes and stirs up the water every now and then. Right after the water is stirred, whichever sick or blind or crippled person can get into the water first is healed. Only one person can be healed at a time. Anybody else who needs to be healed needs to wait until the water is moved again by the angel." The two men walked away.

“So that’s it!” thought the crippled man. “I would so love to be healed. Now all I have to do is get to that pool of water.” I do not know how the man got there. Maybe he scooted himself the best that he could, with his blanket bed under his arm, scooting along the ground. He finally got to the Pool of Bethesda. There, around the pool, he saw some porches. There were five porches. From each porch some steps went down into the Pool of Bethesda. On all five porches there were people who needed help. Many, many people were there. Some were blind. Some were very, very sick. Some were very weak and thin. Some, like himself, were crippled. But most of those people had people with them who could help them. This crippled man had no one to help him.

The crippled man was able to smooth his blanket bed on the floor of one of the porches there beside the pool. As the lame man lay on his bed on one of the porches at the Pool of Bethesda, he looked around at the people. They were all watching the water. The lame man looked at the water, too. The water was very still. It did not move at all. The crippled man thought, “I wonder when the water will move. I wonder when the angel will come and stir up the water. I’m glad that I’m very close to the edge of the porch. When the angel comes to stir up the water, how will I get into it? Perhaps I can sit up and scoot down the stairs. Maybe I’ll be first into the water when the angel comes the next time.” The lame man lay on his bed on the porch, watching the water.

Suddenly he noticed a little ripple in the water! Then he noticed that the water moved a lot. “Ah, the angel has come and troubled the water. Now is my chance to get down into the water. I’ll sit up. Now, I’ll start for the stairs. Oh, how terrible! Someone is already there before I can get there. That blind person was helped into the water. Oh, he can see now! Well, I’ll just watch for the next time that the waters are stirred by the angel.” The lame man scooted himself back onto his bed. He was puffing because it had taken so much energy for him to move as much as he did.

The water was very still again. He watched carefully for it to move. How very wonderful it would be to be able to walk! For thirty-eight years he had not been able to walk. “There, the angel must be stirring it again. It’s moving! Quickly, as quickly as I can, I’ll get to the stairs. Start to scoot down. Oh, no, too late again! Another crippled person has been helped by someone into the water. Now that person can walk. His legs are healed! How happy he is! Now to push myself up the stairs again, and to get onto my bed. Oooh, I’m tired. The water is very still again. I wonder how long it will be before the angel will come and stir the waters once more.”

The lame man lay on his bed. How he wished he could be first in the water after it was stirred! While he watched the water, perhaps he was thinking. Maybe he was thinking about God. He knew that God could do anything. Why, certainly God could heal crippled people. If he just knew God and could talk with Him, perhaps God would heal him. Oh, but he had been a wicked man. God probably wouldn’t even listen to him. As he thought about the sins which he had committed, he was very sorry for them. Somehow he knew that because he had been so wicked, this was the reason he was crippled. Maybe the lame man even tried to pray. Maybe he said, “Dear God, if You hear me, would You please make me well and strong?”

The lame man did not know it, but Someone was coming through the crowd toward him. That Someone could heal the lame man, but the lame man did not know it. The lame man had just decided that he would trust God, but he did not know God. This Someone came closer and closer to the crippled man. Then He was next to him, looking down at him.

I know Who the Someone was. It was Jesus. The lame man did not know who Jesus was. Jesus looked at the crippled man. There was sadness on Jesus’ face. Jesus felt sorry for the man. Jesus also knew that the man had been thinking about his sins and also about God. Jesus said to the crippled man, “Would you like to be made whole; would you like to be healed so that you can walk?”

“I would love to be healed,” said the man to Jesus. “I cannot get down into the water fast enough, however. Whenever the angel stirs up the water, someone else beats me to it. And only one person can be healed after the angel troubles the water. I’m always too late.”

Jesus looked at the man and commanded, “Get up. Stand up. Pick up your bed. Walk.” Walk? The man’s legs could not be strong enough for him to walk. But the lame man believed that Jesus could heal him. The lame man was able to obey Jesus. The man who had been lame got up. He stood on his feet. He bent down and picked up his bed. He walked. Oh, how wonderful! His legs were strong. They could hold him! He walked all around, testing his legs. He looked down at his feet and saw that they were flat on the ground, and that he was surely standing up straight and walking.

Some men came up to this man who had just been healed. These men were rulers of the temple. “Mister, you are carrying your bed. This is a day to go to the temple and hear preaching. You are not supposed to carry your bed today.”

“The Man Who made me well told me to pick up my bed and carry it.”

“Who is the Man Who told you that?”

The man who had been crippled looked around. He was going to point to Jesus, but he couldn’t see Him. (Pretend that you are looking around the crowd for someone.) The man looked and looked, turning this way and that way, but He could not see Jesus. Jesus had walked into the crowd of people and could not be seen.

The man who had been crippled thought, “I must go into the temple. I must thank God that I have been healed.” The man walked into the temple. Jesus was in the temple. Jesus walked up to the man. Jesus said, “Now you are healed. You have confessed your sins. Now don’t sin anymore. If you do the same kinds of things again, a worse thing than being crippled and weak as you were will happen to you.”

The man then knew Who Jesus was. The man who had been crippled and who had lain by the Pool of Bethesda was so happy and thankful to Jesus as he stood there talking with Him in the temple! The man then ran to tell the other men that it was Jesus Who had healed him.

Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus can do anything. Jesus can do for us what He did for the man; He can make our hearts clean, and He can heal us. Jesus also will take us to Heaven when we die. All of this Jesus can and will do for us, if we have asked Him to be our Saviour. Everybody who asks Jesus to be his Saviour will be saved. The lame man was saved, and he was also healed.

John 5:24 (show the children that verse in your Bible) tells us that Jesus said, “He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life.”

See this little piece of cloth. (Hold up a small square of fabric.) Let’s let this piece of cloth remind us of the bed on which the lame man lay. When we see this little piece of cloth, let’s remember the story which we heard today. What a wonderful thing that Jesus did for the crippled man. He healed him. More wonderful than that, though, He saved him. (Tack the square of cloth to the board in your room.)