

Equal With God

JOHN 5:1-18 (BSB) · TEACHER GUIDE · DIGDEEPER.AI

THE BIG IDEA · SAY IT AT LEAST FIVE TIMES

Jesus does God's work, and he asks you, "Do you want to get well?"

Open with it, bring it back after every section, close with it. By the end they should be able to finish the sentence for you.

- Before this passage (day 6): John 4:46-54, He Just Believed. Its big idea: Jesus' word is enough, even before you can see it work.
- After this passage (day 8): John 6:1-15, Bread for Thousands. Its big idea: Jesus already knows what he will do, and it is more than enough.

Open

Ask: What have you waited on so long that you stopped expecting it to change? Recall last time (John 4:46-54): a royal official took Jesus at his word, and his son was healed miles away. Read John 5:5-6 aloud. Big idea: Jesus does God's work, and he asks you, "Do you want to get well?" Ask one person what stuck from last time.

Run Sheet

1. At the Pool (John 5:1-9a, about 13 min)

The one thing: Jesus comes to the man who can't reach the water and heals him with a word.

Ask: Why would Jesus ask a man who had waited 38 years whether he wanted to get well?

2. Carrying the Mat (John 5:9b-15, about 10 min)

The one thing: The man doesn't even know Jesus' name, yet Jesus comes looking for him.

Ask: What do you make of how the leaders reacted to a man who could suddenly walk?

3. My Father Is at His Work (John 5:16-18, about 12 min)

The one thing: Jesus claims God's own ongoing work as his own, and his enemies hear him perfectly.

Ask: The leaders understood Jesus' claim clearly. If they were right about what he meant, what would that change?

Close (never cut it)

This passage shows who Jesus is: the Son doing his Father's work, equal with God. Say that plainly. Then reread v6, let his question hang ("Do you want to get well?"), give a moment of quiet, and end without an assignment.

PROTECT THE ENDING

If section 3 starts late, skip its discussion and optional points, read v17-18, and go straight to the close.

KIDS SIDE ANSWERS

Story order: 2, 5, 4, 1, 3 (top to bottom) · Feelings: The man before Jesus came sad, The man walking with his mat happy, The Jewish leaders worried, The crowd of sick people sad · Code: PICK UP YOUR MAT

Act it out: Kids lie on towels as the sick man. You play Jesus: ask, "Do you want to get well?" then say, "Get up, pick up your mat, and walk!" They jump up and carry their towels while another group calls, "It is unlawful!"

1. At the Pool

JOHN 5:1-9A · ABOUT 13 MIN · SECTION 1 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- A crowd of the sick waited at the pool called Bethesda.
- One man had waited thirty-eight years, with no one to help.
- Jesus spoke, and the man was made well at once.

One man there had been an invalid for THIRTY-EIGHT years.

Jesus asked him, “Do you want to get WELL?”

Discuss: Why would Jesus ask a man who had waited 38 years whether he wanted to get well?

Jesus comes to the man who can't reach the water and heals him with a word.

MUST COVER

- v5-6: Jesus sees him first and asks first. He starts it.
- v7-9: The man names his obstacle. Jesus skips the pool and gives a command: “Get up, pick up your mat, and walk.”

IF THERE'S TIME

- Sheep Gate: the gate where animals for temple sacrifice came into the city.
- Callback: last week the official's son was also healed by Jesus' word alone (John 4:50).

Illustration idea: Being the last one waiting for a ride. The lot empties, everyone else gets picked up, and you're still standing there.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: Maybe he'd gotten used to being sick or had stopped hoping.
- Listen for: Jesus wanted him to say out loud what he wanted.

If it drifts: If talk turns to how the stirred water worked, point out that the man never gets into the pool. The healing comes in v8-9, from Jesus' word.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

He didn't need the water. He needed Jesus, and Jesus asked first.

Short on time? Cut the Sheep Gate note and the John 4 callback.

Bridge → The man walks away healed and straight into trouble.

2. Carrying the Mat

JOHN 5:9B-15 · ABOUT 10 MIN · SECTION 2 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- It was the Sabbath, the weekly day of rest.
- The leaders saw a broken rule, not a healed man.
- Jesus went looking for the man again at the temple.

“This is the Sabbath! It is UNLAWFUL for you to carry your mat.”

Afterward, Jesus FOUND the man at the temple.

Discuss: What do you make of how the leaders reacted to a man who could suddenly walk?

The man doesn't even know Jesus' name, yet Jesus comes looking for him.

MUST COVER

- v10-13: The leaders fix on the mat. The man can't tell them who healed him.
- v14: Jesus finds him and speaks to his whole life: “Stop sinning, or something worse may happen to you.”

IF THERE'S TIME

- Sabbath: a day of rest from the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:8-11). Later teachers counted carrying things as forbidden work.
- v15: The man reports Jesus to the leaders. John doesn't say why, so don't guess too hard.

Illustration idea: Someone walks away from a car wreck, and the first thing the officer asks about is whether their registration is current.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: They cared more about rules than about people.
- Listen for: Maybe they really thought they were protecting God's day.

If it drifts: If it turns into a debate about church rules today, go back to v14. Jesus comes after this man a second time.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

The one doing God's work didn't stop at the man's legs. He came back for the man himself.

Short on time? Skip both optional points and keep v14.

Bridge → Now the leaders turn from the man to Jesus, and Jesus tells them who he is.

3. My Father Is at His Work

JOHN 5:16-18 · ABOUT 12 MIN · SECTION 3 OF 3

THEIR PAGE, WORD FOR WORD (ANSWERS FILLED IN)

- The leaders began to persecute Jesus over the Sabbath.
- Jesus said his work is his Father's work.
- They understood him: he was claiming equality with God.

“To this very day My Father is at His WORK, and I too am working.”

He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself EQUAL WITH GOD.

Discuss: The leaders understood Jesus' claim clearly. If they were right about what he meant, what would that change?

Jesus claims God's own ongoing work as his own, and his enemies hear him perfectly.

MUST COVER

- v17: God rested from creating (Genesis 2:2-3) but never stops keeping the world alive. Jesus says he works right alongside him.
- v18: John says it plainly: “making Himself equal with God.” The leaders heard him correctly.

IF THERE'S TIME

- John 5:19-23 (the next verses, not read today): Jesus goes on to say the Son does what he sees the Father doing.
- Mark 2:1-12 (Mark is another account of Jesus' life): Jesus heals another paralyzed man to show he has God's authority to forgive sins.

Illustration idea: A stranger walks into a family business and says, “My father and I run this place.” Everyone knows he's claiming to be the owner's son, with the owner's authority.

RUNNING THE DISCUSSION

- Listen for: Then he's either God or badly wrong, not just a good teacher.
- Listen for: It's hard to believe. Maybe they misunderstood him.

If it drifts: If people argue over whether Jesus ever claimed to be God, point to v18. This is how his hearers took it, and John agrees with them.

TRY SAYING SOMETHING LIKE

The voice that told a man to walk is doing God's own work, and he still asks, “Do you want to get well?”
Short on time? Drop both cross-references. Read v17-18 and let them sit.
Bridge → Take them back to the question at the pool, now that they know who asked it.

With One Friend, Over Coffee

ABOUT 30 MINUTES · FOR A FRIEND WHO IS CURIOUS, OR NOT SURE

1. Start with waiting. Ask what they've waited on a long time. Share something of your own briefly. Keep it honest and light.
2. Read the pool scene. Read John 5:1-9 together. Point out that Jesus spoke first and the man never reached the water.
3. Read the trouble. Read v10-18. Ask what the leaders were upset about, and what they heard Jesus claim.
4. Name the claim honestly. Say it straight: John reports Jesus making himself equal with God. If they raise the objection, agree it is a huge claim. Don't shrink it.
5. Leave his question. Reread v6: "Do you want to get well?" Tell them it's his question, not yours, and they don't owe you an answer. Then let it rest.

QUESTIONS YOU MAY HEAR

"Did Jesus really claim to be God, or did people add that later?"

In this passage his opponents took him that way, and John, who knew him, says they understood him rightly. That's worth weighing before deciding.

"Plenty of people claim to be God's equal, and they're usually deceived or dangerous. Why is one healing enough?"

It isn't meant to settle it alone. Notice what he does with power: he spends it on a forgotten man, not on himself. Read the whole account and judge him by it.

"Does 'something worse may happen' mean his illness was punishment?"

Jesus doesn't say that here, and in John 9:3 he flatly denies it about a blind man. He seems to be pointing past the body to the man's whole life.

"Why didn't he heal everyone at the pool?"

Honestly, John doesn't say. What the text does show is Jesus choosing the man who had no one.

Evergreen Principles

Four standards every week. The rest rotate: each lesson brings the few that fit its passage best.

EVERY LESSON

1. Pray before you prepare

Teaching the Bible is spiritual work first (John 15:5).

If you're new: Pray for your class by name during the week.

If you've taught for years: Pray for the one person you find hardest to reach.

2. Study the text first

Understand the passage yourself before any help.

If you're new: Read it in two translations; write your own questions first.

If you've taught for years: Don't lean on old notes. What did you miss last time?

3. Teach one big idea

People remember one sentence, not four points.

If you're new: Write it in 12 words or fewer before anything else.

If you've taught for years: Test every story against it. If it doesn't serve it, cut it.

4. Point to Christ

All of Scripture points to him (Luke 24:27).

If you're new: Ask: what does this show about Jesus?

If you've taught for years: Show grace as the reason for obedience, not just the rule.

FOR THIS LESSON

1. Plan for the skeptic and the grieving

This passage makes the biggest claim possible and touches long, unhealed suffering.

If you're new: Have the objection card ready and read it out yourself before someone else raises it.

If you've taught for years: Invite the skeptic's view early in section 3, and let v18 be the reply.

2. Admit what is hard

v14 and the unhealed crowd raise real, uneasy questions.

If you're new: Say, "John doesn't explain everything here," and move on without inventing answers.

If you've taught for years: Bring in John 9:3 briefly to guard against the idea that sickness always comes from sin.

3. Let the passage land the way it lands

The passage mainly shows who Jesus is and ends on a claim, not a task.

If you're new: End on v17-18 and Jesus' question. Resist adding homework.

If you've taught for years: Let the silence after v6 carry the weight instead of your summary.

BEFORE CLASS

- ☐ Read the passage three times
- ☐ Big idea in one sentence
- ☐ Opening and close chosen
- ☐ Know what you'll cut
- ☐ Handouts, pens, extra Bibles
- ☐ Prayed for the class by name

Openings, Closings & Hard Moments

Pick one opening and one close; rotate so class doesn't get predictable.

OPENINGS

- ask a real-life question: What have you waited on so long you quit expecting change?

- use an object: Unroll a thin sleeping mat and ask what 38 years on it would do to a person.
- start in the text: Read v6 cold, then ask: what kind of question is that to ask a paralyzed man?

CLOSINGS

- call back to the opening: Return to the long wait: the One doing God's work asks, "Do you want to get well?"
- allow quiet reflection: Read v6 slowly, then give thirty seconds of silence before you dismiss.
- send them out with a verse: Read John 5:17 together as they leave.

WHEN CLASS GETS HARD

- Someone has prayed years for healing and it hasn't come.: Don't promise a cure. Acknowledge that the pool was full and John records one healing. Point to who Jesus is, and stay with them afterward.
 - v14 sounds like "you got sick because you sinned.": Say Jesus doesn't claim that here and denies it in John 9:3. He is warning the man about his life, not explaining his illness.
- Silence after a question: Wait. Then rephrase simpler, or ask them to talk to a neighbor first.
- One person dominates: "Thanks. Let's hear from someone who hasn't spoken yet." Talk privately if it continues.
- A question you can't answer: Say so, write it down, bring an answer next week.
- A tangent takes over: "Great question. Let's catch it after class so we can finish the passage."

READ THIS WEEK

- John 5:19-23
- Mark 2:1-12
- Genesis 2:2-3

Free at digdeeper.ai/devotionals/john/5-1-18/lesson

Equal With God

JOHN 5:1-18 (BSB) · WHO DO YOU SAY I AM? · DIGDEEPER.AI

Key verse: "To this very day My Father is at His work, and I too am working." John 5:17

THE BIG IDEA

Jesus does God's work, and he asks you, "Do you want to get well?"

1. AT THE POOL · JOHN 5:1-9A

- A crowd of the sick waited at the pool called Bethesda.
- One man had waited thirty-eight years, with no one to help.
- Jesus spoke, and the man was made well at once.

One man there had been an invalid for _____ years.

Jesus asked him, "Do you want to get _____?"

Discuss: Why would Jesus ask a man who had waited 38 years whether he wanted to get well?

2. CARRYING THE MAT · JOHN 5:9B-15

- It was the Sabbath, the weekly day of rest.
- The leaders saw a broken rule, not a healed man.
- Jesus went looking for the man again at the temple.

"This is the Sabbath! It is _____ for you to carry your mat."

Afterward, Jesus _____ the man at the temple.

Discuss: What do you make of how the leaders reacted to a man who could suddenly walk?

3. MY FATHER IS AT HIS WORK · JOHN 5:16-18

- The leaders began to persecute Jesus over the Sabbath.
- Jesus said his work is his Father's work.
- They understood him: he was claiming equality with God.

"To this very day My Father is at His _____, and I too am working."

He was even calling God His own Father, making Himself _____.

Discuss: The leaders understood Jesus' claim clearly. If they were right about what he meant, what would that change?

Read this week: John 5:19-23 · Mark 2:1-12 · Genesis 2:2-3

For Kids: Equal With God

JOHN 5:1-18 · NAME: _____

Big idea: Jesus can do what only God can do.

1. PUT THE STORY IN ORDER! NUMBER THE BOXES.

- ☐ Jesus asked if he wanted healing.
- ☐ Jesus said his Father was working.
- ☐ Leaders said, “No carrying on Sabbath!”
- ☐ A sick man lay by a pool.
- ☐ Jesus said, “Get up and walk.”

2. HOW DID THEY FEEL? CIRCLE ONE.

The man before Jesus came: happy · sad · worried

The man walking with his mat: happy · sad · worried

The Jewish leaders: happy · sad · worried

The crowd of sick people: happy · sad · worried

3. WORD SEARCH

O T E M P L E C U
P M A T J E S U S
B E T H E S D A Y
O F P F B A W B V
K A G P D B A N D
S T S O D B L U K
D H H O G A K C U
S E F L R T R Y Y
F R H C F H P C R

POOL · MAT · WALK · SABBATH · JESUS · FATHER · TEMPLE · BETHESDA

4. SECRET CODE

1=A 2=C 3=I 4=K 5=M 6=O 7=P 8=R 9=T 10=U 11=Y

7 3 2 4 10 7 11 6 10 8 5 1 9

5. DRAW IT!

Draw the man walking away from the pool, carrying his mat.

6. MEMORY VERSE

“Get up, pick up your mat, and walk.” John 5:8 Say it to a grown-up: ☐ ☐ ☐

Jesus can do what only God can do, like... _____