

COASTAL NOTES | JOHN 5 | OCTOBER 18, 2026

DO YOU WANT TO GET WELL?

BIG IDEA: Being healed will cost you something personally.

INTRODUCTION

Last week Jesus asked who He is. This week He asks something about us, and it may be the strangest question in the Gospels, because the answer looks obvious.

Jesus walks up to a man who has been sick for thirty-eight years and asks, "Do you want to get well?" Jesus never wastes a question. Follow along to see what getting well would cost.

SCENE 1 — THE QUESTION (John 5:1–6)

- 1 After these things there was a **feast of the Jews**, and **Jesus** went up to **Jerusalem**.
- 2 Now in **Jerusalem**, by the **Sheep Gate**, there is a pool which in **Hebrew** is called **Bethesda**, having five porticoes.
- 3 In these porticoes lay a multitude of those who were sick, blind, limping, or paralyzed.
- 5 Now **a man** was there who had **been ill** for thirty-eight years.
- 6 **Jesus**, upon seeing this man lying there and knowing that he had already been in that condition for a long time, said to him, "Do you want to get well?"

1. A man was there who had been ill for _____ years.
2. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had already been a _____ time in that condition,
3. Do you _____ to get well?

NOTES:

- **Jesus goes where the hurting are.** It's feast time in Jerusalem. The city is packed with pilgrims, the temple is busy, and the religious calendar is at its peak. And Jesus walks right past all of it to a pool by the Sheep Gate. It's called Bethesda - most likely "house of mercy" - and five covered porches surround it, crowded with the blind, the lame, and the withered. A house of mercy full of people waiting for mercy.

- **Then He picks out one man.** Out of the whole multitude, John zooms in on one. No name. No family. No friends mentioned. Just a man who has been ill for thirty-eight years. Do the math. Some of you haven't been alive thirty-eight years. He has spent that long in the same condition, probably in the same spot.
 - **Thirty-eight years - does that number ring a bell?** Deuteronomy 2:14 says it took thirty-eight years from Kadesh-barnea until the generation of fighting men died in the wilderness. Israel was stuck for thirty-eight years, and so was this man. John never makes that connection himself, so take it as a possible echo, not a doctrine. But it's hard to miss: a man stuck as long as a whole generation of wandering.
 - **A note on verses 3 and 4.** Look in your Bible and you may see brackets or a footnote. Some translations leave out the end of verse 3 and all of verse 4 - the angel stirring the water - because the earliest manuscripts don't have them. Later copyists most likely added them to explain why the crowd waited at the water. We don't need them. Verse 7 tells us exactly what this man believed.
- **Jesus sees him, and Jesus knows.** He didn't need a medical chart. John says He knew the man had been there a long time. Jesus is not surprised by how long you have been carrying what you are carrying. Not by the year. Not by the day.
- **Then comes the strangest question: "Do you want to get well?"** Notice what Jesus does not ask. He doesn't ask, "Do you believe I can?" He doesn't ask, "Have you tried hard enough?" He asks about the will. The Greek word means to want, to desire, to will. Do you really want this? And He isn't being cruel. He's being honest. After thirty-eight years, sickness isn't just something this man has. It's who he is.
 - **Think about what getting well would cost him.** For thirty-eight years his whole life was built around his condition - where he sat, who fed him, how people saw him, why they gave him anything at all. Healing means he can't beg anymore. A man who has been carried for thirty-eight years has to learn to carry himself: work, responsibility, a future to manage. John doesn't spell that out, but it's the question hiding inside the question.
 - **It's still true today.** Some of us have carried something so long it has become our identity - a grudge, an addiction, a bitterness, a label. "That's just how I am." "That's just how our family is." And Jesus walks up and asks, "Do you want to get well?" Because getting well means you can't be that person anymore.

Jesus doesn't ask because He doesn't know. He asks because we don't always know what we're holding on to.

SCENE 2 — THE EXCUSE (John 5:7)

7 **The sick man** answered Him, "**Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me.**"

4. Sir, I have no _____ to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up,
5. but while I am coming, _____ steps down before me.

NOTES:

- **He doesn't say yes.** Jesus asked about his will. The man answers with an explanation. "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up, but while I am coming, another steps down before me." No "yes." No "please." Just a reason why not.
- **Every excuse has a wound under it.** Don't be too hard on him. Everything he said was true. Nobody was helping him. Every time he tried, somebody got there first. Thirty-eight years of that teaches anyone to stop hoping out loud. Jesus doesn't scold him for it. He listens.
- **Now listen to his theology.** Hear how this man believes healing works. Healing is a contest. It goes to whoever reaches the water first - the fastest, the strongest, the one with friends. If you're slow, alone, and last in line, mercy isn't for you. Whatever you make of verses 3 and 4, verse 7 shows what he believed: the water was his only hope, and the line was his only chance.
- **Here is the second cost.** To be healed by Jesus, he has to let go of that whole system. Jesus isn't offering him a place in line. There is no pool in Jesus' answer. Mercy isn't a race. It's a gift. For this man, being healed meant changing his theology. Thirty-eight years of "God helps the fast and the lucky" had to die before he could stand up.
 - **We have pools too.** "I'll change when I find the right church." "I'll get right with God when I get my life together." "I'll start when the timing is better." We lie beside our own pool, waiting for the water to move, because it feels safer than hearing, "Get up."
 - **The opposite of an excuse is a confession.** James 5:16: "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed." Healing and honesty travel together. The man at the pool explained why he couldn't. James says to name what is true and bring it into the open - to God and to someone who will pray with you.

You can't be healed by Jesus and keep the system that never healed you.

SCENE 3 — THE COMMAND (John 5:8–9)

8 **Jesus** said to him, "**Get up, pick up your pallet and walk.**"

9 **Immediately** the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk. Now it was the Sabbath on that day.

6. Get up, pick up your _____ and walk.

7. _____ the man became well, and picked up his pallet and began to walk.

NOTES:

- **Jesus skips the pool.** He doesn't carry the man to the water. He doesn't wait for the stirring. He doesn't argue with the excuse. He gives three commands: "Get up, pick up your pallet and walk." One word from Jesus does what thirty-eight years of waiting could not.
- **The command is bigger than the man's ability.** Think about what He's asking. Stand up - a man who hasn't stood in thirty-eight years. The power isn't in the man's legs. It's in Jesus' word. That's grace. Not "try harder." Just "get up," and the strength comes with the word.
- **Immediately.** Not gradually. Not after months of therapy. Not after the water moved. Immediately the man became well. What thirty-eight years couldn't do, one word did.
- **He never says yes out loud.** Look back. Jesus asked, "Do you want?" The man gave an excuse. Jesus gave a command. And the man got up. His yes wasn't a word. It was his legs.
- **Here is the third cost: pick up your pallet.** The pallet was his bed - a thin mat, maybe the only thing he owned. Jesus doesn't tell him to leave it behind. He tells him to carry it. He walks out carrying the proof. And verse 9 ends with a warning label: "Now it was the Sabbath on that day." His first step of obedience is about to cost him with the religious leaders. Obedience always costs something. Staying by the pool costs more.

The healing was free. Getting up cost him everything he knew.

SCENE 4 — THE COST (John 5:10–16)

- 10 So the Jews were saying to the man who was cured,
"It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet."
- 11 **But he** answered them, "**He who made me well was the one who said to me, 'Pick up your pallet and walk.'**"
- 12 They asked him, "**Who is the man who said to you, 'Pick up your pallet and walk'?**"
- 13 But the man who was healed did not know who it was, for **Jesus** had slipped away while there was a crowd in that place.
- 14 Afterward **Jesus found** him in the temple and said to him,
"**Behold, you have become well; do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you.**"
- 15 The man went away, and told the Jews that it was **Jesus** who had made him well.
- 16 For this reason the Jews were persecuting **Jesus**, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath.

8. It is the _____, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.

9. Afterward Jesus _____ him in the temple and said to him,

10. Behold, you have become well; do not _____ any more, so that nothing worse happens to you.

NOTES:

- **Not everybody cheered.** The first people to see a man who couldn't walk for thirty-eight years carrying his bed didn't say, "Wow!"

They said, "It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet." And look at their question in verse 12. Not, "Who healed you?" but, "Who is the man who told you to pick it up?" Here is the fourth cost: healing will cost you some people's approval.

- **He didn't even know who healed him.** Jesus had slipped away into the crowd. This man was well before he knew whose hands those were. That's grace. It finds us before we know its name.
- **Then Jesus came back.** Verse 14: "Afterward Jesus found him in the temple." The man didn't go looking for Jesus. Jesus went looking for him - a second time.

- **And then Jesus says something hard.** "Behold, you have become well; do not sin any more, so that nothing worse happens to you." It's the same phrase Jesus uses with the woman caught in adultery in John 8:11. Stop sinning. John doesn't tell us what the sin was, but Jesus wasn't casual about it. **Something in this man's life had to stop, and something worse was on the line.** Notice the word: he has "**become well**." Being healed was the event. **Being well is the life he lives afterward**, and the warning is there to protect it.
 - **Grace first. Then seriousness.** Jesus healed him before He warned him. The mercy came first and the warning came second, and both are love. Being well is not permission to go back to the old life. It's the start of a new one.
- **It cost Jesus, too.** Verse 15 says the man told the Jews it was Jesus who made him well. Some read that as gratitude and some as fear; John doesn't say. Verse 16: "For this reason the Jews were persecuting Jesus, because He was doing these things on the Sabbath." A few verses later John says they were seeking to kill Him (5:18). The healing was free to the man. It was not free to the Healer. The One who asked, "Do you want to get well?" was walking toward a cross.

Being healed will cost you something personally. It cost Jesus more.

PERSONAL REFLECTION

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Think about the "pool" you have been waiting beside - the thing you say you need before you can change (a person, a moment, a feeling, a better situation). What is it, and how long have you been waiting?

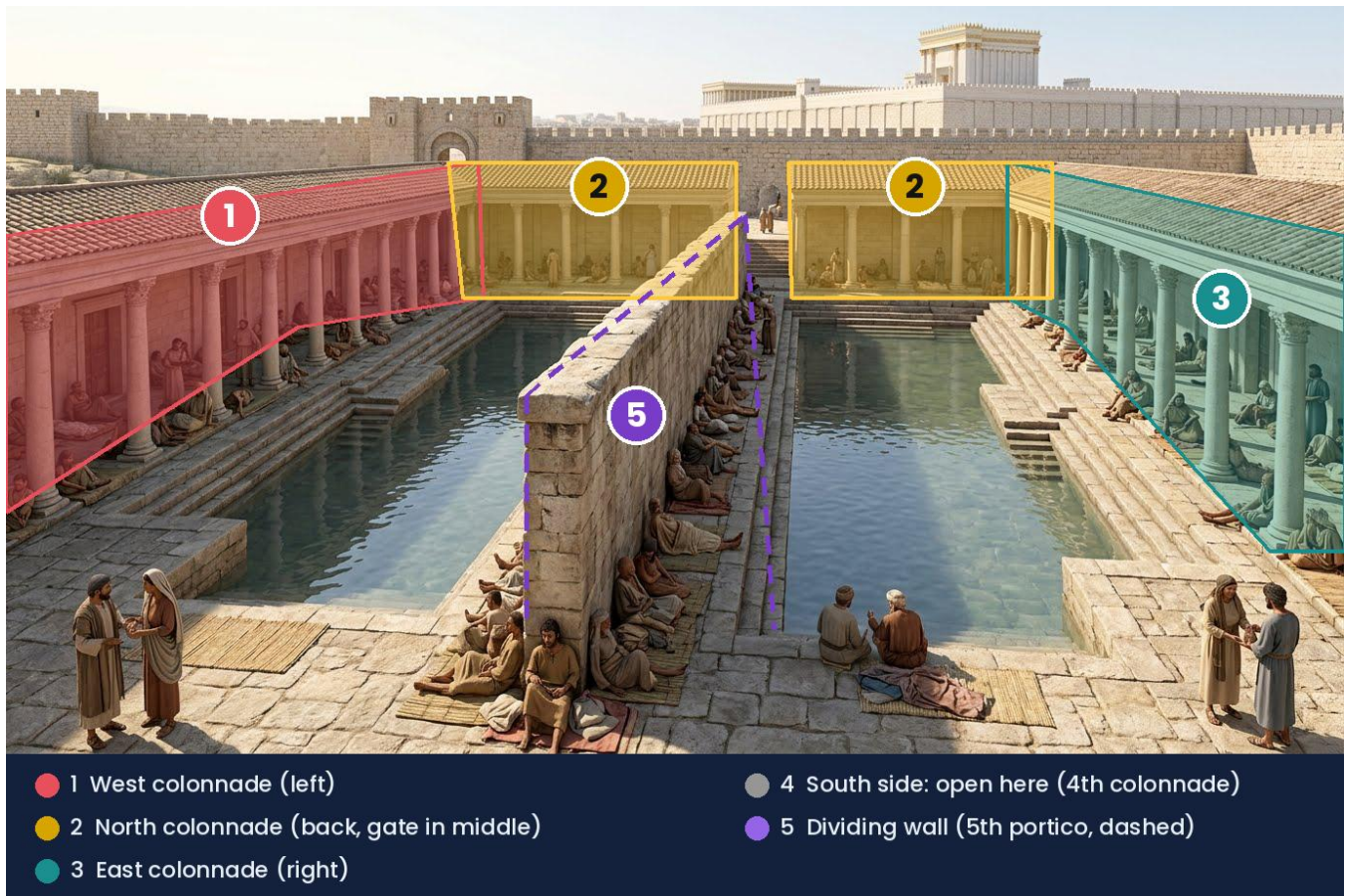
Jesus asked, "Do you want to get well?" and the man answered with an excuse. What excuse do you give most often when Jesus, or someone who loves you, asks you to change?

What would it cost you to be healed of what you are carrying? What would you lose - an identity, a comfort, an excuse, a relationship, a reputation? Is it worth losing?

The man had to let go of the idea that mercy goes to whoever gets there first. What old way of thinking about God do you need to set down so you can receive from Him?

BIBLE NERDS ONLY

The Pool of Bethesda: What the Archaeology Shows



What you are looking at: a reconstruction of the pool as John describes it (an AI-generated picture, so treat it as an illustration). Two rock-cut pools sit side by side. The five porticoes are roofed walkways on columns: along the west (1), north (2) and east (3) sides, along the south side (4), and along the dividing wall between the pools (5). This picture draws 1, 2 and 3. The south side is left open, and the dashed line shows where the fifth ran. The sick lay in the shade of these walkways, close to the water.

Jesus could have asked His question in the temple, in the synagogue, or on the road. John tells us He asked it at a real pool in Jerusalem, in the middle of a crowd of the sick, on a feast day. For a long time some scholars doubted that the place John describes ever existed. Here is what has been found.

The Name: House of Mercy

Biblical Reference: John 5:2

Context: Bethesda is usually understood as Hebrew or Aramaic beth hesda, "house of mercy" or "house of grace." Manuscripts also give the spellings Bethzatha and Bethsaida.

Some scholars connect Bethzatha to the district north of the Temple Mount, and others point to a Qumran Copper Scroll place name, Beth Eshdathayin, "house of the two pools." The scholarly debate is open.

Result: Whichever name is original, it describes the site well: a house of mercy full of people waiting for it.

The Sheep Gate

Biblical Reference: John 5:2; Nehemiah 3:1, 32; 12:39

Context: In Nehemiah the Sheep Gate was the first gate rebuilt, by the high priest and his fellow priests, who consecrated it. It stood in the northern wall near the Temple, and sacrificial animals were brought through it. John's Greek says only "the Sheep" and most translations supply "Gate." The pool lay inside the wall in the northeast part of the city, near the modern Lion's Gate.

Result: John names the place carefully. This is the quarter of Jerusalem where the Temple's lambs came in.

Rediscovery: A Detail Once Doubted

Biblical Reference: John 5:2–3

Context: For centuries nobody could say where Bethesda was. In the 19th century Conrad Schick identified a large tank northwest of St. Anne's Church, and later excavations around the church uncovered two large rock-cut pools with a dividing dam between them. Scholars had long dismissed the "five porticoes" as a symbolic invention, and the excavations gave the detail a physical setting.

Result: A detail John gives in passing turned out to fit a real double pool.

Two Pools and Five Porticoes

Biblical Reference: John 5:2

Context: The site was two large basins side by side. A stone dam, later a dyke, separated them, with a deep reservoir to the north (about 13 meters or 43 feet deep, according to one survey) and a stepped basin to the south. A portico (a roofed walkway on columns) along

each of the four outer sides, plus a fifth along the dam, gives five. That is a reconstruction. No one has found the standing colonnades.

Result: John's "five porticoes" fits a double pool with a dividing wall. The sick waited in the shade of the covered walkways beside the water.

What the Pools Were For

Biblical Reference: John 5:2–7

Context: The pools began around the 8th century BC as a rainwater reservoir held by a dam across a valley. A second pool was added around 200 BC. Some scholars think the southern basin, with its broad steps and landings, served as a Jewish ritual bath (mikveh) for people going up to the Temple. John says the sick gathered there, and the site was later associated with healing.

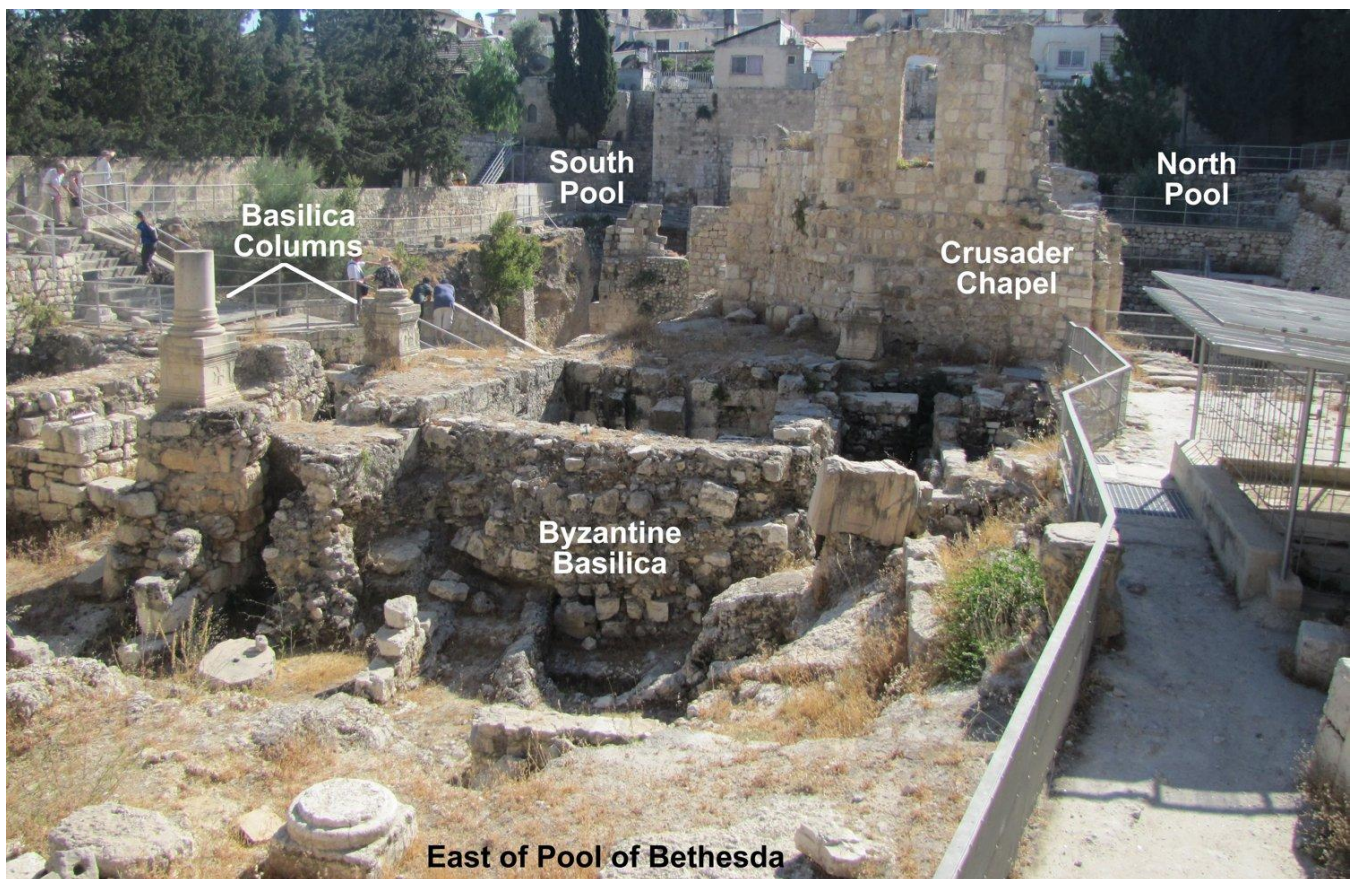
Result: The pool was a working part of the city's water and purification system. People went there to be cleansed, and in John 5 the sick went there hoping to be healed.

Healing Waters in the Ancient World

Biblical Reference: John 5:3b–4, 7

Context: Healing shrines to the Greek god Asclepius commonly used sacred springs and pools, where sick pilgrims bathed and waited for a cure. The Romans later put such a sanctuary at Bethesda, so the site has a long history as a place people came to be healed. John 5:3b–4, the angel who stirred the water, is missing from the earliest manuscripts and probably records a popular belief that grew up around the pool. The man's excuse in verse 7 shows that belief in action.

Result: Waiting beside water for a cure was a familiar idea in the ancient world. Jesus did not need the water; He healed with a word.



The site today: the real ruins, seen from the east. The South Pool and the North Pool are at the far left and far right, and the ruins of the Byzantine church in the middle sit on the dividing dam, which matches the wall between the pools in the reconstruction. The tall wall with the window is the Crusader chapel. The covered walkways are gone, and the pools are deep rock-cut basins. (Photo credit: add source and license.)

Layers on Top: Roman, Byzantine, Crusader

Biblical Reference: John 5:2

Context: After Jesus' day the Romans built a healing sanctuary to Asclepius and Serapis here, in the time of Hadrian. By the fifth century Christians built a church over the site, the Church of the Probatike ("Sheep Pool"), first dedicated to the healing of the paralytic. The Persians destroyed it in 614. The Crusaders built a chapel on the dividing dyke and the large Church of St. Anne in 1138.

Result: For about fifteen centuries, pagans and then Christians treated this as a place of healing. The foundations of the churches rest on the dam between the two pools.

The insight in one line: The pool promised mercy to whoever got there first; Jesus gave it to a man who could not get there at all.

ANSWER KEY

SCENE 1 — THE QUESTION

1. THIRTY-EIGHT
2. LONG
3. WANT

SCENE 2 — THE EXCUSE

4. MAN
5. ANOTHER

SCENE 3 — THE COMMAND

6. PALLET
7. IMMEDIATELY

SCENE 4 — THE COST

8. SABBATH
9. FOUND
10. SIN

FAMILY TABLE TALK: TOUGH QUESTIONS JESUS ASKED

DO YOU WANT TO GET WELL?

Week 2 • John 5 • Oct 18

BIG IDEA: Being healed will cost you something personally.

THE STORY IN 4 STEPS

1

THE POOL

Jesus visits a pool full of hurting people waiting for a miracle

2

THE QUESTION

To a man sick for 38 years: "Do you want to get well?"

3

THE EXCUSE

"I have no one to put me in the pool when the water moves."

4

THE COMMAND

"Get up, pick up your mat, and walk!" And he did!

YOUR TURN: What do you want Jesus to change in you?

Write it or draw it in your own words. It can be big or small.

PICK A CARD (talk about one or two at the table)

WOULD YOU RATHER

Would you rather keep your coziest old blanket forever, or trade it for a brand-new adventure with Jesus? Why?

HOT SEAT

What is something you have been stuck on for a long time? What would help you get unstuck?

REAL TALK

Have you ever made an excuse instead of saying yes? Parents, go first!

BRAVE QUESTION

Is there something you would have to change to follow Jesus fully? Is it worth it?

PARENT CHEAT SHEET

"Why did Jesus ask if he wanted to get well? Isn't that obvious?" Getting well changes everything. His whole life was built around being sick. Jesus asks because He respects our choices.

"Why did it matter that it was the Sabbath?" Some leaders cared more about a rule than about a man who could finally walk. Jesus cares about people.

Not sure? Say: "Great question, let's find out together."

THIS WEEK'S MISSION

Notice one excuse you make this week. Tell Jesus about it and ask Him to help you say yes.

PRAY TOGETHER

Thank Jesus for asking us what we want. Ask Him to help our family trust Him and get up when He says so.