

August 1 – Small Group – Leader’s Guide - Read John 5:1-17

1. The man who was ill for 38 years believed the Pool of Bethesda was the only cure to his disease. What are some of the "magic cures" or "magic pools" our culture and even our church believes to be the cure to our inward restlessness or the longings of our hearts?

We believe wealth and money can cure our poverty; beauty our self-loathing and self-hatred; knowledge our ignorance; entertainment our grief and inconsolability when we are just by ourselves; science and technology our aging and mortality ... to name a few.

2. Jesus asks the man, "Do you want to be healed?" What are some of the hidden and inward ailments we today as a society and as a church are chronically feeling, from which to be healed and delivered?

Restlessness, futility, hopelessness, despair, chronic repetitiveness and mundaneness of our existence, boredom, banality of life and fleeting pleasures, the absence of existential and meaningful purpose, etc.

3. When the Jewish leaders confronted Jesus about healing on the Sabbath, Jesus defended Himself by saying, "My Father is at work and I too must be at work." Jesus here claimed to be God. What are the works of Jesus that His Father also does and how do His works impact us and the world?

Jesus' works are many: uniting earth and heaven together in His incarnation; His ministry of healing, restoration, forgiveness, deliverance, justice, mercy; His teachings of wisdom and perfect moral example; His death on the cross for the atonement of sins; His resurrection; His ascension; His unceasing intercession before the Father; His sending the Holy Spirit -- all these have impacted us as individuals and as a civilisation, to feel and know our worth as image-bearers of God, for the sake of the poor and needy in our world, for the creation of beauty and art and technology, for the reconciliation of enemies and strangers, for the work of justice and equity, etc.

4. Jesus won for us the eternal Sabbath rest of God by dying on the cross and rising to new life on the eighth day, the beginning of a new week. How can we as Christians live into and from the Sabbath rest in our work of God's mission in the world?

We need not to toil or earn God's acceptance or His welcome; we are already welcomed and embraced as His children in Jesus Christ. And so, from this reality of our adoption and welcome, we have been liberated to work with the energy and power and enthusiasm of Jesus Christ, for the good of our neighbours, for our own good, for the good of the earth, to see heaven come into earth in our days, and to see His kingdom come and His will be done.