

Pa232 Counseling

Lesson Pa232-31 Healing: People with Disabilities

What does it mean to be poor? Not enough food? Not enough clothing? No place to live? People with less than they need to live, we may call poor. People with more than they need, we call rich. There are some things, however, that money cannot buy. A poor person or a rich person can be disabled. This means they do not have the ability to do the tasks of daily life, without help from others. Perhaps it was the person's fault, or maybe someone else's fault. It may be no one's fault. Sometimes a person is disabled mentally or physically from birth.

Some people are disabled and no one can see it just by looking. Others cannot hide the way they are disabled. Every community has such people. It is easy to notice a person who is disabled if their limitation can be seen and requires someone to help them. Like the man in our story, some disabilities are visible; yet do not require assistance from anyone. Maybe he kept his right hand out of sight and used only his left hand. This man gathered with others in the synagogue yet was seated in the back of the room.

This story is found in each of the first three Gospels in the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is the story about a group of worshipers on the Sabbath, a man with a withered hand, and Jesus. It has an important lesson to teach us about the church's responsibility and purpose. It is more than a story about a healing. Listen carefully to Christ's words to the spiritual leaders present and to this disabled man. Consider the question Jesus asked the leaders of the synagogue and his directions to the man with the withered hand.

One Sabbath Jesus "went into the synagogue and was teaching, and a man was there whose right hand was shriveled. The Pharisees and the teachers of the law were looking for a reason to accuse Jesus, so they watched him closely to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. But Jesus knew what they were thinking and said to the man with the shriveled hand, 'Get up and stand in front of everyone.' ... Then Jesus said to them, 'I ask you, which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?'" (Luke 6:6-9).

Jesus had been enduring questions and attacks from the Pharisees. He now put his question to everyone in the synagogue. Jesus looked around at them to see whether anyone objected to his question or the implied answer. No one was bold enough to do so. The rabbis forbade giving aid to the sick on the Sabbath, unless it was feared the victim would die before the next day. Jesus was angry and deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts.

He asked them, "'If any of you has a sheep and it falls into a pit on the Sabbath, will you not take hold of it and lift it out? How much more valuable is a person than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath.' Then he said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other. But the Pharisees went out and plotted how they might kill Jesus" (Matt 12:11-14). Already they were planning to take his life. They believed Jesus could do miracles but waited only to see if he would heal on the Sabbath. Jesus was ready to save a life, but the religious leaders were planning to destroy his life. It is obvious who is breaking the Sabbath.

Do people with disabilities in our meetings always receive the help they need? As you heard this story, what lesson did it teach you? Proverbs suggests the answer by saying, “The rich and the poor (or disabled) have this in common: the Lord is the Maker of them all” (Prov 22:2).

Jesus may be asking your church this question: “Is your group doing good or allowing evil to continue on the Sabbath?” Jesus chose to demonstrate his love by a good deed. Jesus told the man with the withered hand to stand up and come forward. There would be no question about the healing. Then he told him to stretch out his right hand—the one that was withered. When he obeyed Jesus, in faith, by moving the hand that could not move, it was made whole!

All of us are in some way disabled to the point that we need the words and power of God to function. Our congregations should be reaching out to help the broken and downhearted, those who have fallen and are weak. They need to hear the Word of God that tells them they are important to him. He loves them and wants to change their situation. Even if they have not yet come to faith, you can pray for them, believing God hears and answers prayer.

Many times a word fitly spoken lifts another’s burden. As counselors, listening and keeping in confidence what we learn are important. The best listeners are those who keep quiet about what they have heard. Listening and learning the needs of others can be done by a friend, pastor, brother, or sister in Christ. They don’t need to wait until the Sabbath, but they can help whenever a need is found. Any believer can pray and ask God to do a miracle for someone with a mental, physical, or spiritual need. God loves and cares for the needs of the whole person.

This lesson is **important** because it demonstrates the attitude of Jesus toward those with a disability. The religious leaders were hoping Jesus would break the Sabbath so they could condemn him. They cared nothing for the man with the shriveled hand. Jesus wanted to show love and mercy to the man with the disability. Too often the church ignores those with problems and they end up forgotten by believers. We need to be God’s hand extended to anyone in need.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that God is concerned about people with physical or mental needs as well as those with spiritual needs. He loves them as they are and wants to see the church help transform their situation.

Let’s **review** this lesson with the following questions

1. How do we know who the disabled people are among us? [Pause]
A. If you said, “Disabled people are those who need help from others,” you are correct.
2. What was the question Jesus asked the religious leaders? [Pause]
A. If you answered, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil, to save life or to destroy it?” you answered correctly.
3. What part did Jesus ask the disabled man to do to receive his healing? [Pause]
A. If you responded with, “Jesus told him to stand up, come forward, and stretch out his withered hand,” you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to listen to the story of the healing of the disabled man as many times as you need to, so you can tell it in your own words. Then discuss with another

believer what the church can do to help the disabled people in your church or neighborhood. Pray together, asking God to direct your steps and prepare you to meet those in need. The Holy Spirit can and will draw them to the gathering of the body of Christ.