

GROWTHguide

FOR THE WEEK OF JUNE 19, 2016
"Pick Up Your Mat"



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

John 5:1-14, Romans 8:1, Ephesians 2:8-9, Jeremiah 17:21-22

REFLECTION AND STUDY

DAY 1

Read John 5:1-6. In the beginning of John 5 we read about a disabled man who Jesus asks an interesting question. "Do you want to be made well?" On the surface that may seem like a bizarre question with an obvious answer, but in fact, if he were honest, the man might have said no. Have you ever stayed in a bad situation because you were afraid of change? Have you ever wanted to change, but not been able to take action or make the sacrifices necessary? It takes a lot of faith to truly commit to allowing Jesus to change your life. Sometimes it's easier to stay exactly the same. If you really want to change, miracles can happen. If you don't, even Jesus himself cannot help you.

- Have you ever been in a situation where it was easier to stay the same than to allow change?
- What excuses do we tell ourselves to keep ourselves from change?

Thank God for his healing. Ask God to prepare your heart for change and help you to trust in his power.

DAY 2

Read John 5:7-9. We heard Sunday morning about what it means to pick up our mat and carry it. Our dirty mats represent our lives before Jesus and everything He has set us free from. Imagine your mat as a intricate tapestry woven of experiences, feelings, places, burdens, and everything else that was part of your life before Jesus. Imagine what your mat looks like. What does it smell like? How worn is it? Whatever condition it's in, we don't need to be ashamed. Our mats are powerful tools to connect with others around us. Who better to share the life changing power of Jesus with someone who needs help than a person who has come through the same struggle?

- Do you feel free to carry your "mat"? Spend some time thinking about it.
- Has God placed people around you that may benefit from your story?

Thank God for your mat no matter what it looks like. Thank God for all of the knowledge and tools you hold. Pray that God would remove any shame you may hold and help you to walk in His freedom.

DAY 3

Read John 5:9-14. The religious leaders were pretty upset that the healed man was carrying his mat on the Sabbath day. They completely missed the fact that this man who'd been disabled for 38 years had been miraculously healed and focused only on the law that had been broken. Many times we miss how people's hearts are changing around us because we are so focused on their past. When life changes happen around us, do we find ourselves focusing more on the mat than the miracle?

- Do you see yourself acting more like Jesus or more like a Pharisee in your relationships?

Thank God for all of the people in your life. Pray for them and their upcoming life changes. Pray that their hearts would continue to be transformed and that you would have eyes like Jesus to focus on the miraculous transformations happening around you.

DAY 4

The healed man is able to enter the temple for the first time in 38 years. What a joyous day! When Jesus sees him there, he tells the man, *"See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you."* This seems harsh, but it's important to remember that while God will always forgive our sins, he will not rescue us from the consequences of those sins. Sin carries a great price, it leads to spiritual death and separation from God. We must strive to be in close communion with God to experience the joy and grace that He wants for us. Jesus wants us to accept the invitation for healing and the all that comes with being healed, but we must pick up our mat daily and leave our sin behind. This is not a one time decision, but an ongoing struggle that all Christians experience. **Read Romans 8:1-2.**

- Why do you think it is so hard to break habitual sin?
- What are some examples of suffering from the consequences of sin after receiving forgiveness?

Thank God for his mercy and grace. Pray that the chains of sin would be broken and thank God for his forgiveness and unfailing love.

DAY 5

Let's revisit the mental picture of your mat. It's real, it's gritty and dirty and weighted down by your old life. If you are a follower of Christ you pick it up and carry it every day with a humble heart knowing that it is a tool Christ uses to draw others near to you. The weight is bearable because God gives you strength now. Your old life is gone, and you are a new creature. Use your tools carefully as others come into your life. You never want to boast about your sin. Instead, you want to glorify the transformation and always point towards your Savior. **Read Ephesians 2:8-9.**

- How has your life changed since you have come to know Jesus as your Savior?
- Have you written your testimony to share with others?

Pray and ask God to inspire you to write down how your life has changed as a result of your relationship with Him. Thank Him for the gift of grace.

DAY 6

The Healing at the pool is just one of many Sabbath miracles. It is no accident that Jesus worked on the Sabbath Day. The religious leaders were missing the original purpose of the Sabbath and could not see that as the Son of God and our Savior, Jesus is Lord over the Sabbath. In the other Gospels, there will be a number of Sabbath controversies following this miracle as Jesus forces the issue again and again. **Read Jeremiah 17:21-22.**

- Why do you think Jesus healed on the Sabbath?
- How do you balance keeping the Sabbath holy, managing your responsibilities and taking advantage of divine opportunities that may present themselves to you?

Pray that God would help you keep balance in your life every day of the week.

DAY 7

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.