



**JESUS, WHO GIVES US HOPE
(Sabbath School Program)**

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Scripture Focus: John 5:1-9

Later, Jesus went to Jerusalem for another Jewish festival. In the city near the sheep gate was a pool with five porches, and its name in Hebrew was Bethzatha. Many sick, blind, lame, and crippled people were lying down close to the pool. Beside the pool was a man who had been sick for 38 years. When Jesus saw the man and realized that he had been crippled for a long time, He asked him, “Do you want to be healed?” The man answered, “Lord, I don’t have anyone to put me in the pool when the water is stirred up. I try to get in, but someone else always gets there first.” Jesus told him, “Pick up your mat and walk!” Right then the man was healed. He picked up his mat and started walking around. The day on which this happened was a Sabbath.

Possible Hymns: My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less (Seventh-day Adventist Hymnal No. 522), Jesus What a Beautiful Name (Contemporary), Hope Is the Flag Flown High in the Castle of my Heart (Children)

Comments and Discussion: (Depending on the size of the audience, the discussion could be with the whole group or ask people to discuss with the person they are sitting with. Even in a small audience, some one-on-one sharing will be better.)

Today I want to reflect with you on the topic of Friends of Hope. I want to share some ideas, and gather your thoughts as well, and finally, tie the discussion into a story about how Jesus brought hope to a helpless person. I guess the challenge is for us to be friends of hope to people we know.

Let’s start with **friendship**. We treasure friends because they bring a special dimension to our lives. Hubert Humphrey said, “The greatest gift of life is friendship.” Ralph Waldo Emerson noted, “The only way to have a friend is to be one.” And the blind hymn writer Helen Keller believed, “Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light,” and she should know.

So my first question for reflection is: Who is your best friend and what do you appreciate most about that friendship? Share with a person (or two) beside you. You have 60 seconds each, or 40 seconds each if you are a threesome.

Next, think about how you could be a better friend. I am going to give you 60 seconds to quietly think and then 60 seconds each to share, or 40 seconds if you are a threesome.

Jesus said we should be doers of the word and not just hearers, so I hope that you work on how you can be a better friend.

Let's move on to **hope**. Hope is an interesting word in English. We can hope for something which may or may not happen. Every week millions of people throw away money on a lottery ticket hoping that they will win big. They hope but they know most of them will lose, rather than win. Then we can have hope – a quiet confidence in something. Desmond Tutu noted, “Hope is being able to see that there is light despite all of the darkness.” English Philosopher Bernard Williams rightly said, “There was never a night or a problem that could defeat sunrise or hope.” Christians have what the Bible writer Paul called a ‘blessed hope’ - the return of Jesus to this world - because it is based on God’s promise, so it is not wishful thinking. The great American preacher Robert H. Schuller said, “Let your hopes, not your hurts, shape your future.” That is good advice.

So what do you hope for? What are your desires for your future? As you share your hopes for the future, remember this promise from God, “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future’” (Jeremiah 29:11, NIV). You have 60 seconds each, or 40 seconds if you are a threesome.

Before I leave hope, I want to share this wisdom from Robert Fulghum, “I believe that imagination is stronger than knowledge. That myth is more potent than history. That dreams are more powerful than facts. That hope always triumphs over experience. That laughter is the only cure for grief. And I believe that love is stronger than death.”

Let's come now to the **story of Jesus**. It is recorded in the biography written by His friend John (John 5:1-9). (in the Bible, or in the bulletin or on the screen, or acted out by two characters, or read by three people – Jesus, the cripple and the narrator).

This is a sad, sad story with a happy ending. Think about the crippled man for a minute. What did he hope for? Was the hope a reality? No, because he had no friend to help him into the water. He was friendless and hopeless. If you were the man, what feelings would you experience? How about when the waters moved – what would you feel then? How about when you could not get into the water?

Now think about Jesus. What did Jesus do? What surprises you about what Jesus did? Share your thoughts with your friend. You have 60 seconds each, or 40 seconds if you are a threesome.

Now think about what the crippled man may have thought when Jesus told him to stand up and walk. Why do you think he obeyed Jesus and got up? Share your thoughts with your friend. You have 60 seconds each, or 40 seconds if you are a threesome.

What would he have been thinking and feeling as he began to walk home? How would this experience have affected you? You have 60 seconds each, or 40 seconds if you are a threesome.

I looked at this story of Jesus and the crippled man because I think it says something about us today. It is a picture of what Jesus desires for us. As you reflected on the hopes you have for the future, you were sharing that things today are not all that you want them to be. You hope for something more. That was the cripple's situation. And perhaps like the cripple there is not a lot we can do about our present situation. With true friends who have hope you have people who will be there with you and for you. But beyond friends, there is Jesus, The Friend who is closer than a brother. And as He said to the crippled man, "Do you want to be healed," He says to you and me today, "Do you want to be healed?" What do you want to say to him? He is waiting and wanting you to say yes. I want to give you a quick 30 seconds so you can tell Jesus what your next step will be.

Thank you for participating in our discussion of friends of hope.