

Voices: America, do you want to get well?

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America, do *you* want to get well?

There is a lot of talk these days about the hope for wellness.

The Pool of Bethesda was thought to be a place of healing. Many sick, blind and lame people often gathered there in hopes of finding a cure and experiencing wellness.

Jesus approached a man at the pool who was paralyzed 38 years (John 5). For nearly four decades, this man would have been transported on a mat carried by friends or family members. All his functioning for daily life depended on other people.

As Jesus approached, he asked the man, "Do you want to get well?"

Do you want to get well?

What a fascinating, provocative, challenging question.

Why would Jesus ask that question? The truth is, we don't know why Jesus asked, but he did. Jesus wanted to know where the man stood on the issue. Did he really want to get well?

You would expect a clear, "Yes," right?

Perhaps this man, though he claimed to want wellness, was more comfortable in his 38-year reality. Perhaps he enjoyed the benefit of others bringing him food. Maybe the thought of having to fend for himself in a new

reality raised particular fears.

Whatever the case, Jesus wanted to ensure this man was not comfortable in his present condition and was ready to enjoy the new freedom Jesus promised to bring.

Do we really want to live beyond our current circumstances?

We can all become tempted to find comfort in our present discomfort. We may say we long for something different—for freedom, wholeness, redemption or reconciliation—but our actions demonstrate, when presented with an opportunity for healing, we do not take it.

Jesus wanted to bring this man freedom, but freedom would require change. Change is challenging. Change requires vulnerability and bravery.

Are you willing to change?

We talk of wellness in our world today. But I wonder if we really want to get well. I'm not talking about whether your neighbor or your enemy wants to get well. Do *you* want to get well?

Some find much comfort and purpose in the division. Others don't know what they would do tomorrow if they didn't have an enemy as the object of their disdain. Some would not know what to do if they were not able to blame someone else for their problems.

Still others wouldn't have much fun without the ability to judge or feel morally superior to others. Some might be bored if they didn't have an anger fantasy against their opponent or the opportunity to slam their enemies on social media.

The No. 1 question in counseling is, "Is there a willingness to change?" The reality is, healing can be painful at times.

Sometimes, the present dysfunction and paralysis we know is more comfortable than the freedom we do not yet know. Therefore, we avoid changing aspects of our lives that would help us live more freely.

Perhaps we like the attention that comes from the struggle. Dodging our responsibilities, maybe we blame someone else without recognizing our role in the problem.

Where do you stand on Jesus' question?

In light of all the current challenges, I'd encourage all of us, collectively, to sit with Jesus' question a while. Do you want to get well?

In the words of one unknown author, "Let there be change, and let it begin with me."

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