

Leaving Samaria, Jesus proceeds to Galilee in the northern part of Israel, where he grew up
A Gentile man and a royal official from Capernaum has a son who is very sick
He hears that Jesus is in the area and goes to see him, begging that he come heal his son
Jesus said, “Unless you see signs and wonders you will not believe”
Already Jesus is aware that people are more interested in the miracles than him
They are attracted to what they see that is miraculous—water to wine, healings, etc.
But the man is desperate and persists, asking that Jesus come before his son dies
Jesus says, “Go, your son will live”
The man took Jesus at his word and went on his way home
Before he got home, he was met by people coming to find him, saying his son was alive
He asked and realized that his son began to get better when Jesus said he would live
This man—a Gentile—took Jesus at his word and went home to find his son alive

The next story takes place back in Jerusalem at a pool
The pool was famous for its healing properties—the sick, blind, and lame came for its healing
Jews and Gentiles considered it a sacred site with healing properties
The water bubbled up on occasion, which caused a stirring of the water
The story was that if you were the first in the pool when the water stirred, you would be healed
Some thought it was an angel—some thought it was the magic of the pool
A man is lying beside the pool—and has been for the past 38 years, patiently waiting
He didn’t ask for anything and doesn’t even appear to know who Jesus is or that he does miracles
But Jesus noticed him and asks him, “Do you want to be made well?”
The man doesn’t seem to even hear the question, but simply responds with his usual answer
“I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred; others get there first”
Jesus doesn’t criticize his answer or chide him for making excuses
He simply says, “Stand up, take your mat and walk”
The man was made well—took up his mat and began to walk!

At first glance, these stories couldn’t be more different...
One has a father taking all the initiative—the other man does nothing
One has a father insisting when Jesus doesn’t immediately respond—the other man does nothing
One has Jesus expressing his frustration about their need for signs—not to the other
One has a man leaving Jesus wondering what will happen—the other man walks immediately
One does nothing other than go home—the other is an invalid told to stand up
In both cases, a healing takes place

Again, we see that there is no pattern to what Jesus does or to how Jesus heals a person
Too often in the church, we have tried to make patterns out of these stories
From Jesus talk with Nicodemus—we created a pattern that “you must be born again”
From the healing stories—we talk about praying with faith, believing in the healing
It matters how and what you say—whether you truly believe
Yet, we see that Jesus didn’t follow those patterns
The man by the pool for 38 years didn’t ask and didn’t even say he wanted to be healed

I think it really has nothing to do with following a formula—it has everything to do with trust
Which takes more trust?
To go home without proof, nothing more than Jesus words, “Go; your son will live.”?
For an invalid who can’t get to the pool, to “Stand up, take your mat and walk.”?

It isn't about doing things a certain way—it is about following the Leadings and trusting God

We want “signs and wonders” so that we can believe

Truth is that we are no different than the people that came to Jesus, asking for signs and wonders

It is so easy to doubt that God really cares about me and my situation—or even if God exists

We think that if something irrefutably amazing happened, then we would know for sure

Yet, we have to try—we have to believe in something—we have to hope—so we ask!

Like the father who went to find Jesus—desperation drives us to ask for a miracle

We hope that along the way we will find some glimmer of evidence that God does care

Sometimes we even bargain with God—making a contract with God—if you do this, then I will...

Even in that we are asking for signs before we will trust

Ultimately we have to seek God unconditionally

Until then we limit God because of our expectations so God isn't free to be God

But then we find that in moments of our deepest despair, God comes all the way to us

Like the man at the pool, God asks nothing of us

God understands our excuses and pays them no attention

God knows our inner being and meets us there without judgment

I'm often amazed at what God does ask of us...

To go home without proof, nothing more than Jesus words, “Go; your son will live.”

Just a minute—before you leave, let me call home on my cell phone and see if he's ok

There was no such option—Just a 20 mile walk home wondering what was happening

But part way home he met his servants and found out his son was well

Learning that he began to get well at the same time Jesus said he would live—he knew

He knew that Jesus had healed him and that he could trust this Jesus with his life

“So he himself believed, along with his whole household.” John 4:53

But the word “believed” would be better translated as “trusted”

It isn't a set of beliefs—it is about a relationship, about trusting Jesus

When I pray for healing—I can often sense that my prayer has been heard

Yet I don't know the outcome—I must trust, waiting until it is revealed

And ultimately I recognize that the miracle may not be the one I expected

Yet I see God at work and my trust is strengthened

Jesus asks an invalid who can't get to the pool, to “Stand up, take your mat and walk.”

I would expect Jesus to tell him to wiggle his toes, feet, and then legs—do stretches

To slowly get the feeling into his limbs and try sitting up

But Jesus says, “Stand up, take your mat and walk.”

How often God asks us to do something we haven't done before

What I learn is that the ability and confidence comes in the doing

I simply step out, trusting that God will give me what I need

I may not do it perfectly or meet some external standards—but I'm enough

Sometimes, my lack of expertise is more readily accepted by others

Like an invalid being able to stand and walk—I can do what is asked of me

All of this is so dependent on trusting God—that God is present and walks with me and that I'm enough