

EMOTIONAL HEALING

In the last newsletter I identified eight states to emotional/spiritual healing that are common to all. They are

1. Pain and suffering, 2. A genuine desire to get well, 3. Hope, 4. Instruction, 5. Motivation, 6. Obedience, 7. Discipline, and 8. Perseverance. I defined what was involved in the first state of *pain and suffering* in my last letter. We are now ready to look at the second necessary step to healing.

Do you want to get well?

In the 5th chapter of John, there is a story of the healing at Bethesda. Here Jesus came upon a paralytic man who had been 38 years in his sickness. The man was camped by a pool called Bethesda. In that time it was believed that an angel of the Lord would come down at certain seasons and stir the waters of this pool, healing whoever was able to get in the water after the stirring. This man, being paralyzed, could not make it in. Jesus walked up to this certain man and asked him a straight forward question, "Do you want to get well?"

Taking this at face value, it appears to be a very strange question. Here the man has been paralyzed for 38 years, he is camped at the pool trying to get to the waters. Of course he wants to get well. Or does he? If we stop and think about the real question that Jesus asks, we can understand this on a different level. It is also helpful to know that the word *well* as used in this passage of Scripture in the Greek is translated as sound and whole. If the man were to sincerely answer yes, what would that mean? It would mean that the use of his limbs would be given to him, but what would that mean? Things would change, and would need to change radically. This man would have to think differently, he would most likely need to get a job, become responsible. He could no longer have others care for all of his needs. In essence life would change dramatically from what he knew it to be the past four decades. He would need to adjust his thoughts, behaviors,

attitudes, and habits. What a question this really is. Do you want to get well?

When I ask people seeking counsel this question, I frequently get the same odd look that Jesus probably did from the paralytic man. I almost always get the same response: "I wouldn't be here if I didn't." Unfortunately that is not always the truth. I believe Jesus knew that when he asked the man that question. Not everybody wants to get well. Most everybody does want to "not suffer" any more, but that is different, although that is often how that question is interpreted. As I previously discussed in the first step to healing, suffering is not a choice, and often the journey towards inner healing involves a great deal of it.

Getting emotionally and spiritually well often requires quite a bit of work. In some cases individuals decipher that the pain involved in the healing journey is greater than the pain they are currently in. When this is the case, people will not always be willing to pay the price attached to "being healed". I have observed that when the pain in one's life becomes greater than their fears of major change, they are ready to examine what is entailed in "getting well." I recall one man I worked with who had a drug problem. He first lost his job. That was not enough. He then lost all dignity and confidence. That was not enough. He then lost his wife's respect. That was not enough. He then lost his wife. That did it. He fought diligently to restore his life and his marriage. He regained his life, became completely sober, built up his confidence and his faith again, but he did lose his marriage. He paid a tremendous price but was finally able to say authentically, "I want to get well now."

This is a question we must all address in our lives. What is required of us when we pray "God deliver us" may be very similar to what the Israelites experienced. In His wisdom, God answered with first leading them into a wilderness. We need to be prepared for the same.