

Welcome to Kev's on-line eGroup

The e-Glue that helps with the glitter

Part 1: Detailed sermon notes

Part 2: eGroup study questions

Here Comes Church – “In the know”

- Interested in serving at Elevation Church: See: www.elevationchurch.cc
- Please consider joining an eGroup (small group) so you don't have to walk this walk alone – See www.elevationchurch.cc. The “e” stands for empowerment - because getting the instructions from God without having the empowerment to live them out will frustrate you. These groups are our way of putting some very wonderful people in front of you feed you spiritually.
- Stay out of “isolation silos” - you are an easy target for the enemy – and you don't have the benefit of friends to support you. Embrace the power of numbers.
- Interested in leading an eGroup? See: www.elevationchurch.cc
- Don't over-think it – Invite someone to church – “Who do you know that is close to you that is far from God?”
- What are your Gr8ful eight?
- K-Love and Elevation Workshop at Red Rocks in CO in August 2025
- Elevation Nights is back: Elevation Nights is hitting the road again and we're coming to a city near you from October 21st through the 30th, 2025 - we're going to be in St. Paul, Omaha, St Louis, Louisville, Duluth, Tampa, Miami, and Orlando.

Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

John 5:1-11 – Jesus heals the lame man at Bethesda

5 Some time later, Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals. **2** Now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheep Gate a pool, which in Aramaic is called Bethesda and which is surrounded by five covered colonnades. **3** Here a great number of disabled people used to lie—the blind, the lame, the paralyzed. **5** One who was there had been an invalid for thirty-eight years. **6** When Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time, he asked him, “Do you want to get well?”

7 “Sir,” the invalid replied, “I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred. While I am trying to get in, someone else goes down ahead of me.”

8 Then Jesus said to him, “Get up! Pick up your mat and walk.” **9** At once the man was cured; he picked up his mat and walked.

The day on which this took place was a Sabbath, **10** and so the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, “It is the Sabbath; the law forbids you to carry your mat.”

11 But he replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”

12 So they asked him, “Who is this fellow who told you to pick it up and walk?”

13 The man who was healed had no idea who it was, for Jesus had slipped away into the crowd that was there.

14 Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “See, you are well again. Stop sinning or something worse may happen to you.” **15** The man went away and told the Jewish leaders that it was Jesus who had made him well.

The Authority of the Son

16 So, because Jesus was doing these things on the Sabbath, the Jewish leaders began to persecute him. **17** In his defense Jesus said to them, “My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.” **18** For this reason they tried all the more to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.

19 Jesus gave them this answer: “Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does. **20** For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does. Yes, and he will show him even greater works than these, so that you will be amazed. **21** For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, even so the Son gives life to whom he is pleased to give it. **22** Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, **23** that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.

24 “Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life. **25** Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live. **26** For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. **27** And he has given him authority to judge because he is the Son of Man.

Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

eGroup Prayer on 10/25/2025:

Prayer Prompt

“Pastor Steven taught us that, “God has a way of putting the best gifts in the worst boxes. Trust God, not the box.” Thank God for this week’s message and the time spent together. We thank Pastor Furtick for the the reminder that even when we face things that come in ugly packaging, that doesn’t mean that God is not working through them. We are encouraged that God works through the most challenging situations. We ask that God will be a positive label to put on the other side of the challenges we face.”

Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Closing Prayer by Pastor Steven Furtick on 10/6/2025:

"I've got more in me. I've got more love in me than I've got hate in me. I've got more dreams in me than I have disappointment." Keep it in context. There are more with us than against us." Joseph said "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good." Dothan is just a dot on a map – not a destiny – the most horrible thing happened to Joseph - but he was restored enough to move forward in the revelation of who God was. Don't let this dot define you - In light of what God is doing through you, this is just a dot. It's not even worth comparing. Do you not understand that your testimony is changing lives – when people hear of your faith and your perseverance? Before the enemy was visible, God was there invisible. He is in your situation, and he is in your struggle, and God is not surprised. This is just a dot, because greater is he that is in me than any enemy that is against me. What would it look like for you to open the file in your mind today, to just reframe your situation with the faithfulness of God? Dothan is a place where you can admit it's both. "I'm surrounded, and I'm secure, because I keep it in context." When you begin to praise God for His faithfulness, you shrink the Enemy, and he has no power over you. When you begin to open up your mind and say, "God, I've seen good days and bad days. Father, I pray for those today who have felt in their hearts and in their spirits like, "This is the end." I agree with your truth concerning them, that it is nothing compared to the glory you will reveal in them. I thank you for what you're doing in their life even now. You're developing fruit and character and maturity, and you will not leave them alone in Dothan. God, I thank you for the moments that you showed up for me in Dothan. I was surrounded. I didn't know what to do. I couldn't understand it, but you put it in context, and you reminded me that not only are you faithful and not only are you good, but you can get glory out of any situation. Hallelujah.

Opening Prayer #2 by Pastor Furtick on 9/22/2025: A little history lesson. Back before we had cell phones, we had something called collect calls. A collect call is when you needed to get in touch with somebody but you didn't have any money or currency or resource. And then they would say, do you accept the charges? And if the person who picked up the phone really loved you, they would say, I accept. I hear the Lord saying, I accept. I hold you to the high of my heart. I know your name. You call my name. And when I hear your name, I'll come see about you. I'll help you in the day of trouble. I'll carry you through rough water. I'll still the storm if you'll call my name. We thank you, Lord, that you've already paid the price for us to come into your presence today. Not by the blood of bulls and goats, but by the precious blood of Christ. We thank you today that we can come before you and make our heart an altar. We can bring anything to you. It doesn't scare you, intimidate you, or repulse you. We thank you that you have already dealt with our sins and we are free to worship you because of Jesus. We cast all anxiety on Jesus today. He's strong enough. We cast all depression on Jesus today. He's big enough. We cast all of our fear on Jesus today for He is big enough. God, I pray for every one of my brothers and sisters in Christ, in this room, across all of our campuses, and all around the world. I thank You that You're doing a great work. I sense Your presence. Even if I didn't, You would be here. But I thank you that I feel you right now. And I praise you for the word that you gave me. It is a liberating word. A powerful word. It came from heaven and so hell has to leave. Because when you speak, anything is possible. And we ask you now. Kind father. Give a word to us.. In Jesus name. Amen.

Part 1: Detailed sermon notes

Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Elevation Sermon Notes – “Your Label Is Lying” – Pastor Furtick – 10/25/2025 – final installment of Same Lies/New Loops

Sermon Highlights

- Don't label it until later. When I label my situation while I'm still in it, I limit my situation to how I see it.
- Some of the hardest seasons you'll go through will be the ones you look back and say God taught you the most.
- Is it ever a bad time to do a good thing?
- The devil will try to convince you that your issue is you. Your label is lying.
- God has a way of putting the best gifts in the worst boxes. Trust God, not the box.
- It's more impactful to hear about the process, not the product. Freedom involves a journey.
- Sometimes God will give you a command that makes no sense in the midst of your condition.
- Sometimes God does it now, but you praise Him later. God says, “Praise me now and I'll explain it later.”
- I am not what I did, I am not who I was, I am what God says.
- The law says you can't. The Word says otherwise.
- I might be in it, but it is not in me.

Scriptures - john 5:1-11 – Jesus heals the lame man at Bethesda

Sermon Discussion

- “Don't label it until later. When I label my situation while I'm still in it, I limit my situation to how I see it.” What area of your life have you been wanting to label too soon?
- “Some of the hardest seasons you'll go through will be the ones you look back and say God taught you the most.” Share something God has shown you through a challenging season.
- “The devil will try to convince you that your issue is you. Your label is lying.” What label have you been carrying that doesn't match what God says about you?
- “Sometimes God does it now, but you praise Him later. God says, ‘Praise me now and I'll explain it later.’” What can you choose to praise God for right now, even though you haven't seen it happen yet?
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Kev's guys on-line eGroup study notes

Elevation Sermon Notes – “Your Label Is Lying” – Pastor Furtick – 10/25/2025 – final installment of Same Lies/New Loops

AI enabled sermon recap:

- False Labels and Healing at the Pool of Bethesda
- Oct 19, 2025 • 50 minutes, 2 seconds
- A sermon of worship, prayer, and teaching centered on John 5:1–16 emphasizes the power of Jesus' name, the danger of false labels, and the authority of God's word over human judgments. The message urges listeners to adopt “new loops” of thinking and living, not to label situations prematurely, and to trust and obey Jesus' command despite their conditions.
- Worship, Invocation, and Prayer
- Repeated exaltation of Jesus' name as source of glory, healing, freedom, and salvation, with congregational declarations of love and praise.
- Contrast drawn between angels' worship and redeemed people's unique praise: “the angels can't praise God like you can.”
- Intercession: re-center distracted hearts on God's word; break shame and condemnation; call for salvation “today”; release an “explosion of joy” in homes and campuses; affirmation that “Jesus is in this room” bringing change.
- Series Context: Same Lives, New Loops
- **Series theme: replacing destructive mental and behavioral patterns (“loops”) with God-shaped ones—new ways of thinking, speaking, and seeing.**
- Focus today: identity and labels; learning to align inner loops with God's truth.
- Scripture Focus: John 5:1–16
- Setting: Jerusalem, a Jewish festival; the pool called Bethesda (House of Mercy), surrounded by five colonnades (five noted as symbol of grace).
- Characters and condition: a large group of the “blind, the lame, the paralyzed”; one man had been an invalid for 38 years.
- Jesus' encounter: “When Jesus saw him” and knew his long condition, He asked, “Do you want to get well?” The man cited lack of help and being beaten into the pool by others.
- Command and miracle: Jesus said, “Get up. Pick up your mat. And walk.” Immediately he was cured, picked up his mat, and walked.
- Sabbath controversy: Healing occurred on the Sabbath. Religious leaders objected, saying the law forbids carrying the mat. The healed man replied, “The man who made me well said to me, ‘Pick up your mat and walk.’”
- Key refrain: “The word says otherwise” challenges legalistic or limiting interpretations when God's authoritative word acts.
- John's Narrative Perspective - John writes decades after events, offering reflective interpretation; this healing appears only in John's Gospel.
- Point: in real time, the event looked like a confrontation and “bad timing” (Sabbath), but later evaluation reveals deeper purpose; some seasons can be understood only “later.”

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- Point: in real time, the event looked like a confrontation and “bad timing” (Sabbath), but later evaluation reveals deeper purpose; some seasons can be understood only “later.”
- **Labels, Identity, and “Label It Later” - “Your label is lying”: the man is unnamed and known only by condition; many forget their true name by focusing on what they lack or cannot do. “Don’t label it until later”: avoid premature judgments about seasons or people. Illustration from a songwriting session: make it now, name it later. Early labels can constrain what something is meant to become.**
- Gift-box analogy: people may put cheap gifts in fancy boxes; God often places the best gifts in the worst boxes (hard seasons). Trust the Giver, not the packaging. Religion’s mislabeling: turning God’s gifts into burdens; leaders saw only “the mat,” not “the man.”
- Freedom as Process and Honest Testimony - Call to honest testimonies: rather than “instantly set free” labels, describe the ongoing process—learning healthier “loops” that interrupt destructive spirals with God’s word.
- Even after healing, Jesus later warns the man to stop sinning; the journey continues beyond the initial miracle.
- Command vs. Condition - God’s command can confront and supersede present conditions: “Get up, pick up your mat, and walk” makes no sense to a paralyzed man—obedience activates change.
- Exhortation to youth and all believers: live by calling, not crowd labels; purity and obedience despite peer norms.
- Prophetic encouragement: where circumstances say “over,” God’s word says “otherwise.” Echo of speaking life (e.g., valley of dry bones).
- Carrying the Mat: Not Going Back
- The mat becomes a testimony: he carries what once carried him, signaling, “I’m not going back” after 38 years stuck.
- Joyful response encouraged—praise even amid trials; “dance on the grave” of former bondage as a sign of new life.
- Practical Encouragements and Exhortations - Place Jesus’ name over every aspect of life: good days, bad days, uncertainty, family, generations, “every tribe and tongue and nation.”
- Remember: Jesus “saw him”—God sees the person beyond labels and speaks to true identity.
- Replace shame with trust in Christ; do not let others’ labels define calling or worth.
- **Next Steps / Actions - Re-center on Scripture over anxious thoughts; intentionally interrupt negative loops with God’s word. Withhold premature labels on your season or self; “make it now and name it later.” “Open the box”: look for God’s gift within hard circumstances; trust the Giver over appearances. Obey the personal command God highlights (e.g., “Get up...walk”) even when it contradicts your condition. Carry your “mat” as a testimony that you are not going back; praise God publicly and honestly about your ongoing process. Place Jesus’ name over your family, decisions, and daily life; choose calling over conformity.**

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Detailed sermon notes:

- **On our good days to give you praise. Jesus, be the name that we call on our bad days to rescue us. Jesus, be the name that we call when we can't find the answer. Jesus, be the name that we call. When they ask us for a reason. And this hope that we have within us is springing up in a song. Jesus be the name that we sing in this church. Jesus be the name on a Sunday morning. Jesus be the name on a Friday night. Jesus be the name over every family. Over every generation. Over every tribe and tongue and nation. I love to call you I love to praise you I love to love you I love to worship you In your powerful name today Jesus I bring before you now And petition you on behalf of each and every person.**
- **Who is joining us for this moment First of all God Re-center their heart They've been distracted. They've gotten out of balance. They've been giving more weight to their thoughts than to your word. I ask you to bring them back to the center today. Secondly, Lord, I ask you to deal with their shame today. If they have never placed their trust in Jesus Christ, today will be the day. Today is the last day that they live in sin. Today is the last day that shame and condemnation rule and have a final word over their life. To worship like it. To think like it. To speak like it. To live like it. To glorify you like it. And to not be ashamed to praise your name. God, I ask for an explosion of joy today in every heart, in every home, on every campus, on every row. I thank you that Jesus is in this room today walking up and down the aisles. I thank you that Jesus is in this room today stirring our affection. I thank you that Jesus is bringing change today. And I praise you in the mighty name. Jesus, Jesus, Jesus. Jesus, we pray. It's all I know. Glory to God. Glory to God. Hallelujah. Hallelujah. Hallelujah.**
- A miracle can happen now. For the Spirit of the Lord is here. I'm so grateful for God's presence. I will never understand why He chooses us to worship Him. He's got angels that worship Him. Seraphim and Cherubim surround His throne just singing, Holy, Holy, Holy, Worthy, Worthy, Worthy.
- Turn to your neighbor and inform them, You are not an angel. Come on, tell them it. Don't be scared to offend them. They already know that. If they don't know it, their kids know it. If they don't know it, their brother-in-law knows it. You are not an angel. Now look at them real quick. Come on, participate. Even if you're watching online, just find somebody and tell them, you're not an angel. Tell them, but the angels can't praise God like you can. See, because the angels have always been perfect. The angels have never sinned. The angels didn't have to be redeemed. But if you've been redeemed and you know it, if he snaps you out of the pit and you know it, if he brought you this far and you know it, say Jesus, be the Lamb. We can sing it all night, but we gotta stop because it's preaching time!
- The word of the Lord is coming your way. Whether you're in this room or whether you're watching this later, or whether you're listening in a car, I hope you're not watching in a car unless you're a passenger. Just listen and watch the road. The Lord has something he wants to show you today in his word.
- This is the final message in the greatest series in the history of our church. Y'all don't like it. My favorite series in the history of our church. Because it's the one that I needed the most. Because it's called same lives. New loops. Same lives. New loops. New loops. And the Lord is giving you some new ways of thinking, some new ways of being, some new ways of talking, some new ways of seeing. New loops.

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Elevation Sermon Notes – “Your Label Is Lying” – Pastor Furtick – 10/25/2025 – final installment of Same Lies/New Loops

- It's going to be amazing today because we're going to see a picture of somebody who had believed a lie for so long that to him it was true. And when you have believed a lie long enough, it's true to you. even though everybody else can see that it's not. Today, God wants to show you something about the way that he sees you.
- Go ahead and put your name in the comments. And since you can't do that live, tell the person next to you your name.
- We're going to be spending some time today together in John chapter 5. Remain standing if you're able for the reading of God's word. And as I share this with you today, the Lord wants to give us a picture of what it means to leave the lies behind. That's what we come to church for, right? We don't come to church and hear truth and just take lies home with us like we didn't hear the truth. We want to come to church, receive the truth of God's word, and take it forward into the world that he's called us to change.
- John chapter 5, verse, I may just read all 16 verses. I wasn't gonna stop around verse 6 - but I thought I was going down John chapter 5 “verse 1 sometime later Jesus went up to Jerusalem for one of the Jewish festivals now there is in Jerusalem near the Sheikah a pool which in Aramaic is called Bethesda that word means house of mercy Bethlehem means house of bread, Beth is house. And then Seda from Hesus, the word that means covenant love or favor or grace or mercy. It means all of those things. It's the house of mercy. At least that's what it's called. It's supposed to be a place where people can come and get grace. But it isn't and you'll see that in the passage. It's called Bethesda and it's surrounded by five covered colonnades. And incidentally, since we're in John five, five in the Bible is often symbolic of grace. It's the number of grace. So this is supposed to be a place of grace. You know, can I say that about our church? This is supposed to be a place of grace. Anybody can come like they are and not leave that way. It was surrounded by five covered columns here. A great number of disabled people used to lie. blind the lame the paralyzed one who was there had been an invalid for 38 years when Jesus saw him lying there and learned that he had been in this condition for a long time he asked him do you want to get well sir the invalid replied I have no one to help me into the pool when the water is stirred while I am trying to get in Someone else goes down ahead of me. Then Jesus said to him, Get up. Pick up your mat. And walk. At once the man was cured. He picked up his mat. And walked. But that's not the end of the verse, is it? The day on which this took place was a Sabbath. And so the Jewish leader said to the man who had been healed, It is the Sabbath. The law forbids you to carry your mat. But he replied, Oh, I love this Bible verse right here. The man who made me well said to me, I hear what you're saying to me. But the one who walked by me and told me I could walk too, told me to do this. The man... who made me well said to me, pick up your mat and walk.”
- I got good news for you today, church. The title of my message is, the word says otherwise. The word, the word says otherwise. Tell your neighbor, I know you feel kind of depressed. I know it looks like it's over, but the word, says otherwise. Put it in all caps in the chat. Put it in your language. Put it in your native tongue. Put it in emojis. I don't care. The word says otherwise.
- And we're going to give this message a subtitle also. We're going to call it, hmm, see if I can explain this. Your label is lying. Your label is lying. healthy food, your label is lying. You know how that guy said he was a Christian guy? Your label, and he wore a Christian shirt, your label is lying. You know how people say when you come to Christ, everything will just be better all at once? Your label is lying. But God's word is true. Father, thank you for your word in Jesus' name. Amen.

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- Be seated. Don't label it until later. Don't label it until later. Now you're gonna write that down. You don't even know what I mean by that. But you will later. I was in a songwriting session recently and we were just starting to work on a song. We had really not identified the tempo of the song, time signature of the song, even the theme of the song. whether it wanted to be a ballad or a bop. Sometimes you don't know. Sometimes a song starts like really, really worshipful and the next thing you know you're dancing on a table and you don't know what happened.
- So the key to this is be patient. Be patient. Let the song tell you what it wants to be. Let the spirit of God have his way if you're writing a worship song. And we were just starting to write a song and the producer, who was recording the session and needed to save the song on his computer, stopped and asked a question. He said, what is this song called? I looked back at it and I knew that he needed to save the file so he could access it and be organized. I looked at him and said, I can't name it. We haven't even made it yet. We need to make it before we name it. If we name it before we make it, There may be something else that the song wants to be that we don't allow it to become, because we already gave it a name.
- So what we need to do is just save the file as a work in progress, and then we can see what it's going to be by the end of the day, because we'll label it later. We'll make it now and label it later. I don't know who this is for, but maybe that's the word that you came to get today.
- **Make it now and name it later. We're so specific in our time about trying to diagnose everything. Even every child is diagnosed with all of these conditions before they are seven years old. And sometimes that can be helpful, but other times it can be a hurdle. Because if I give a child a label before that child has even had the chance to develop beyond those developmental limitations. I may limit what the child thinks that the child can be because I gave the child a label too soon that limited their potential mentally, even though their potential in God was unlimited. Label it later.**
- And I'm not talking about not going to doctors and specialists. You understand, I'm using this as a way to get you to see that sometimes you are trying to label your life as you are living your life. And it is causing you to misdiagnose some of the things about you that only God can reveal in time. It is causing you to name things and save things to the hard drive of your mind. And you call yourself things and you call situations things that they really aren't because you are trying to label it before you have even lived it.
- So you say things like this is the worst season of my life. How do you know that yet? The seed hasn't even given the harvest for it. You have no idea. As a matter of fact, I would imagine that any time the dirt is being plowed, it is hard for the dirt that you would wish away if God came down and asked you, would you like to skip those stages, will be the very stages that later you will be able to skip. That was the season, am I right? Where God got me out of that relationship. And I'm so glad that he did. That was the season where God set me free from something I thought I needed. And if he would have kept giving me what I wanted, I would have never gotten what I needed. And when I label my situation while I'm still in it, I limit my situation to how I see it. And the problem with me is I can't see things like they are. I only see things as I am. And I am limited.

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- And so if I look at my situation and label it with my mind, I will always find a way to zoom into the microscopically bad. Or maybe I'm just wanting this one thing to happen so bad. Or maybe something happens in my life and I don't like the package that it came in. So I don't receive the purpose that it came for. I'm going to stop and breathe for a minute. Clap your hands and give God praise. all of the gifts that he gave you that you didn't know it was a gift when he gave it. Praise God for all the gifts that he gave you that you grumbled about when he gave it to you. You've got to remember, John wrote John.
- Okay, you know that. John, the disciple who Jesus loved, that's what he called himself. That's how he labeled himself. That's wild to me. Who are you? The one he loves. Not one of the one he loves, the one he loves. John did not write his gospel as the ministry of Jesus was happening. He wrote it somewhere around 50 years after the events transpired. Now there's a reason I'm telling you this. Sometimes I think we read these stories in the Bible like they're coming from the journal of one of the disciples. So we read a story like this and it's wonderful. There was a man who couldn't move, and he got up and he was healed, and it was amazing. And even the titles that are in the Bible, like over John chapter five, it says the healing at the pool. That's what this story is called in retrospect. But in real time, this was not a healing at the pool.
- In real time, This was a confrontation with the authorities. I'll explain that later. Y'all see what I'm doing? I'm gonna say it now, I'm gonna explain it later. Jesus, a lot of times, as he was doing things in his ministry, would not explain it to his disciples. He would just do it. And as he would do it, they might think about it, boy, that was a really bad move. I mean, Jesus should have waited until Tuesday to heal this guy.
- Did you see it in the text? It said he healed him on a bad day. Now let me ask you a question. If you haven't walked for 38 years and you have the opportunity to walk, is it ever a bad time to do a good thing for somebody? And yet that's what the religious leaders said. They said he should have done it on a different day. And Jesus knew that. But when John is writing the gospel, He's not writing it later that night. He's not taking what he saw happen. John's gospel is a little different because Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are all written somewhat differently. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called synoptic gospels. They mean sea width. They kind of use the same source material. They refer to the same events and they just take them from different angles. John's gospel is wild.
- He just shows you stuff from bonus footage from the cutting room that none of the other disciples showed you. Maybe it was the special way he felt about his relationship with Jesus, that he includes things that the others don't. This miracle is only included in John's Gospel. That's the first thing I wanted to tell you. But the second thing I wanted to tell you is that it was included in John's Gospel after decades have passed, which means that sometimes it is better to evaluate your situation later. If you look at it in the moment, all you can see is, man, this is a lot of trouble Jesus is about to get in. Man, Jesus really is wasting time.
- I mean, imagine this. They're setting out to go to the festival. They're on their way. The Bible doesn't mention which of the three festivals, but it's one of the major ones. And they get to Jerusalem, and Jesus stops by this porch where, look at verse 3, these kinds of people are lying. The blind, the lame, the paralyzed. Please circle those three words, Justin, if you can. Verse 3. The blind, the lame, the paralyzed. The blind, the lame, the paralyzed. Jesus is stopping by to see somebody. He is the most important figure in human history.

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- He is the centerpiece of civilization. He is the Rose of Sharon, the Lily of the Valley, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Alpha and the Omega, the Master and the Maker of the universe, the King of Kings, the Lord of Lords, the Shepherd of the Lost, the one that the angels worship 24 seven around the throne, and he stops by to see about somebody that doesn't even have a name. Of course, he has a name, but his name has been replaced By his label. So we don't know who he is. Or what he can do. The only thing we know about him. Is that for 38 years. Watch this. He has not been able to move. And there are some of you listening to me preach today. Who have been labeled so long. by what you can't do, that you forgot your name. You have been labeled so long by what you don't have that you have forgotten your true nature. You have been labeled so long by what life didn't give you that you have forgotten your blessings. But the devil is a liar. I said the devil is a liar. I'll preach this another 10 weeks if I need to.
- He's telling the same lies over and over and over and over again. And what he wants to get you to do if he's effective at his job and the devil is really sneaky at him. Because he will try to convince you that your issue is you. But I found out that God is masterful at using situations that we would not wish to accomplish purposes for which we don't even know to pray. I'll give you an example. I can tell I'm kind of overwhelming you with information today. About five is the number of grace, and Bethesda means house of mercy, synoptic gospels and all this.
- So let me just break it down like this. When Holly gives gifts at our house, I will say that she is the best gift giver that I have ever known in my life. I'll also say she is the greatest gift that I have ever known in my life. Other than you, Lord. And I'll also say that I might even say that just so you'll clap for it. I really feel that way. But she used to do something when she would get gifts that was so disappointing. And we finally got her to stop a few years ago. Let me tell you what she was doing. I don't know if she was doing this intentionally, I don't know if it was just something she did out of efficiency, I don't know. What she would do? Okay, I already told you, she gives great gifts. But let's say Christmas will roll around, right? And there's several gifts for each person that Holly bought, right? She wrapped something beautiful and all that and take the wrap and take her off. And then there would be a box that she would put the gift in. But the box was absolutely no indication of the value of the gift. And here's what I mean by that. She would take the box from the nicest store you can imagine. Like picture your favorite store, your favorite brand, right? Like the fanciest, nicest box So you peel the paper back and you go, oh yeah. Yeah, this is going to be good. This is about to be good. And then when you would take the lid off the box, she had put the worst gifts.
- The box would say Nordstrom, and the gift would say Dollar Tree. And you'd be looking at the gift, I don't know, what is this? And she would put the worst gift In the best box. God does just the opposite. I'm sorry Holly. But this is one time where you are nothing like God. Because God. Will take the worst box. The worst situation. The worst hell you've ever been through. The worst insult. The worst persecution. God will hand you a box. And the box will be so beat up. And the box will look so small. And the box will look like it's been rained on. And the box will look like the dog chewed it up. And the box will look like betrayal. And the box will look like, God, I don't know what to do. And the box will look like there's no way out of this. But if you open that box and trust in God, not the box. I said trust God, not the box. Because my God... Is out the box. And God will put the best stuff. Can I preach like I'm in St. Paul, Minnesota.

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- **On a Tuesday night. God will take the worst box. And put the best gift. And I'm saying this in case life dropped off a box on your doorstep. And it doesn't look like what you prayed for. And it doesn't make any sense with what you feel called to. And it doesn't line up with your expectations. But open that box. The sky has a way of putting the best blessings in the ugliest boxes.**
- So the box doesn't have to be beautiful for the gift to be from him. High five somebody. Say open the box. Open the box. Open the box. God can do what he wants to. Open the box. Let God out the box. You got your little puny way of labeling what God can do and who God can do it through. But open the box.
- You're not even in church today. But God can meet you in the kitchen. Open the box. Put down the fork and the knife. Lift your hands and give God praise. God is at the box. God is at the box. Jesus said to the man. I know this situation isn't what you would have chosen. And I know this is not the place you want to be. But your label is lying. I wish I could draw this, but I didn't bring my screen out this weekend. I'm not gonna slow down the momentum of this message for technology. But just imagine, boop, boop, boop. I've just seen it. And imagine one of the loops says you can't do that. That's the best a lot, right but When everything that's around you looks like sickness long enough You begin to believe the box When everything that your eyes when everything that your emotions feel tell you Well, I guess alcoholism is just a genetic thing and there's no amount of therapy or recovery that can break those chains off of you. And there's not even enough prayers. Because did you pray about this last year? 38 years, man, that's a long, that's a long time to circle the situation. It brings me all the way back to the first story I shared in this series when the Israelites wandered in the same loop for 40 years. You know technically it was 38 years, 38.
- Because one year they spent getting out of Egypt, one year they spent getting into the promised land, those years aren't counted in the 40, it's 38 years. Whoa. And people will always tell the story of your first year and your last year, but they don't see the 38 years. Literally. So please do this, when you're sharing your testimony with somebody, be honest with them. Amen. Don't make your label a lie. Don't tell them, and the Lord just set me free from anxiety. I had somebody tell me that one time. And the Lord set me free from anxiety. Now I said, I believe that he does that, and I believe that he did that for you, and I praise him for it.
- **But what exactly do you mean he set you free from anxiety? Because when they said it, they said, the Lord set me free from anxiety in 1984. So what I wanted to ask was, and since then? What did you do, swallow the key? The Lord set you free? Friend, did you swallow the key? Or the Lord swallowed the key? Like, what happened? And as they began to share in more detail, it was actually more powerful to hear about their process than it was to hear about their product. Because what they meant by it, when they labeled it, the Lord set me free, was they meant, he began to show me ways to deal with it that were not harmful and destructive and sinful.**
- **And so instead of just going to porn every time I felt anxious, instead of just going to drugs every time I felt anxious, instead of just going to self-mutilation every time I felt anxious, instead of just waiting up all night, I learned some, they didn't say this, but they basically said, I learned some loops. I learned some new loops, and I quit just going around and around spiraling, and I found out how to interrupt my word with the word of God.**

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- Isn't that more powerful? Come on, isn't that more powerful to hear that than to hear somebody say, well the Lord just set me free and then they're like well I guess he doesn't love me. He must not love me like that or I must be doing something wrong. Maybe they're just not describing freedom fully. To know that freedom involves a journey of 38 years. This is powerful man. I even feel it as I'm preaching right now. I feel the Lord telling me to slow down and tell you what it really means that this man got up and walked. It doesn't say that he knew where to go.
- It doesn't say that his life is problem free. In fact, Jesus finds him a few verses later and tells him stop sinning or something worse is gonna happen. He's not even finished with his issue yet. But the powerful thing about Jesus, when I get to the part of my sermon where I know this is the word of the Lord, because there is a moment in the sermon where the word of the Lord comes. It's all the word of the Lord. This whole passage is the word of the Lord. But there is a moment where the word of the Lord comes to you And what happens at that moment is your condition is interrupted by a command. So it's like this.
- The man's condition is sick, paralyzed, and stuck on the porch. The command of Jesus makes no sense in the face of that condition. Get up, take your mat, and walk. Sometimes God will give you a command that makes no sense in the face of your condition. Sometimes God will tell you as a teenager, I don't care what all your friends do. I don't care what they say you're weird about. I don't care what they call you for. You be pure. I don't care what a thousand people do over here. A thousand people, just like your parents used to say. I don't care if everybody else is doing it. If everybody else was jumping off a bridge and you'd be like, shut up.
- But see, I don't say when everybody else was jumping off a bridge. I just want to tell you what Jesus did. Everybody else didn't die on the cross for you. Everybody else can't rise from the grave. Everybody else ain't going to be there for you in the midnight hour. Everybody else can make you, make you, call you, choose you, gift you. Don't let them label you. Don't even let them tell you what kind of kid you need to be to be cool. I'm not concerned with you being cool. I'm concerned with you being called.
- **I'm concerned with a God who can raise you up and make your name great. And I'm concerned with a God whose name is greater than any other name. And that's what I'm concerned about in this season of my life. Not what they label me. I don't care what they say about me. I don't care what they say about my preaching. I care when I close this Bible today. Did I say the word of the Lord? Did I speak the word of the Lord? Did I say what God gave me to say? The best I could say it with a stammering tongue and a limited vocabulary and a Moncks Corner, South Carolina accent.**
- Did I say the word of the Lord? Not how somebody else said it. Not how I should say it. Not how I would say it if I was smart. Did I say it to the limit of my IQ? Did I speak the words of God? When the word of the Lord came to this man, it was so personal. The Bible says something that I think you need to see before you hear what Jesus said to him. I want to show you something in John chapter 5 verse 5. This is the part that made me cry when it says, When Jesus saw him. Excuse me, that's verse 6. That's verse 6. When Jesus saw him. Go back to verse 5 though. One was lying there. Now, lying is not his name. It's his label. That's the condition he was in. And he was lying on a mat. Mat was not his name. Could have been. It is a name, but it's not his name. It's where it is. Not who it is. I'm going to preach this, Lord. I am going to preach this just like you showed me. Because it was so beautiful how the Lord showed me in verse six. The key to all of this is when Jesus saw him.

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- Just encircle the word him. Now contrast that. When Jesus walked by, there's a blind person. There's a person who can't move. There's another person. I'm not sure of their condition. There's somebody who's only been at the pool two weeks. 38 years. I'm speaking to somebody today. This is not your first day in this situation. This is not your first frustration. That's all right. Because the Bible says that Jesus saw him. I still got to show you what I mean. It says that Jesus saw him lying there. Now, if you fast forward, when the man gets up, the religious leaders see the man lying. They label him differently. They label him according to his condition and they label him according to their expectation. The Sabbath was supposed to be a day of no work, but they see him carrying a bag.
- The Sabbath was not a day where you can't make up your bed. The Sabbath was a day where you couldn't do commerce in the city, but they twisted. They have labeled it. Their label has become a lie. Did you know that religion will always try to label something that the Lord gave you? And instead of using it to lift a burden, it will create one? So you begin to see God as the person who's perpetually disappointed in you. God is not disappointed in you. How can He be disappointed in what He appointed? If He called you, that means He knew you would be in this situation before you were in this situation. You think you can surprise God? You think God's like, I wish I would have done a scouting report on them? You think God is somehow mesmerized by your weakness? Now people are. People are very different. The religious leaders in verse 10, they have their focus somewhere completely different. The Bible says that the Jewish leaders said to the man who had been healed, it is the Sabbath.
- The law forbids you to carry your mat. Hold on, I'm confused. They are looking at a man and they are talking about a mat. How can they only see the mat and not the man? No, no, no. I'm honestly asking, how can they see a man who has never walked before? If he's 38 years old, maybe he did walk a little while before those 38 years. We don't know. But for almost 40 years, he hasn't been able to walk. And he's walking. And they walk up to him and say, hey, you can't do that. And he's like, I know. I didn't think I could either, but I met a man! And he walked by me! And he stepped for me! And he talked to me! And he told me to get up and take it up! And what? And I'm walking in the power of his word! And I'm walking in the potential of a brighter tomorrow! And I'm living in the light of a new day! I'm just speculating. I think this man started singing at this point.
- I think he started singing, Look at what the Lord has done. I'm never going back to the way I was. That's why I got my mat. Cause I'm not going back. Say it, not going back. Say it, not going back. Get on my spot. Cause I'm, cause I'm, take my mat cause I'm, All right, we need to work on y'all's rhythm. My man is walking. And you're talking about a man? You're talking about practice? You're talking about a man? I'm a man. You can't see the man for the man. And it makes me wonder, what's your man that I can't see that's got too magnifying mind? This man has to be singing. Carrying a mat. He's not going back to the place he's been for 38 years that isn't working anymore. Man, he's happy too. He's happy carrying that mat. Because he's holding something that's been holding him his whole life. Boy, he's happy. He turns around. Goodbye yesterday. Five covered colonnades. Goodbye colonnades. Y'all missed it.

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- I'm living in the light of a new day. I won't waste another minute on my old ways. Praise the Lord. He's not even saved yet. Not even born again. He doesn't even know it's Jesus yet. He doesn't find that out. To later. See sometimes God does it now. But you praise him later. Because you didn't even know. He was doing it. That's the time. I feel God saying. Praise me now. My man is walking! Talking about, I'm dancing on the- I'm carrying the mat that I once laid on Carrying the mat that I once laid on Carrying the mat that I once laid on Carrying the mat that I mean this night ain't heavy!
- I'm not going to stand still. And here's the fair scene. Carryin' the mat that I want. You can't do that, no, you're doin' it wrong. Just carryin' the mat that I want. You can't do that, no, you're doin' it wrong. Carryin' the mat where I used to lay. You can't do that, cause this is the wrong day. act in church.
- What kind of church is this? What kind of church is this? This is the house of mercy. This is the place for grace. This is the place where I am not what I did. I Yes! I! Can't do that, can't do that, there's just no way Can't do that, I listen to what that man say I'm making this up on the cuff, the cuff. I don't know if it's any good. But they said, the law says you can't. The man said, the word says. Otherwise, somebody shout otherwise. Otherwise.
- **And the hand of the Lord was upon me. And he took me down to the valley. And the valley was full of bones. And they were very dry. And the bones said death. And the bones said over. But the word said otherwise. And God said prophesy to the bones. Prophesy to the marriage. Prophesy to the bankruptcy. Prophesy to the oppressor. I prophesy to the blindness, prophesy to the lameness, I prophesy to your legs, I prophesy to your righteousness in Christ, I prophesy there is a better word than condemnation. They said die, but God said live, live, live. I'm dancing on the grass! I'm dancing on the grass! I'm dancing on the grass! You can't do that! You can't dance in church! You can't be happy! You're going through hell! Good stuff. I might be in it! But it is not in me. I'm not my match. I'm not my friend. I'm not my bad decision. I'm not my safe. I'm not the abuse. I'm not my past. I'm dancing on the grave! I'm dancing on the grave! I'm dancing! You can't dance! You gotta move! You'll be your church dance! Get up on your feet and praise the Lord! You can't do that. You can't dance on a grave. You can't get beauty for ashes. You can't be grateful when you've still got a kid who's far away from God. You can't keep worshiping through tears. You can't keep trusting that God is good through cancer. You can't do that. But the word says otherwise. I'll see y'all soon! Keep dancing! Keep dancing!**

Part 2: eGroup study questions

“Labels, Identity, and “Label It Later” - “Your label is lying”: the man is unnamed and known only by condition; many forget their true name by focusing on what they lack or cannot do. “Don’t label it until later”: avoid premature judgments about seasons or people. Illustration from a songwriting session: make it now, name it later. Early labels can constrain what something is meant to become.”

How does this speak to you today?

“On a Tuesday night. God will take the worst box. And put the best gift. And I'm saying this in case life dropped off a box on your doorstep. And it doesn't look like what you prayed for. And it doesn't make any sense with what you feel called to. And it doesn't line up with your expectations. But open that box. The spirit has a way of putting the best blessings in the ugliest boxes.”

How have you seen this revealed in your own life?

- “But what exactly do you mean he set you free from anxiety? Because when they said it, they said, the Lord set me free from anxiety in 1984.
- Like, what happened?
- And as they began to share in more detail, it was actually more powerful to hear about their process - Because what they meant by it, when they labeled it, the Lord set me free, was they meant – he began to show me ways to deal with it that were not harmful and destructive and sinful.
- And so instead of just going to porn every time I felt anxious, instead of just going to drugs every time I felt anxious, instead of just going to self-mutilation every time I felt anxious, instead of just waiting up all night, I learned some loops.
- I learned some new loops, and I quit just going around and around spiraling, and I found out how to interrupt my word with the word of God.”

Next Steps / Actions:

- Re-center on Scripture overanxious thoughts; intentionally interrupt negative loops with God's word.
- Withhold premature labels on your season or self; “make it now and name it later.”
- “Open the box” - look for God's gift within hard circumstances; trust the Giver over appearances.
- Obey the personal command God highlights (e.g., “Get up...walk”) even when it contradicts your condition.
- Carry your “mat” as a testimony that you are not going back
- Place Jesus' name over your family, decisions, and daily life; choose calling over conformity.

Closing prayer: “And the hand of the Lord was upon me. And he took me down to the valley. And the valley was full of bones. And they were very dry. And the bones said death. And the bones said over. But the word said otherwise. And God said prophesy to the bones. Prophesy to the marriage. I prophesy to your righteousness in Christ, I prophesy there is a better word than condemnation. You're going through hell! Good stuff might be in it! But it is not in me. I'm not my bad decision. I'm not the abuse. I'm not my past. I'm dancing on the grave! You can't dance on a grave. You can't get beauty for ashes. You can't be grateful when you've still got a kid who's far away from God. You can't keep worshiping through tears. You can't keep trusting that God is good through cancer. You can't do that. But the word says otherwise. Keep dancing!

Back up slides

In August 2017, Pastor Furtick led a study of David called “Bars and Battles.” I think Pastor Furtick’s sermon this weekend “Not as Long as My Song” builds of this prior series. On August 13, 2017, Pastor Furtick said this while unpacking Psalm 142 and 1 Sam 22 – where Saul is trying to kill David: “We have to learn to trust God and keep our hand on the harp. This means that the weapons of our warfare are not carnal (fleshy or bodily), they are mighty through God for the pulling down of strong-holds – so it might not look like much – but our worship is our weapon. If you humble yourself under the mighty hand of God, and trust him – no matter what is coming at your head, no matter what is coming at your life – if you trust him and duck – and trust him and pray – the hand of God is on your life. Therefore, if you can win the battle here (your heart) – if you can get down low enough to say God I need you – and realize that the real battle is not with Saul – it is with self. Before David become a king and before God calls us to do what we are supposed to do, we need to learn to do the hardest thing to do – to depend. The easiest thing for David to do was to fight – this came naturally to him – the hardest thing for David to do was to be humble and depend – where David has to depend on the hand of God for the spear to miss him.” Kev note: Dang that is good!



July 18 – Daily Devotional:

“There is nothing miraculous about the things that we can explain. We command what we are able to explain, consequently it is natural to seek to explain. It is not natural to obey; nor is necessarily sinful to disobey. If one man says to another – You must and you shall, he brakes the human spirit and unfits it for God. Many a soul begins to come to God when he flings off being religious, because, there is only one master of the human heart, and that is not religion but Jesus Christ. But woe be to me if when I see Him I say – I will not. He will never insist that I do, but I have begun to sign the death warrant of the Son of God in my soul. When I stand face to face with Jesus Chris and say – I will not, **He will never insist, but I am backing away form the re-creating power of His redemption.**



Dr. Timothy Keller

total freedom = lack of meaning and significance

What if we found the reason for life? Why we were created? Why we were designed? And conformed to that and then honored that?

If there is a design, there is a designer. And if there is a designer, the logos has come. Not some abstract philosophical principle. **It is a person.**

The designer has punched a hole into the world and he has descended. And you were built not to just honor some philosophical principle. But you were built to know and love this divine person. When you know him and when you serve him and you find out what he built you for, when you comply with it and submit yourself to him, you find out who you are. And you are now able to reach your potential.

Have a good navigational beacon in 2022:

“Life and Leadership at the Highest” A quote from an unknown author and requoted by Pastor Tim Keller in his sermon “This is Jesus” part 4 “Two Grieving Sisters Encounter Jesus” at Oxford University in 2016: “The accounts of Him in the New Testament speak for themselves – He combines qualities that no one has ever seen – despite his incredible claims, we never see him pompous, offended, or standing on his own dignity. Despite being absolutely approachable to the weakest and most broken people, he is completely fearless before the powerful and the corrupt. Despite being weary and lonely, we find him remarkably human - filled with joy, fear, love, and anger. Yet, we never see him Moody. We never see him being inconsistent. We never see Him strong when He should be tender and we never see Him tender when He should be strong. Most interesting of all – Of all his encounters with people - we are continuously surprised – shocking us - but never disappointing us – it is difficult for us to imagine words that Jesus ought to have said or deeds that he ought to have done. Nothing he has done ever falls short - in fact He is always surprising us - because He is incomparably better than what we could imagine for ourselves. Why? These are the surprises of perfection – He has tenderness without weakness – He has strength without harshness – humility without the slightest lack of confidence – unhesitating authority without the slightest sense of self-absorption – Holy and unbending convictions without the slightest lack of approachability – power without insensitivity – passion without prejudice – there is never a false step – there’s never a jarring no – this is life at the highest.”