



Lesson 10: The God Who Transcends Boxes

1. When my son was learning to talk, one of the few words he liked to say was, “Stuck!” He’d say it when he was in his high chair, he’d say it when he was in his car seat. He’d look at his confined surroundings, maybe tug on the straps, then mournfully look at me and protest: “Stuck!”

Of course in those scenarios, he had good reason to be stuck—those buckles were to help keep him safe!

In Episode 10 of *Story Encounters: The Chosen*, we meet several kinds of people who were stuck, and we can read about them in Luke 5:18-26.

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One day Jesus was teaching, and Pharisees and teachers of the law were sitting there. They had come from every village of Galilee and from Judea and Jerusalem. And the power of the Lord was with Jesus to heal the sick. Some men came carrying a paralyzed man on a mat and tried to take him into the house to lay him before Jesus. When they could not find a way to do this because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and lowered him on his mat through the tiles into the middle of the crowd, right in front of Jesus. When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.”

The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? Who can forgive sins but God alone?”

Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home.” Immediately he stood up in front of them, took what he had been lying on and went home praising God.”

LUKE 5:18-25, NIV.

What people in this story do you perceive as “stuck”?

Answer:

2. One obvious answer is the paralytic.

Scan the code on the right to watch a video.



Jesus saw the man as stuck both physically AND spiritually. It was a common belief held by Jews at the time that physical disease and ailments were the result of sin and an evidence of God’s judgment against that sin (See John 9:2). Jesus understood what was going on deep within his heart.

One author puts it this way:

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The palsied man was entirely helpless, and, seeing no prospect of aid from any quarter, he had sunk into despair. Then he heard of the wonderful works of Jesus. He was told that others as sinful and helpless as he had been healed; even lepers had been cleansed. And the friends who reported these things encouraged him to believe that he too might be cured if he could be carried to Jesus. But his hope fell when he remembered how the disease had been brought upon him. He feared that the pure Physician would not tolerate him in His presence.

Yet it was not physical restoration he desired so much as relief from the burden of sin. If he could see Jesus, and receive the assurance of forgiveness and peace with Heaven, he would be content to live or die, according to God's will. The cry of the dying man was, Oh that I might come into His presence! There was no time to lose; already his wasted flesh was showing signs of decay. He besought his friends to carry him on his bed to Jesus, and this they gladly undertook to do."

— ELLEN WHITE, DESIRE OF AGES, P. 267.

3. When the paralytic met Jesus, He met the One who had been calling out to his heart all his life—the God of heaven who had been wooing him from the moment he was born, the very One who knew him even while he was in his mother's womb.

Scan the code on the right to watch a video.



Face to face, Jesus healed his paralyzed limbs and his paralyzed soul, declaring him forgiven and commanding him to take up his bed and walk. He was stuck no longer and with tears of joy, the man walked out carrying his bed.

The story concludes in verse 26:

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Everyone was amazed and gave praise to God. They were filled with awe and said, "We have seen remarkable things today."

LUKE 5:26, NIV.

4. Everyone, that is, except another group who was stuck: the Pharisees.

Why do you think the Pharisees were jealous and afraid?

Answer:

5. The Pharisees knew Jesus had not attended any of their schools and yet He surpassed them in power and knowledge. The unassuming, genuine way Jesus taught and cared for the people captivated the attention of the multitudes, and the Pharisees were afraid of what His trajectory might do to their political and religious power. Their jealousy blinded them to the fact that the Son of God was indeed among them.

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There are two concepts that Nicodemus referred to. Those concepts are based on two verses:

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Thus says the LORD: “Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls...”

JEREMIAH 6:16, NKJV.

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“Behold, I will do a new thing, Now it shall spring forth; Shall you not know it? I will even make a road in the wilderness And rivers in the desert.”

ISAIAH 43:19, NKJV.

How do you reconcile these two ideas?

Answer:

6. In the time of Jesus, and even today, students of the Bible can twist Scriptures to fit their own preconceptions of who God is. People may even use select verses to push a specific agenda, rather than studying it to uncover what God is truly saying.

Why do you think the Pharisees preferred to limit God to their preconceived box where they were stuck? [check all that apply]

- ☐ They could pride themselves in knowing God.
- ☐ It's safer. Having a predictable God leads to a predictable life with less surprises.
- ☐ A God in a box is easier to obey.
- ☐ They were too lazy to keep searching for more truth.
- ☐ They wouldn't need to grow in knowledge and faith

☐ Other:

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We can also be in danger of thinking we know all there is to know about God and His truth, and end up closing our eyes and heart from anything new God wants to reveal to us. “We are not safe when we take a position that we will not accept anything else than that upon which we have settled as truth.”

— REVIEW AND HERALD, JUNE 18, 1889, ELLEN G. WHITE

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Luke 7:17 reads, “If anyone is willing to do His will, he will know whether the teaching is of God or whether I speak on My own accord and by My own authority.” Notice the order there—if you’re willing you will know. What Jesus is saying is that surrender proceeds seeing. Surrender first and the perception follows. Willingness precedes wisdom. Proverbs 9:10 reads, “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is itself understanding.” Notice that there’s a posture that precedes perception. Just open the Bible and pray this simple prayer: “Father show me who you are and who I am. Make me willing to change and change me!”

— ADAPTED FROM DAVID ASSCHERICK, “CHURCH 101: HOW TO READ THE BIBLE AND HAVE DEVOTIONS” (SERMON).
[HTTPS://YOUTU.BE/ETMwuWB609E](https://youtu.be/ETMwuWB609E).

7. What are some things you can do to ensure you don’t limit God but rather freely allow Him to work in your life? [check all that apply]

- ☐ Always pray before reading the Scriptures.
- ☐ As you read the Bible, open your heart to see what God is revealing to you.
- ☐ Expect the unexpected, while remembering God’s Word lines up with His will.

- ☐ Focus on establishing a relationship with God rather than following a set of rules or traditions.
- ☐ Fully surrender to Him.
- ☐ Other:

By limiting their knowledge of God to what He had shown them in the past and refusing to be open to learning new things, the Pharisees missed out on the life-changing encounters right before them.

8. That brings us to our third and final group of stuck people in this story: the people surrounding Jesus. Composed of curious onlookers and even Jesus' disciples, they were still barriers to the paralytic finding Jesus. Even as they tried to listen to Jesus, the majority of the crowd were stuck in their unwillingness to help the paralytic, whether consciously or subconsciously. If it were not for his determined friends, the paralyzed man may have never encountered Jesus.

We, too, may look at others and write them off as less than us, or "not worthy" of our time and attention, simply because they are different from us. We may think of some people as simply out of God's reach—unsavable, unredeemable.

Thankfully, God loves and values all of His creation, and we are called to do the same.

“*I now realize how true it is that God does not show favoritism but accepts from every nation the one who fears him and does what is right.*”

ACTS 10:34-35, NIV.

We are all on different journeys, and our walk with Jesus doesn't look the same.

9. Which of these 3 groups of stuck people do you identify with the most? [pick one]
 - ☐ The paralytic who was stuck in despair.
 - ☐ The Pharisees who were stuck in their perception of God and how He works.
 - ☐ The crowd who were stuck in selfishness and insularity, blind or indifferent to the needs around them.

Just as Jesus healed the paralytic, God longs to heal you from your paralysis wherever you may be stuck. Whether we ourselves are stuck in a box, or we have placed God or others in a box, we serve a God who is bigger and better than our boxes! Ultimately He wants you to keep 'unboxing' Him, and as you grow in Him, He will fill the depths of your soul and heart now and for all eternity.

10. How would you like to respond today?

- ☐ I understand that God does not work in a box and there is no limit to the lengths He will go to reach me.
- ☐ I desire to allow God to work in me and through me in accordance with His perfect will.
- ☐ I desire to have a deeper relationship with God and talk to Him as I talk to a close friend.
- ☐ I want to remember that everyone around me is redeemable and want to help them realize God's amazing love for them.
- ☐ I would like to study the Bible more and learn how to have a faith that can move mountains.

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I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.”

EPHESIANS 3:16-21, NIV