

If so, then, 'Get up! Move from the zone of fear, denial, excuses, aloneness and eroding future and WALK!' Claim what is there: a choice of HIV testing, possible even in the privacy of one's own home; easy to take antiretroviral medication that prevents opportunistic infections and can suppress viral load to undetectable levels making it non-infectious and non-transmissible. It is very possible to reclaim a healthy future. It is our choice. None of us are truly alone and none need to be alone. Choose hope!

HIV testing is available, even in the privacy of home. Immediate treatment with effective medication is available and on-going support and accompaniment is available. Others who have walked the same path are available for accompaniment. All it takes is a decision: DO I WANT TO BE WELL?™

Jesus challenges him to do his own part and when he did, his health was restored and he was able to reclaim his independence and his very life in all its fullness. '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.'

We cannot respond adequately nor appropriately when we haven't internally come to terms with our situation. We need to be totally honest with ourselves and own the decision to change. No one else can do it for us. Then, we have to find the courage to act. If we are truly honest with ourselves, and truly WANT to find a solution to our problem, then the excuses and things that were holding us back fall away and we find renewed motivation and strength to do what needs to be done.

The man's answer is very telling. He does not answer Jesus's question directly. He responds by providing excuses. He has been passive in his desire for healing. When we live in denial, and our actions. We justify our state, we apportion blame on others, and we fail to do what is within our own power to deal with our problems. It becomes everyone else's problem but not mine.

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."

This question seems out of place in the circumstances. The man has been lying close to the place of healing for a long time – 38 years in fact. Surely that indicates his desire to be well and yet Jesus asks this very direct question: "Do you WANT to get well?"

For a long time, he asked him, "Do you want to get well?"

CHOOSE HOPE

JOHN 5:2-9

WEEK 2

TIME OF HOPE

A DEVOTIONAL RESOURCE WITH MESSAGES OF HOPE FOR EACH SUNDAY OF THIS MONTH

WEEK 1

CLAIM FOR YOURSELF ALL THAT IS NOW AVAILABLE TO GIVE YOU A HEALTHY AND FULFILLED LIFE

MATTHEW 12:9-13

For some people, the discovery of a positive diagnosis for HIV can be a devastating blow. An over-whelming fear may set in, and fear drives fiction. Fear of loss of health, of social standing, of one's employment, the loss of the support and love of one's family, loss of dignity and control and ultimately one's life. Some may feel as though their whole life has just been crushed. It is as though life has just crumpled and both the present and future have taken on a dimension of uselessness and despair.

The Scriptural story described in Matthew, Mark and Luke is very poignant. It is an encounter in the Synagogue between Jesus and a man 'with a withered hand.' Having a disability rendered the man an outcast in the society of that day. His social standing was non-existent, his ability to earn a living was compromised and, in effect, his present and his future were crushed. The by-standers, principally the Pharisees who were the religious leaders of the day, appeared to have neither understanding of nor empathy with the afflicted man. Their attention was on the actions of Jesus, whom they sought to challenge or undermine whatever he did for the man, because it might conflict with their religious sensitivities. Jesus calls the man out – not to make a spectacle of him - but to put him and his need centre place, a man of infinite value in God's eyes. Jesus is angry with their attitudes and He turns to the man and tells him: "Stretch out your hand." So he stretched it out and it was completely restored, just as sound as the other.

This is a beautiful story of acceptance and love for the person in need and severe chastisement of the bystanders. Many people living with HIV have experiences that resonate with this story yet it is a story of great hope.

Today, a positive HIV diagnosis no longer represents a devastating blow and there is no necessity for one's life to feel crushed and crumpled. Immediate effective treatment is available to suppress the virus to such undetectable levels that it cannot destroy the immune system and thus prevents the development of multiple debilitating opportunistic infections. Now rendered untransmissible, the virus cannot harm your loved ones, your future children and your life can be yours again.

Stretch out your hands, away from denial and fear and despair, and claim for yourself all that is now available to give you a healthy and fulfilled life once again.



Moses and Aaron faced Pharaoh together. It was not a welcomed meeting. It was not easy but they did not give up and the rest is history - the great liberation and exodus of the people of God.

When faced alone, stronger and together you can overcome challenges that look so much more daunting situation as yourself. You owe it to your loved ones and to yourself. Together you are knowledgeable family member or friend, your Pastor, or another person in the same situation today. Take someone trusted with you to help you – whether it is a

relationships are broken - especially when we are fearful of their reaction. The solution provided by God to Moses, way back in those early days, is one that still speaks to our to break important news to those closest to us, or those in authority over us, or when Moses was no different to anyone of us when we are faced with a difficult choice of having speak to the people for you and it will be as if he were your mouth..."

vs 14-16: "What about your brother, he can speak well. You shall speak to him and put taking on what was now his responsibility. God becomes angry with Moses and declares in to each excuse, the Lord answered him with a solution but Moses continued to avoid and tongue" vs 15: "O Lord, please send someone else to do it."

There is a very powerful story in Exodus 3: & 4: 1-17. It relates to the time when Moses encountered a burning bush in the desert and God spoke to him: "I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt, I have heard them crying out because of their slave drivers and I am concerned about their suffering." He then tells Moses he is sending him to Pharaoh to bring the Israelites out of Egypt. The two chapters contain a litany of excuses from Moses as to why he can't go: vs 1: "Who am I to go?" vs 3: "Suppose I go to them and they ask me..." vs 4: "What if they do not believe me or listen to me..." vs 10: "I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor now... I am slow of speech and tongue"

EXODUS 3: AND 4:1-17

HOW TO DISCLOSE YOUR STATUS

WEEK 3

WEEK 4

WE STAND FOR ONE-ANOTHER

MARK 2:1-12

One of the biggest challenges with the traditional perception of 'masculinity' is the lack of health-seeking behaviour of men: 'Real men' are those for whom health and safety are irrelevant. They equate health seeking behaviour with weakness, unmanliness and beneath their dignity. Poor health seeking behaviour has meant that, in many instances, men only access health facilities when their conditions have deteriorated. The challenge lies in encouraging men to feel empowered to take their health seriously and to seek medical attention early, even proactively – especially if they suspect HIV.

In the scriptural passage, friends take extreme measures to ensure their friend receives help.

The passage depicts a paralysed man brought to Jesus by his four friends. We are not told of the cause of his illness (genetic, disease based, self-inflicted through foolishness or by accident) nor even do we hear his voice. Yet his friends obviously care much and are not dissuaded by the obstructing crowds. They are determined and creative to ensure their friend reaches the source of potential healing.

"Since they could not get him to Jesus because of the crowd, they made an opening in the roof above Jesus and, after digging through it, lowered the mat the paralysed man was lying on. When Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic..."

What is particularly poignant (vs 5) is that Jesus reacted when he saw the faith of the friends.

The reactions to Jesus' response from the various representatives in the crowd differ from wondrous amazement to self-righteous judgement. Jesus 'knew in his spirit what they were thinking in their hearts' and He asks: 'Which is easier to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven', or to say, 'Get up. Take up your mat and walk?' and he said to them, "Why are you thinking these things?" It is not for us to judge, it is for us to respond practically and with compassion.

As Christians, let us consider how far we are prepared to go in support of a friend or person in need, who is HIV positive, to ensure they receive the necessary assistance. Are we prepared to go the extra mile, to accompany the person in need of care to the source of care? Are we prepared to actively challenge stigmatising attitudes to ensure no-one fails to access the services they need because of man-made barriers or fear or discrimination? Now, it is our opportunity to actively stand together and to never under-estimate the power of standing for another one another.

