

What an Amputee at Disneyland Taught Rev. Sam Rodriguez About Jesus' Power

"We will never get to the front!"

I tried to reassure my daughter while struggling to imagine how this ride could possibly be worth the wait unless Harrison Ford himself sat next to us in the Temple of Doom. We were at Disneyland and the beautiful Southern California day had become hot and sticky.

"Daddy, look!" my son said. "I see a way in with no line!"

My gaze followed his pointed finger to a nearby doorway.

"Buddy, the park reserves that entrance for people who are hurt or have physical conditions that make it hard for them to wait. People with disabilities or those with special needs use that entrance to get on the ride."

"Well, let's go through that door then because I have a special need. I can't wait any longer!" he said.

"I am not sure you have the kind of special need we are talking about," I told him. "That entrance helps people who really need help."

"Like him?" My son pointed at a young man in a wheelchair in the row behind us. I gently lowered my son's hand and smiled in the direction of the young man in question.

The man smiled and waved at my son. He looked like any other 20-something at the park except that his right leg ended at the knee.

"Well, yes," I said. "He probably could use that entrance."

"Then why doesn't he?" my son said.

"Excuse me, but I couldn't help but overhear you."

Mortified, I turned to see the young man in the wheelchair now almost directly behind us in the next row.

"Sorry," I said. "It's just that—"

"No problem," the man said and smiled. "I understand. It is fine, really. I just overheard your son and wanted to answer his question if I may. My name's Jeff, by the way."

We shook hands, and I introduced myself and my family.

"I do not use the handicapped entrance," Jeff said, "because I do not think of myself as handicapped. Sure, I don't have all of my right leg, but that does not keep me from living my life. I still go to work, play basketball with my friends, and go wherever I want."

"Like Disneyland," my son said.

"Exactly!" Jeff said. "You are only limited by the way you see your circumstances—not by the circumstances themselves."

Our Tendency to Dependency

Our encounter with Jeff made quite the impression that day—not just on my son but on me as well.

Presumably a military veteran, our new friend Jeff had lost half his leg and consequently had to adjust to life with this new limitation. While many people might be tempted to feel entitled to take shortcuts, this young man had taken the opposite direction. He refused to see himself as a victim of circumstances.

Our tendency for dependency is nothing new. Throughout His public ministry Christ encountered people who often felt trapped by their circumstances or limited by their wounds. He

frequently healed people suffering from physical, mental and spiritual maladies. And with His love, power and grace, Jesus exploded their excuses and ignited their initiative to live by faith, not by sight. His encounter with a man who could not walk—and who apparently did not recognize Jesus—is brief and dramatic but carries enormous implications and application for our lives today.

When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that he had been in that condition now a long time, He said to him, “Do you want to be healed?”

The sick man answered Him, “Sir, I have no one to put me into the pool when the water is stirred. But while I am coming, another steps down before me.”

Jesus said to him, “Rise, take up your bed and walk.” Immediately the man was healed, took up his bed, and walked (John 5:6-8a).

Can you relate to the kind of situation where you depend on someone else or something else for your life to change?

If we genuinely desire wellness—and I am talking about health and wholeness in all areas of our lives: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual—we must be willing to let go of the labels we have allowed to define us. We must move beyond the barriers we allow to limit us from day to day. We must choose to stop seeing ourselves as victims of our circumstances and instead start seeing our circumstances as subject to the authority and healing power of Jesus Christ! We are victors, not victims! {eo}

*This article is adapted from You Are Next: Destroy What Has Paralyzed You and Never Miss Your Moment Again (Charisma House, 2019) by **Rev. Samuel Rodriguez**. Rodriguez is the president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, the world’s largest Hispanic Christian*

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