

# HUMANIZE ME



Sometimes people say a public figure needs to be humanized. What could this mean except that there are things in this world that make us less than human? Jesus is on a mission to make you more human—the kind of human who looks more like the Son of God. This series tackles the forces that keep us from being just as human as God always intended us to be. And it leads us to discover that when we are humanized, we get to humanize others.



## HUMANIZE ME • Luke 13:10–17 • Tim McConnell • September 1, 2019

Okay, everybody bend and stretch and breathe and bend. How's your body? Are you friends or enemies this morning? It's terrible when our bodies are our enemies, isn't it? Some days our bodies just don't cooperate. Particularly as we age. I joke a little with the older side of the congregation whenever they mention a knee replacement or a new hip. Of course, I express compassion and pray for them, but I also say, "Great job! That brings us one step closer to a fully bionic church!" The Bionic Church. We can rebuild it. We have the technology. Better. Stronger. Faster. It is frustrating that our bodies have limits and wear out and put us through pain. Does God care about our bodies? I thought God was only worried about spiritual things. Yes, God cares about your body. God gave you your body. Being human as God made us to be isn't just spiritual. Being fully human means being body as well as a soul. God made the body. God became a body in Jesus. God cares about our bodies. Our relationship with our bodies is part of being humanized.

The human body has limits. Has anybody experienced that? We love all these superheroes in part because they break past the physical limits we live with every day. Like Leonardo DaVinci's Vitruvian Man (edited for family viewing), as marvelous as the body is, it sits in its limits, stuck in its circle. Some of these limits are good. God has made us to be present in just one place at a time. I have a hard enough time with that. So that's good. Our bodies slow us down in some healthy ways. Medieval theologians said it is a good thing our bodies slow us down because our hearts and spirits run after all kinds of evil things, and if we weren't contained in lumbering physical frames we would fall away from the Lord like Satan himself whom Jesus said He saw fall like lightning out of the presence of God. A lot of these limits, even limits that frustrate us at times, are for our good. But other things impinge on our bodies in ways that humiliate us and hurt us, and even make us feel less than human. What does Jesus think of that? What are we to think of that? What are we to do?

"On a Sabbath Jesus was teaching in one of the synagogues, and a woman was there who had been crippled by a spirit for eighteen years. She was bent over and could not straighten up at all" (Luke 13:10–11). It says a

"spirit" held her down. Could this be referring to demonic activity? Sure. We see that in the Bible. But it also just means there is a force at work beyond naming, a force that Luke the physician is unable to explain in medical terms, and it causes this woman great pain. This force is as opposed to Jesus as Jesus is opposed to it—the force is anti-Christ. It limits her in her body and she feels sometimes, maybe, less than fully human. Now we see Jesus move: "When Jesus saw her, he called her forward and said to her, 'Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.' Then he put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up and praised God" (Luke 13:12–13). What does Jesus do? Jesus sees, calls, speaks and heals. He sees her and calls her forward, then speaks to her in the middle of a religious service and even lays a hand on her to heal. I want you to understand how bold and courageous a move this was. It was just a little scandalous, I'd say, in a body accustomed to gathering divided by gender. Physical dividers separated men and women. Jesus saw, called, spoke, touched.

So the conflict begins. "Indignant because Jesus had healed on the Sabbath, the synagogue leader said to the people, 'There are six days for work. So come and be healed on those days, not on the Sabbath'" (Luke 13:14). Is he making a biblical argument? He thinks he is. The Sabbath should be defended. It's one of the big 10! But he has lost a few things along the way. He forgets the Sabbath, along with all of God's law, was given as a gift, not an inhuman terror. He turns to the crowd, did you see that? It's often easier to sway a mob than to deal with one another in relationship and dialogue. The man derides her, puts her down in front of the crowd without the courage to address her directly or the gumption to say something to Jesus; he diminishes her for coming for healing when the Sabbath services were on, as though the Sabbath were not meant for healing, as though the gathering of the people of God wasn't exactly where she should have come.

Well, here comes the heart of Jesus: "The Lord answered him, 'You hypocrites! Doesn't each of you on the Sabbath untie your ox or donkey from the stall and lead it out to give it water? Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for

eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?" (Luke 13:15–16).

Hypocrite. It means the ones who wear masks. You mask-wearing charlatans. Jesus is saying what appears to be happening isn't what's really happening; what appears to be the concern isn't actually the concern. Something pernicious is happening under the surface, and he's ready to root it out and bring it out into the open. Hypocrites. What is it? What's the lie? The lie is, everybody in the room knows that when it's the Sabbath the animals get taken care of. You're so worried about the letter of the law, but you untie your animals. You relieve the thirst of your animals. You help donkeys on the Sabbath. You help oxen on the Sabbath. Are you saying this woman is less than a donkey? That's not piety; that's dehumanization. But here is Jesus in righteous anger. "This woman is not an animal. This woman has suffered for eighteen years. She has been tied up in this for eighteen years. Less than a beast? No sir. She is a daughter of Abraham. She is made in the image of God. And today she is in the presence of the Lord and Savior. She has waited eighteen years; her healing does not wait one more day, her healing does not wait one more hour. Her healing is now! Right now. This Sabbath is for healing." Are you with Jesus? Don't you want to follow a man like that? I do. Jesus is the humanity the world needs. He sets her free, right there. His authority overrides whatever authority pressed her down and bent her over; His power sweeps away the power that bent her back and burdened her with pain. Jesus set her body free. Jesus cares about your body.

But even more, do you see the true layer of this conflict? The unmasked layer. It's about humanity in the eyes of Jesus. Jesus is a humanizing Savior. So, what about us? Where do you want to stand in that room. Are you with the synagogue leader or are you with Jesus? We are not dehumanizers; we are humanizers. Aren't we? At least we hope to be. I want to be a humanizer like Jesus. "Humanizer." It sounds a little like an appliance you might put in your bedroom at night. Got the humidifier, the atomizer, the humanizer. ... What's it like to follow a humanizing Savior like Jesus? He goes on, if you look down the page, to talk about how the Kingdom of God is like a tiny seed or a little bit of yeast in the dough. You might think some things are little things, tiny little things to do; but little things make a big difference. Like reaching out

to one unnamed, unknown suffering woman and ending her burden.

You ask, "So, Pastor Tim, is First Pres involved in any places that help people's bodies heal around the world?" I'm glad you asked! As a matter of fact we are! "When is First Pres going to get serious about acting like Jesus out there?" As soon as you're ready, friend. We are already there. See, this was a miraculous healing. Only God can do what only God can do. But only we can do what only we can do, and Jesus was very clear that His miraculous healings were meant to inspire us. In John 14, He says, "Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:12–13). What's He saying? He's saying, "The stuff I did, I did to inspire you to do like I did. If I made blind people see, if I made lame people walk, if I straightened spines and restored legs and healed illnesses, that's what you ought to do. What a great way to demonstrate My love and bear witness to My Kingdom and humanize."

Two stories. One is in Cuba. We support a church in Cuba and have for years and years. Pastor Lydia has been out there already, and I'm headed there early next year. But one of the things this church does is house a free clinic. The doctor is retired and the invitation came from Pastor Liudmila to serve in the church just as he was searching for an opportunity. After seeing patients, the doctor prescribes medicine from the church's pharmacy. Medicines—even items as simple as aspirin and vitamins—are very hard to come by in Cuba. Thanks to donations our First Pres sends, First Pres Havana is able to maintain a small store of medicines in their church building. The doctor can prescribe medications and, if the church has them, the patient carries them home right then.

In Mongolia, our partner Mongolia Campus Crusade for Christ has multiple branches of ministry. One of them is a medical ministry. I heard a story of a patient who was hit by a bus and suffered a broken pelvis. He was bed-ridden for three years while his body developed ulcers, chronic muscle contraction and widespread, constant pain. His situation

was hopeless and his spirits were low. He was succumbing to depression, and even said he wished he could die, mostly around the burden he was putting on his family. The medical ministry was able to get a gifted doctor to see him. After treating his ulcers and visiting him several times, with instructions for exercises and stretches, using a walker, the patient was able to stand up. He rejoined his family at dinner, able to sit in a chair at the table for the first time since the bus accident. Three years ago. The change in his body opened up his spirit to joy again. The doctor sat with him and talked to him about Jesus, and it was very easy for him to accept the Lord after he experienced love in such a practical way.

Those are just two stories from our own partners. The witness of the healing power of Jesus Christ ranges the globe. We could talk all day, all week, about the different interventions we make around the world and here in our city. And we could run a university on lectures about how the influence of Jesus changed health care and medicine. It is not an exaggeration at all to say that the compassion of Jesus toward the sick created a western civilization that values relieving the sick of their pain and disease. Karma doesn't produce such a system. Nihilistic Buddhism doesn't create such a system. Power politics and imperialism don't create compassion. The heart of Jesus did it. Are you with Him? Where do you want to stand in that room? Don't you want to follow a Lord like that?

Does Jesus care about your body? Yes. Yes he does. He took on a body Himself. He knows what it is to be set in limits and burdened by pains and interrupted by illness. He even knows the pain of the woman today. Jesus knows what it is to be bent over in pain. He was bent over beneath the wood of the cross. Jesus knows what it is to be tied down and bound. He was bound on a day He surely wished there was enough humanity in Jerusalem to unbind Him. But He stayed bound. He carried the cross. He even became paralyzed, pinned to the cross, for us. He became burdened and bound so that you and I could be named free. That's Jesus. And this Jesus, He would stand for each and every one of you just as He stood for that woman on that Sabbath day. Are you with Him?

**STUDY GUIDE**  
**HUMANIZE ME • "Strong Bodies"**  
**Luke 13:10–17**

**UP:** **Connect With God Through Spending Time in His Word**

Read aloud the passage for the week: Luke 13:10–17.

- 1) Reread verses 13–14. What do you think about the synagogue leader's response here? Trying to understand his perspective, where do you think he is coming from?
- 2) Many of the religious leaders of the day had developed additional rules regarding the Sabbath in order to make sure people didn't get anywhere close to breaking the 4th commandment. These weren't God's Law but were the "norms" of these religious groups. When have you seen the "religious norms" of Christians create similar sorts of problems?
- 3) The synagogue leader seems unphased by the miracle that Jesus just performed. He appears to miss God's work in his midst. Are there times when you are inclined to miss what God is doing in your life? How can you combat this?
- 4) By healing on the Sabbath, it seems that Jesus is communicating that a right relationship with God is a relationship of faith that brings healing and wholeness and peace. Do you have any stories of how God has done this in your life?
- 5) How does this passage challenge you to think differently about what it means to be human?

**OUT:** **Connect With the World Around Us  
(Join God in His Mission)**

CityServe is coming up October 5. This event provides a fantastic opportunity to join in the humanizing work of Jesus in our city. Take time [perhaps for the second time] to visit the CityServe website and consider how you might serve others—[firstprescos.org/cityserve](http://firstprescos.org/cityserve).

**IN:** **Connect with Each Other**

Think of the people in your life who are in need of healing (physical, spiritual, emotional...). Take time to pray for them.