

From Author Martin Bell in his book The Way of the Wolf in the story *Where are the Nine?*

One of them was frightened – that's all. He didn't understand what had happened, and it frightened him. So he looked for some place to hide. Jesus scared him.

A second was offended because he had not been required to do something difficult before he could be healed. It was all too easy. He had expected months, maybe even years, of prayer and fasting and washing and righteous living before he could be healed. But he had done none of this. His motto was "you get what you pay for." Jesus made it too easy.

The third had realized too late that he had not really wanted to be cleansed. He did not know what to do or how to live without his leprosy. He did not even know who he was as a person without his leprosy. Jesus had taken away his identity.

The fourth leper did not return to give thanks because in his great joy he simply forgot. He forgot. That's all. He was so happy that he forgot.

The fifth leper was unable to say thank you any more to anyone. His life of leprosy and begging had turned his heart hard and callous. He just doesn't didn't say thank you to anyone any more.

The sixth leper was a woman – a mother who had been separated from her family for eleven years because of the leprosy. She was hurrying to the priests so she could rejoin her husband and children. She did not return to give thanks because she was on her way home.

The seventh had doubts that Jesus had anything to do with the cleansing. He knew that healing had taken place, but why and how were his questions. Certainly he did not believe in hocus-pocus, magic, miracles – any of that. There was a perfectly reasonable and rational explanation of what had happened, and he wondered if it had anything to do with Jesus.

The eighth leper did not return precisely because he did believe that Jesus had healed him – that the Kingdom of God was here and the

Messiah had arrived. He didn't return because he was spreading the exciting, wonderful news about the Kingdom.

As for the ninth leper, we don't know, we just don't know, why he didn't return to say thank you.

Ten were cleansed and only one returned ... What shall I say now, that the real point is not that one returned but that ten were cleansed? You already know that. That condemnation is easier than investigation, that if we take time to investigate the reasons why people act as they do, we would find that they have to act the way they do and that such action in the light of the circumstances is quite understandable and totally forgivable and even completely reasonable and just as it should be? You already know that. What then shall I say? That it is good to give thanks? Yes. That it is understandable not to give thanks? Yes. That God does not heal people and then stand around just waiting for us to say thank you and then get angry and have his feelings hurt if we don't? Yes, that's true. Which is the same as saying: no, he certainly doesn't.

But what of the nine? They are on the way home, hiding in fear, refusing to believe, offended at what they call cheap grace, so happy they forgot, lost without their leprosy, unable to say thank you ever again, publishing the news of the Kingdom. Who knows where they are! The point is this: Jesus does. He knows where they are.

[excerpt from "Where Are the Nine?" In The Way of the Wolf: The Gospel in New Images, by Martin Bell, published in 1970]. You can find a copy of this book. [Official Site of Martin Bell and the Way of the Wolf](#)