

Empowered by the Holy Spirit

SESSION IN A SENTENCE: Peter and John offered a man who was lame something better than money—healing and salvation in Jesus.

BACKGROUND PASSAGE: Acts 3:1–4:31

A man was hired to work the overnight shift for a parcel company. In the early morning hours, he unloaded 18-wheelers full of packages. The location where he trained was outfitted with electric belts that would send the packages out of the trailer and up to the next belt to be sorted. Little did he realize how helpful that electric belt was. After training, he was transferred to his permanent location that was not outfitted with electric belts. Instead, he and his fellow workers had to haul the boxes out of the trailer by hand before passing them off to be sorted. Many days he longed to be back at the state-of-the-art training warehouse, where electric belts made the work so much easier.



When was a time you didn't realize how helpful something was until it was gone?

Group Time

Point 1: God's people have something better to offer the world (Acts 3:1-7).

¹ Now Peter and John were going up to the temple for the time of prayer at three in the afternoon.

² A man who was lame from birth was being carried there. He was placed each day at the temple gate called Beautiful, so that he could beg from those entering the temple. ³ When he saw Peter and John about to enter the temple, he asked for money. ⁴ Peter, along with John, looked straight at him and said, "Look at us." ⁵ So he turned to them, expecting to get something from them. ⁶ But Peter said, "I don't have silver or gold, but what I do have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!" ⁷ Then, taking him by the right hand he raised him up, and at once his feet and ankles became strong.

Imagine being this man, unable to walk from birth and forced to beg for money from those who walked by. Would you wonder if God were punishing you? Would you have any hope of improving your circumstances? Day after day, you would expect ridicule and pity and hope only for someone's generosity with silver and gold. But Peter and John encountered the man with something far better to give—healing in Jesus' name.



What are some ways the condition of the man who was lame compares with our sinful state apart from Jesus?

Now put yourself in the shoes of Peter and John and be encouraged by the power of Jesus working through His disciples. We probably should not expect to walk around town healing people, but we have other Spirit-empowered ways to minister to the world. And just like Peter and John, we are all called to minister to the world in the name of Jesus, watching Him do amazing things through us as we share His gospel with the world.



Why should we consider the gospel of Jesus a better gift than silver and gold, or even a healing?



Voices from Church History

"The Spirit-filled life is not a special, deluxe edition of Christianity. It is part and parcel of the total plan of God for His people."¹

—A. W. Tozer (1897-1963)

Point 2: God's people give glory and praise to Jesus (Acts 3:11-16).

¹¹ While he was holding on to Peter and John, all the people, utterly astonished, ran toward them in what is called Solomon's Colonnade. ¹² When Peter saw this, he addressed the people: "Fellow Israelites, why are you amazed at this? Why do you stare at us, as though we had made him walk by our own power or godliness?" ¹³ The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and denied before Pilate, though he had decided to release him. ¹⁴ You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer released to you. ¹⁵ You killed the source of life, whom God raised from the dead; we are witnesses of this. ¹⁶ By faith in his name, his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know. So the faith that comes through Jesus has given him this perfect health in front of all of you.

Peter and John were clear with the man who was lame that his healing came in Jesus' name. Here they made the same point with the gathering crowd. The disciples did not see themselves as special but as vessels through whom God was working. They had no power of their own but called upon the name of Jesus to heal a man, and the result was a powerful display of Jesus' authority on earth. Through faith in this Jesus, the man was healed. So Peter and John's point is clear—give glory to Jesus!



Why might we find it so difficult to give glory to Jesus for the works He accomplishes in our lives and through us?

God is not trying to make your life harder, more confusing, or more stressful. He didn't send Jesus, the Holy Spirit, or send you on His mission to add a burden to your life. Jesus is called the "source of life" (Acts 3:15) and the "Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9:6) for a reason. The burden we already have in our lives comes from sinning against God and rejecting His Son. This guilt shackles us and keeps us from being the human beings we were created to be. But Jesus came to set us free to be truly human as He is. So don't reject or deny Him; rather, have faith in His name, be healed from your sin, and praise Him.

It's _____ whose name we bear.

It's His _____ we are called to join.

All _____ to Him for our salvation and for the salvation of others!

Point 3: God's people call others to repentance so they can experience refreshing (Acts 3:17-20).

¹⁷ “And now, brothers and sisters, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your leaders also did. ¹⁸ In this way God fulfilled what he had predicted through all the prophets—that his Messiah would suffer. ¹⁹ Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out, ²⁰ that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus, who has been appointed for you as the Messiah.

The Jewish people in the temple, and their leaders, were guilty of the heinous, cosmic crime of putting the Son of God to death. Graciously, Peter categorized them as having acted in ignorance, but this did not let them off the hook. If they truly had understood God and His Word, they would have accepted and worshiped Jesus. Instead, they executed Him in unbelief. Therefore, they needed to repent to find forgiveness of sin—as do we all.



Why is ignorance not a valid excuse for sin?

The Jews had a faulty theology that led to faulty, guilty actions. A biblical theology helps us know God rightly so we can worship Him rightly and then tell others about Him rightly. But the people of this crowd had not recognized the Son of God in the flesh standing before them. And misunderstanding the plan of God and the person of His Son, they justified a rigged trial and an unjust killing. Yet through repentance and faith, this same Son would forgive, be with His followers through the Holy Spirit, give them rest and *refreshment*, and one day come for them again as their promised Messiah.

God Is Immanent: God is personable and _____ to those made in His _____, while remaining completely distinct and unique from all of His creation. God is not a distant deity (as imagined by the deist) who only sits on His heavenly throne with no interaction, but instead, He is a personal God who created people in His image to be in personal _____ with Him.

My Mission

Because we have experienced the miracle of our salvation from sin and new life in Jesus, we follow the example of the early Christians as we boldly and graciously proclaim the gospel and minister to those in need.

- **What steps will you take to focus your life on obeying and giving glory to Jesus Christ?**
- **In what ways can your group give what you have of resources and the gospel to those in need in your community?**
- **What opportunities are being laid before you by the Holy Spirit to present the gospel and point people to Jesus?**



Voices from Church History

“When we pray for the Spirit’s help ... we will simply fall down at the Lord’s feet in our weakness. There we will find the victory and power that comes from His love.”²

—Andrew Murray (1828-1917)

Notes

Daily Study

Day 1: Read Acts 3:1-10

The man who was lame was passed by over and over again for years. Perhaps every so often, someone would stop and hand him a few coins. Maybe someone would even pray for him as they passed by while going into the temple. However, his life was riddled with constant helplessness and shame.

Peter and John, walking in the Spirit, had a different set of lenses. They didn't pass by the man or flip him a coin; rather, they saw him as a man in need of healing. And fortunately, they knew where the healing would come from—the name of Jesus.

Of course, we know that we aren't guaranteed physical healing in this life. God may grant it, but even if not, our suffering is never wasted (Rom. 5:3-5). We certainly aren't guaranteed to be able to heal every person we encounter. But we can follow the lead of Peter and John—having eyes to see those who are hurting and pointing them to Jesus.



For whom in your life can you help meet physical needs while pointing them to eternal hope in Jesus?

Day 2: Read Acts 3:11-16

If we were in Peter and John's situation, the mediators of Jesus' awesome power, we might have been tempted to take credit for something as amazing as a miraculous healing. If we can't even give God credit for the small things, how much more might we be tempted to take credit for the big ones, especially the big ones that would make us look powerful or wise or even super-holy!

Peter and John show us that we need God Himself to work through us. Our salvation is initiated by the Father sending the Son, the Son dying and rising from the dead, and the Spirit indwelling us. Our lives are testimonies of grace, not pillars of our greatness. May our lives, in the things we say and the things we do, help people be astonished by God, not by what we've done.



In what ways do you take credit for God's grace in your life? How will you change that?

Day 3: Read Acts 3:17-26

As we discussed in the session, those who knew the Bible the best were often those who overlooked its most important truths. Peter reminded the people here that in Deuteronomy 18, Moses promised to send another prophet like him. We know that this prophet was Jesus—a true and better prophet whose preaching would determine whether or not His hearers would be included in the people of God. The Jews, he reasoned, should know Deuteronomy 18 and therefore believe what Moses said about Jesus.

As Christians, we are sometimes the most immune to the gospel's potency. We've heard it so many times that it seems like white noise. When God speaks to us, we simply aren't prepared to listen to Him. May we of all people know the Scriptures well so that we might be able to listen to the Holy Spirit and respond to His commands.



What are some ways you might feel like the gospel has become white noise to you?

Day 4: Read Acts 4:1-22

Peter and John ruffled many feathers as they preached Christ and did miracles in Jesus' name by the Spirit's power. This is not surprising, of course, given that Jesus promised His disciples would be persecuted (Matt. 5:11-12). When the leaders saw Peter and John's faith and boldness, they saw something different. These weren't petty criminals; they were unique men sent by God.

Though the authorities might have rejected Jesus as their Messiah, they could not accuse Peter and John of any wrongdoing. They threatened Peter and John to knock off the evangelism stuff, but this would not sway the disciples. They expected persecution—as we should—but they did not allow persecution to squash their desire to fulfill their mission.

In places all over the world today, there are varying levels of persecution and cultural pressure against the church. But take heart, God is with us and will never leave us.



Are you prone to be timid in sharing your faith? Why or why not?

Day 5: Read Acts 4:23-31

By God's grace, the believers didn't back away from suffering and persecution. They acknowledged its presence but weren't crippled by its reality. They remembered not only the words of Jesus and Psalm 2, but they reflected on the fact that Jesus' crucifixion was carried about by the kings of earth. This was routine Christianity for them.

As we face trials and tribulations that often are nowhere near the level that our brothers and sisters in the Book of Acts faced, or the larger world, for that matter, we need to be reminded that this is part and parcel of biblical Christianity. We are not the rulers of this world—not yet (Rev. 5). Rather, we are exiles and sojourners on our way home (1 Pet. 2:11). So let us hold loosely to our lives here on earth and live for the kingdom of God under King Jesus that will one day conquer all.



What are some ways you try to avoid suffering or persecution for Christ that you may need to face with boldness, humility, and faith?

Encourage One Another

Join together with 2-4 people from your group, or with your family, sometime during the week to reflect on the session and to share how God is working and you are responding.

Share your thoughts and reflections on the truths from Scripture in this session:

- God's people have something better to offer the world (Acts 3:1-7).
- God's people give glory and praise to Jesus (Acts 3:11-16).
- God's people call others to repentance so they can experience refreshing (Acts 3:17-20).



How have you responded to these truths from Scripture?



When have you seen non-Christians' circumstances make them more open to hear the gospel?



Why should we see our experience of repentance as a preview of the future new creation?

Notes

UNIT 28

SESSION 1

1. J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit*, 2nd ed. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2020) [eBook].
2. Martin Luther, quoted in *The Oxford Handbook of Martin Luther's Theology*, eds. Robert Kolb, Irene Dingle, and Lubomír Batka (OUP Oxford, 2014) [eBook].
3. St. Basil the Great, *On the Holy Spirit*, trans. David Anderson (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), 97.

SESSION 2

1. A. W. Tozer, *How to Be Filled with the Holy Spirit, in Life in the Spirit* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2009), 24.
2. Andrew Murray, in *Andrew Murray On Prayer* (Whitaker House, 1998) [eBook].

CHRISTMAS SESSION

1. See Keiki Hendrix, "Christmas Classics: 'The Man and the Birds' by Paul Harvey," *Everyday Christian*, December 17, 2010, www.everydaychristian.com/blogs/post/christmas_classics_the_man_and_the_birds_by_paul_harvey]
2. Samuel Ngewa, "John," in *Africa Bible Commentary*, gen. ed. Tokunboh Adeyemo (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2006), 1279.
3. C. S. Lewis, "The Incarnation," in *The Joyful Christian* (New York: Touchstone, 1996), 52.

SESSION 3

1. R. C. Sproul, *Surprised by Suffering* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), 40.
2. Jen Wilkin, *None Like Him* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2016) [eBook].
3. Karen H. Jobes, *1 Peter*, in *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2005) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 4

1. Jerry Bridges, *The Pursuit of Holiness* (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2006), 111.
2. David Platt, "Is Your Definition of Faith Biblical?" *Radical*, July 27, 2018, radical.net/is-your-definition-of-faith-biblical.
3. Leo the Great, Sermons 21.3, quoted in *James, 1–2 Peter, 1–3 John, Jude*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. XI in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].

UNIT 29

SESSION 1

1. Randy Alcorn, *Managing God's Money* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale, 2011), 4.
2. St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *On the Apostolic Preaching*, trans. John Behr (Crestwood, NY: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1997), 79.
3. Timothy Keller, *Generous Justice* (New York: Riverhead Books, 2010), 91.

SESSION 2

1. Athanasius, *De Synodis*, in *St. Athanasius: Select Works and Letters*, vol. IV in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, eds. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (New York: The Christian Literature Company, 1892), 453.
2. Eric Mason, *Unleashed* (Nashville, TN: B&H, 2015), 61.

SESSION 3

1. Chrysostom, *Homilies on Romans* 7, quoted in *Romans*, ed. Gerald Bray, vol. VI in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].
2. Michael F. Bird, *Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2013), 568.
3. John Newton, "Amazing Grace! How Sweet the Sound," in *Baptist Hymnal* (Nashville, TN: LifeWay Worship, 2008), 104.
4. *Ibid.*
5. *Christianity Today*, "John Newton: Reformed Slave Trader," May 12, 2020, www.christianitytoday.com/history/people/pastorsandpreachers/john-newton.html.

SESSION 4

1. Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics* (New York: Touchstone, 1955), 56.
2. "James 2," in Bible Lessons International, 2012, bible.org/book/export/html/21430.
3. Adrian Rogers, *Adrianisms: The Wit and Wisdom of Adrian Rogers* (Memphis, TN: Love Worth Finding Ministries, 2006), 57.
4. "Significant Statistics About Tithing and Church Generosity," CDF Capital, February 25, 2019, www.cdfcapital.org/tithing-generosity.

UNIT 30

SESSION 1

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2. Francis A. Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*, in *The Francis A. Schaeffer Trilogy* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1990), 350.
3. Chrysostom, *Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles* 18, quoted in *Acts*, ed. Francis Martin, vol. V in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2001) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 2

1. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 67, quoted in *The Early Christians in Their Own Words*, edited by Eberhard Arnold (Rifton, NY: Plough Publishing, 2011), 83.
2. Rudolf Gwalther, Homily 65, Acts 9:10-16, quoted in *Acts*, eds. Esther Chung-Kim and Todd R. Hains, vol. 6 in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014) [Wordsearch].
3. Billy Graham, in *Billy Graham in Quotes*, eds. Franklin Graham with Donna Lee Toney (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011) [eBook].

SESSION 3

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2. Warren W. Wiersbe, *Be Complete* (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 1981) [Wordsearch].
3. Heinrich Bullinger, *Commentary on Colossians* 1:23, quoted in *Philippians, Colossians*, ed. Graham Tomlin, vol. 11 in *Reformation Commentary on Scripture: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2014) [Wordsearch].

SESSION 4

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2. Joni Eareckson Tada, "Share His Sufferings," in *Jesus, Keep Me Near the Cross*, ed. Nancy Guthrie (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2009), 143.
3. David S. Dockery, *The Doctrine of the Bible* (Louisville, KY: Seminary Extension of the Southern Baptist Seminaries, 1997), 36.