

# THE CHURCH MEETS NEEDS



**+** **SESSION IN A SENTENCE:**

In healing the man who was lame, Peter and John displayed God's power to him and all those around and pointed to a greater, spiritual healing found in Christ.

**+** **BACKGROUND PASSAGE:**

Acts 3

**+** **SETTING:**

As we continue in the book of Acts, we notice brokenness entered the story quickly. The first Christians had been together—sharing their resources and possessions with one another as any had need (Acts 2:42-47). They now moved out into the world, and there they met a man who had been lame from birth. Through this story, we will see how the generosity that marked the people of God in the church spilled over into their care for those on the outside, especially those who were hurting and broken.

# DAY 1

## READ:

**Acts 3:1-10**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Acts 3:1-10**

NOTES

This is a miracle of miracles. A man who was unable to walk from birth was healed by faith in Jesus's name. The man went from being unable to walk to walking, leaping, and praising God. It's no wonder that those who saw this man marveled at what God had done in his life.

Have you ever seen God transform a person? Maybe you've seen God break the power of sin, put a marriage back together again, or grant new life after the destruction of terrible decisions. The person was broken by sin, but they were made whole in the name of Jesus. In fact, the apostle Paul described becoming a Christian as dying to our trespasses and walking in a new way of life (Romans 6:3-4).

Like the healed man, Christians walk as new people because of the miraculous power of God. This is enough to prompt us to worship because of the transformation we've experienced and to long for God to transform the lives of others in our midst.

**How can you praise God for His work in your life and in the world?**

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"We take what we think are the tools of spiritual transformation into our own hands and try to sculpt ourselves into robust Christlike specimens. But spiritual transformation is primarily the work of the Holy Spirit. He is the Master Sculptor."<sup>1</sup>

—Jerry Bridges (1929–2016)

# DAY 2

## READ:

**Acts 3:1-10**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Acts 3:4-10**

## NOTES



## KEY DOCTRINE #94: SOCIAL CONCERN

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the Spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. (continued)

The first thing Peter and John did when the man asked them for alms was to look straight at him. This point may be easy to overlook, but it's important nonetheless. Imagine how many people over the years had walked past the man who was lame and had not stopped to notice him. How many people had looked the other way or pretended not to hear his petition? The man had likely grown accustomed to looking up at people's distant stare in the opposite direction. The apostles, in contrast to so many who had gone before, looked straight at the man, surely communicating their intention to help.

Do we notice those who are hurting in the world? Many times Christians are likely as guilty at overlooking those in need as those who passed by the lame man each day on their way to the temple. Christians today may be busy with their own lives and unwilling to acknowledge the plight of another human who is made in the image of God. Today, try to not look past others but look straight at them and ask the Lord to give you wisdom for how to love them well.

**Who do you need to really see today?**

# DAY 3

## READ:

**Acts 3:11-16**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Acts 3:12**

## NOTES



### **KEY DOCTRINE #94: SOCIAL CONCERN**

(continued)

We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends, Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth (Micah 6:8; Ephesians 6:5-9; 1 Thessalonians 3:12).

Acts 3:12 seems like an odd question for Peter to ask the crowd in the temple that day. After all, the people had often seen this man who could not walk, and now he was leaping and praising God. Why wouldn't anyone be amazed at this? Granted, many of the people in Jerusalem had witnessed Jesus's miracles. The apostles had also witnessed God do many amazing things—He'd sent His Spirit, accomplished the miracle of Pentecost, empowered Peter's sermon, brought thousands of people to faith, and birthed His church. Anything was possible with God.

The onlookers, on the other hand, were amazed because they thought the apostles themselves had produced this miracle. It would have been amazing to see mere humans cause a man who had never walked to stand and leap. But it was God's power and not the apostles' power at work. No one should have been amazed because God can do anything He wants.

The same is true today. God can do whatever He wants, which should give us great confidence to trust Him, to pray to Him, and to expect Him to act. Amazement is a proper response, not because people are surprised at what God can do, but because every time He acts, His might is on display.

**How does God amaze you?**

# DAY 4

## READ:

Acts 3:11-16

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

Acts 3:14

NOTES

Peter condemned his hearers for making a bad exchange. He reminded them that God had glorified Jesus as evidenced by His miracles, and yet they chose to release a murderer—Barabbas—instead of the Son of God.

Before modern readers are too quick to condemn this exchange, consider Paul's words in Romans 1:22, which speak of an equally bad move on the part of all humanity: Thinking we're wise, we choose to worship created things instead of the Creator. All people have denied the Holy and Righteous One and chosen instead to worship and serve far lesser things. The result of this exchange is the sinful chaos reigning in this world. Every day, every hour, people are confronted with a choice: Will I worship the Holy and Righteous One or will I choose something else in His place?

Since Jesus is holy and righteous, the implication is that nothing else compares to Him. Nothing else in all of creation can take His place. As a result, it's wise to consider whether your life is worshiping Him as He deserves or whether you are following the pattern of Romans 1 and worshiping a sad substitute.

**What does your life say you worship?**

# DAY 5

## READ:

**Acts 3:17-23**

## FOCAL PASSAGE:

**Acts 3:19**

## NOTES

Consider the implication that sin can be wiped or blotted out (v. 19). Peter was not suggesting that sin can be overlooked, or that God minimizes the implications of sin. Peter didn't even say that sin isn't really that bad or that people need not worry about it. Rather, he was clear that sin is disastrous and costly, but because of Jesus's work, sin can be wiped out.

Now surely he wasn't saying here that the sinful actions people performed will all go away. What he was saying was that the consequences of sin before God—death and wrath—can be wiped out for us because Christ took them upon Himself. Therefore, God can look at sin for what it is, deal with it justly in Christ, and yet wipe it away from us.

There's a joyous freedom found in knowing that sin is wiped out. It's not uncommon to see people still living under the weight of sin and guilt, even though that very sin has been forgiven by Christ. It's imperative that all Christians live in light of the reality that there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). Since sin is truly wiped out, then Christians should live free and forgiven.

***If Christians have been forgiven, why do some often feel weighed down instead of refreshed?***

# GROUP

NOTES

## VOICES from CHURCH HISTORY

"If indeed it was all the prophets and not only one of them who said this, it follows that, although the event took place through ignorance, it did not take place contrary to God's ordinance. See how great is the wisdom of God, when it uses the wickedness of others to bring about what must be."<sup>2</sup>

—Chrysostom (c. 347–407)

**POINT 1: God's people serve others to display God's works** (Acts 3:1-7).

### KEY DOCTRINE #94: SOCIAL CONCERN

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the Spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends, Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth (Micah 6:8; Ephesians 6:5-9; 1 Thessalonians 3:12).



**How is our social concern a testimony of our love for Christ?**

As we are called to social concerns, our ultimate goal is to display God's work and point to Jesus, our Savior.

## **POINT 2: God's people challenge others to recognize God's Son** (Acts 3:11-16).

We humbly serve others to testify about Jesus.



**How can we remain humble in ministry successes?**

Sharing the gospel includes contextualizing and focusing on Jesus's death and resurrection and the need for faith to believe in Him.



**How can our service point more directly to Jesus?**

## **POINT 3: God's people invite others to experience God's presence** (Acts 3:17-20).

Jesus's forgiveness extends to all when they repent.



**How can we help lead others to repentance?**

With repentance comes refreshment from God's presence as we await the day of Jesus's return.



From Day 5: **If Christians have been forgiven, why do some often feel weighed down instead of refreshed?**

## **MY RESPONSE**

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

- **HEAD:** What are your thoughts about those who are broken and need Jesus?
- **HEART:** What pride issues reside in you today?
- **HANDS:** Who can you serve this week who are considered marginalized?



Scan this QR code to access this session's Scripture passages.

## **VOICES from THE CHURCH**

"Before the church is called to do or say anything, it is called and sent to be the unique community of those who live under the reign of God. The church displays the firstfruits of the forgiven and forgiving people of God who are brought together across the rubble of dividing walls that have crumbled under the weight of the cross. It is the harbinger of the new humanity that lives in genuine community, a form of companionship and wholeness that humanity craves."<sup>3</sup>

—Daniel L. Guder