

Exploring Acts

The Continuing Ministry of Jesus Christ Through the Holy Spirit

Lesson 3

Day One: The Opportunity for Ministry

It was Graduation Day as the hopeful teenager donned his cap and gown to walk up the aisle of the auditorium while the band played the obligatory tune of “Pomp and Circumstance.” He proceeded across the stage to the podium where he was given a handshake and handed his diploma. The ceremony itself was enjoyable, but the boy eagerly anticipated the moment when he would be handed not a diploma, but the keys to a brand new car. As father and son shared a congratulatory hug, dad slipped into his son’s hands a gift wrapped box. He opened it to find a beautiful new leather Bible with his name engraved in gold on the cover. What was this—a Bible? It was certainly not what he wanted or expected. Where was the shiny new car? Angry and let down, the son stormed off to sulk alone. It was a lost opportunity and only years later—on the occasion of his father’s death—would he open the Bible to find keys to a brand new car tucked inside the pages on which were underlined the words of 2 Corinthians 9:15: “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!”

When life hands you a hard blow, what do you do? When you run out of options and hopes fade, where do you turn? Is there a second chance? The disciples asked these same questions in the early days of ministry when many were turning away from Jesus. It was Peter who cut through the confusion: “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ the Son of the living God” (John 6:68–69). It was a life lesson that would be replicated again on an ordinary day as Peter and John walked up the steps of the temple gate together to pray.

Read Acts 3:1–26.

Open your Bible and lesson each day by beginning with a word of prayer. Come to your time of study expectant to receive something from the Lord.

Look close ~

Write down your first observations of the text: the setting, the lame man, what you notice about Peter and John.

Peter wouldn't have needed to get the man's attention if he simply wanted to give him money. But because Peter intended to share a spiritual lesson, he needed to make a connection with him. The Greek translation of this passage says that the man gave the apostles his full attention, expecting something very generous from them (v. 5). What follows is a ministry opportunity that only God could perform.

2. In an unexpected dramatic call to action, what does Peter offer this man? v. 6
 - a. After forty years of being unable to walk, what immediately followed? Vv. 7–8
 - b. What was the response of the crowd to the event? Why?
3. The physical healing and the spiritual healing occurred simultaneously; which do you think was greater? (Support your point of view.)
4. Contrast the difference between what the beggar expected and what he received. (See Ephesians 3:20 to add to your understanding.)

Personal: Could *you* perhaps be this lame beggar today? Expecting one thing from God when He wants to do another that is completely outside your present understanding? God will at times bypass your temporal need to address the greater eternal need. Commit your way to Him today and then watch expectantly for Him to do above what you could ask or think! Use your lesson as a worksheet this week to record any happenings.

Day Three: The Message of Ministry

Review Acts 3:11–26.

The lame beggar did not need to understand his healing to have faith in God. His obedience to Peter's command to "rise up and walk" was evidence of the faith in his heart. All the people ran toward where the miracle took place. Their amazement at what they saw was immediately addressed: "Why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us (v. 12) as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?"

1. Peter answers his own question. By whose name and power was he healed?

Peter includes himself as one of the “eyewitnesses” in looking back momentarily (vv. 13–15) at the One who was not only the power but also the message behind the miracle—JESUS. In recognizing the crowds’ guilt, Peter also acknowledges they had no idea what they were doing. But there were prophets and prophecies centuries earlier proclaiming this would come to pass.

2. In verse 19, Peter issues a gracious appeal to accept the gospel message. Do a little research and write a definition for each of the words that depict the message of salvation:

a. Repent— _____

b. Converted— _____

c. Sins— _____

d. Blotted out— _____

e. Refreshing— _____

3. In case you’re wondering how much God loves you, write out the words of Romans 5:8 below, inserting your name to personalize it.

4. If you’ve ever pondered how *completely* your sins are forgiven, take a look at what the Bible has to say (jot down the key words that stand out to you):

a. Psalm 51:1–2 _____

b. Psalm 103:12 _____

c. Isaiah 43:25 _____

d. Isaiah 44:22 _____

When something is blotted out it is gone—remembered no more. Since God does not remember your former sins—let them go! And return to Him.

But one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 3:13–14)

Day Four:

JESUS: Name above All Names

Review Acts 3:13–22.

Peter used five different titles or names for the Lord Jesus in his astounding spontaneous sermon. Today we'll look at them to delve a little deeper into their meaning. It is in these deeper discoveries of Jesus that we find the sweet spot of His nearness and the motive for our service.

“His Servant Jesus” – v. 13:

Peter begins with a history lesson to let the people know that God's work did not originate with Jesus' life upon earth as we know it. As a Jew speaking to other Jews, Peter invoked the most revered of Jewish patriarchs saying, “The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob . . . glorified His Servant Jesus. What was His role as “servant” according to Philippians 2:5–8? (Is “this mind” in you?) How has God exalted Him now? Philippians 2:9–11

“The Holy and Righteous One” – v. 14:

In his sermon, Peter pointed to the fact that the Jews who worshipped at the temple in Jerusalem disavowed and rejected the *Holy and Righteous One*; but they did it in ignorance and unbelief. Realize that before *you* received Christ *you* too were numbered among them. But now God has made a way for you to know this “Righteous One.” What is the proof? 1 John 2:3–6

“The Prince of Life” – v. 15:

The rejection of God's Holy and Righteous One resulted in His death. The very Author of human life had His breath snuffed out by His people. But God raised Him from the dead so that you could have new life with Him. John 14:1–4 reveals His plan for you; what is it? How does it motivate you to want to fulfill your purpose by serving Him before you go home?

“A Prophet like Me” – v. 22:

Peter referred to one of the Old Testament heroes of the past—Moses—to tie the thread of salvation to Jesus: “Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you . . .” (Deut. 18:15) In other words, belief in Moses should produce belief in Jesus. Another Old Testament prophet says it well; look up Isaiah 55:3. What does Isaiah refer to in this verse? Write it out below.

“The Christ” – v. 20:

The power to heal and to save resides in the name—Jesus Christ. What does Colossians 1:15–16 proclaim about Him? _____

If you do not have the assurance of your salvation or that your sins are forgiven, you can pray to receive Christ as your Lord and Savior today. Pray these words: *Lord Jesus, I confess my sins to You. I need your forgiveness and Your Holy Spirit to follow You. Please come inside and be MY Lord—My God today! I thank You that I am forgiven and I belong to You. Amen.*

Day Five: Selah . . . Pause and Ponder the Week in Review

This section of the lesson is intended to be an at-a-glance, user-friendly recap of what you've learned this week. Go back over your lesson with a marking pen or highlighter and mark what stands out to you. Use the margins to make personal notations. Be sure to indicate which points or questions you'd like to share in your discussion group.

1. What is your take-away-truth? How are you working to make it a part of your daily walk?

2. Write out this week's verse from memory.

3. What does this week's verse reveal to you?

4. Personal: Compose a prayer of thanksgiving for what you've learned this week.

Prayer Time: Write down the people in your group to keep in prayer this next week.
