

Acts Chapter 3

Theme of Acts: The Holy Spirit and the Birth of the Church

As you read this study, you can click on any Bible verse or use your Bible. The study is broken into two parts:

Personal Reflection

You can complete this section in one sitting or little by little during the week. Begin with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit into your time. Spending time in the Bible, studying the original intent, meaning and cultural context helps you to understand how it applies to you now.

Further Study: with your small group or on your own

Complete this with your small group if you are in one; otherwise complete this section on your own to learn more.

Song for the week: Bless God - Brooke Ligertwood

Song links: https://youtu.be/ci1AN9R3_9I?si=XW5WQgbiW_Agye4H

Read Acts 3

Personal reflection:

Peter and John were together just as they often had been. They were together as fishermen, before being chosen by Jesus. Jesus sent them together to prepare for the Passover meal. That night, John took Peter with him to where Jesus was being tried and three days later, they went together and discovered the empty tomb. They were together when Jesus ascended and while His followers waited for the Holy Spirit. *Optional, read these related verses: Genesis 2:18, Luke 5:8-10, Luke 22:8, John 18:15-16, John 20:1-8, John 21:20-24, Acts 1:12*

With who and how are you investing relationally to build friendships?

How are friendships an important part of being part of the Church?

Read these verses. What do they teach you about friendships? 1 Thessalonians 5:11, 1 Corinthians 15:33, Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

Jewish tradition going back to David (about 1,000 BC) was to pray three times a day. Some prayed seven times a day. *Optional, read these related verses: Psalms 55:17, Psalm 119:164, Daniel 6:10*

Why do you think they built prayer time into their way of life?

What in your life reminds you to have a connection with God by prayer?

Read 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 and Phillipians 4:6. What do these teach you about prayer? According to these verses, what should you be talking with God about and how often should you connect with Him?

“Peter triumphantly avows what most men are ashamed of, and try to hide: ‘Silver and gold have I none.’ He had ‘left all and followed Christ’ (Bible Commentary).”

Paul also spoke openly about what he did not have, pointing to God’s ability in his own weakness. Read 2 Corinthians 12:5-10. What does Paul write about strengths and weaknesses?

How has God or how might God use your weaknesses for His purposes and glory?

Jesus was sent by God and performed miracles to prove He was / is God. The apostles were sent by Jesus and performed miracles in Jesus’ name to prove the truth of a risen Jesus as the Messiah.

“Jewish tradition sometimes associated miracle workers with exceptional holiness. Peter healed and attributed the power instead to the Lord (Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible).” *Optional, read these related verses: John 5:1-15, John 9:1-15, Acts 3:2-10*

When Peter healed the man in the name of Jesus, it was for God’s glory, not for Peters. Much like in the Jewish tradition of “exceptional holiness,” people today may seek spirituality but they do not have saving faith in Jesus.

What is the difference between spirituality versus being a Christian? How is seeking spirituality different from for spiritual growth with the Holy Spirit?

Read Matthew 7:15-23. What is Jesus’ warning?

In Matthew 24:24 Jesus warns the Jewish people, “For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.” You can only tell if something is a fake by knowing the real thing. What should we do in order to not be deceived?

Peter asks the witnesses “Why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?” The Jews would have known of the Old Testament miracles. It is likely the people knew of or witnessed Jesus’ miracles. Yet none of the miracles of Jesus nor this healing done in the name of Jesus was convincing the people.

Peter knew that miracles whether through us, witnessed by us or experienced by us are always for God's glory, not ours. They demand a bold acknowledgement on our part to give the glory to God. Miracles are never based on our faith or obedience. They are never about us, they are for His glory.

When the lame man was healed, he went "walking and jumping, and praising God." Those who saw were "were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him." The lame man became a believer; his response was also his testimony. God used the healing to testify to who He is.

Sometimes we need to stop to pay attention to notice what God is doing in our lives. Have you noticed anything God might be doing in your life that testifies to who He is? If so, elaborate.

When Peter saw they were filled with wonder and amazement, he saw the opportunity to share the gospel. Peter was unlike Paul who was educated and was a career-leader. It may have been a natural transition for Paul. Peter was not experienced yet he paid attention to the natural, organic opportunity to share the gospel.

We all have opportunities to share the gospel. Sometimes you may feel underqualified or like you do not have the words. Like Peter, we are not all trained in speaking or we may not have been gifted to be teachers. Yet God still wants to use each of us, just as He created us. What would help you identify the moments in your life when you can naturally share God's testimony about Himself in your life?

Witnessing can become discouraging when we do not see the response of faith in the other person. How can you continue to be like the healed man in spite of the response of others?

This is the second recorded message that Peter gave. He said that Jesus was / is the same God that they had been taught about - the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. *Optional, read these related verses: Genesis 26:20-24, Genesis 28:10-13, Exodus 3:2-6, Exodus 3:15, Matthew 22:32*

Peter continued, "God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this." Then he showed "heart-winning gentleness, setting forth the putting to death of Jesus (1) as a deed of ignorance, and (2) as the necessary fulfillment of the divine counsel (Meyer's NT Commentary)."

It can be challenging to tell someone the gospel including that they are a sinner in the need of a Savior. Peter did by telling the people both what they already knew and what they needed to know and did it with "heart-winning gentleness." As you share the gospel with people, what are some words you could use to both speak truth and be gentle and loving?

Putting it into practice:

Read Peter's message again in Acts 3:11-16. Read it out loud if you are comfortable so that you can hear it. Peter was quick to give the credit to God. Take time to do a self-assessment. Is there anything in your life that you have not yet thanked God for?

Further Study - with your small group or on your own

There is importance in relationships. An eight decade long Harvard study showed the positive effect of relationships to mental health, physical health and even aging well.

“When we gathered together everything we knew about them (those in the study) ... The people who were the most satisfied in their relationships at age 50 were the healthiest at age 80 (Robert Waldinger, the director of Harvard’s Study of Adult Development).”

“Loneliness kills. It’s as powerful as smoking or alcoholism ... when the study began, nobody cared about empathy or attachment. . . . But the key to healthy aging is relationships, relationships, relationships (George Vaillant, former director of Harvard’s Study of Adult Development).”

The study reflected what we know to be true - we need relationships.

Read Genesis 2:18. What does God say about being alone?

Read Hebrews 10:24-25. What are we encouraged to do?

Read Colossians 3:12-17. What things did Paul encourage among believers?

In Matthew 16:15-18 Peter said Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus said Peter’s answer was the rock on which the Church would be built. “The LORD is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold (Psalm 18:2).” The Church is built on the Lord, our rock; it is God who will build the Church. And He uses us.

God used Peter to declare the truth of Jesus in Matthew 16. In Acts Peter gave the first two recorded testimonies of the same truth.

Read Ephesians 2:10. God knows the plans He has for you, too. How might this build confidence and peace in you for what God prepares for you each day?

Peter said in Acts 3:26 “When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

What blessings come from turning from sin?

Peter ended his message with the promise of restoration to come with Jesus coming back.

Does knowing Jesus is coming back affect your faith and how you live? If so, how?

Is there anything from this week’s personal reflection time which you would like to discuss more with your small group?