Sharing Jesus: Acts 3–4

HOUSE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE — IN (LOOKING BACK) · UP (LOOKING UP) · OUT (LOOKING FORWARD)

Before You Meet: Peter shared the gospel in Acts 2 by speaking to guilt (what we have done) and in Acts 3 by speaking to shame (who we fear we are). Shame paralyzes, but Jesus meets us where it began, restores us, and sends us. The question is not "Am I qualified?" but "Will I let Jesus lift my head and send me?"
UP (Gospel) is one third of the night. Give real time to IN and OUT too.

IN — Looking Back *(Community)*

Care · Worship · Celebrate Faithfulness · Motivation & Encouragement

Care. Check in — highs, lows, and needs for prayer or practical help.

Worship. Praise together: a song, silence, or naming one thing God has done for you that you're thankful for.

Celebrate Faithfulness. Follow up on last week's step and celebrate it out loud.

Motivation & Encouragement. Name a way you've seen someone lift another person's eyes toward Jesus lately and encourage them by name.

UP — Looking Up *(Gospel — Sermon Discussion Guide)*

Reword or skip questions as needed. Pray first and aim for genuine conversation.

Key Takeaways

1. **Guilt vs. shame.** Guilt focuses on behavior; shame attacks identity.
2. **Look at us.** Peter answered the man's shame by lifting his gaze to Jesus.
3. **More than religion.** Gathering, praying, serving, and giving can still miss a person's real need.
4. **Head on.** Jesus confronted Peter's shame at the charcoal fire rather than ignoring it.
5. **Known and loved.** Three questions answered three denials, and Peter's shame was removed.
6. **Equipped, not qualified.** Jesus equips the called rather than calling the equipped.
7. **Comfort given.** The comfort we receive in affliction equips us to comfort others (2 Corinthians 1).

Opening (Choose One)

- The pastor described how a smell — charcoal smoke, Christmas cookies, Bengay — can instantly take you back to a specific moment. What smell or sensory detail takes you back to a vivid memory, and what does it remind you of?
- The sermon distinguishes between guilt, which focuses on behavior, and shame, which attacks identity. In your own life, which do you find more difficult to overcome, and why?

Read Acts 3:1–10. Peter and John meet a man paralyzed from birth at the temple gate.

Digging In — Acts 3:1–10

1. **Missing piece.** The religious people at the temple showed the same four values as the believers in Acts 2 — gathering, praying, serving, and generosity — yet something was missing. What was the difference between what they were doing and what Peter did?
2. **Guilt or shame.** The pastor described two ways Peter shared the gospel: one aimed at guilt (Acts 2) and one at shame (Acts 3). How would you describe the difference in your own words, and which is more relevant to the people in your life right now?
3. **Look at us.** Peter told the man, "Look at us," lifting his head so he could see Jesus. What does it look like in everyday life to say "look at me" to someone weighed down by shame?
4. **Lift your head.** In what ways does Jesus invite you to lift your head and redirect your focus when shame causes you to look down?
5. **Religious activity.** These religious people were gathering, praying, serving, and giving, yet missed the man's real need. How can we, as individuals and as a community, guard against performing religious activity while overlooking the deeper needs of those around us?

Peter's Story — Luke 5, Luke 22, John 21

6. **Your moment.** The pastor walked through Peter's journey from his first encounter with Jesus, through his denial, to his restoration on the beach. Which moment resonated most with you, and why?
7. **Head on.** Jesus restored Peter by returning to the thing that first revealed his need — a miraculous catch of fish and a charcoal fire. The pastor said, "Jesus confronts our shame head on. He does not ignore it." Why do you think Jesus addressed Peter's shame directly rather than simply moving forward, and what does that tell us about how God restores us?
8. **Three times.** Jesus asked Peter, "Do you love me?" once for each denial. By the third time Peter answered, "Lord, you know everything. You know that I love you." What does it mean to you that Jesus knows everything about you and still pursues you?
9. **Reaffirm.** Is there an area of your life where you sense Jesus is personally and persistently asking you to reaffirm your commitment to him and his mission?

Going Deeper — Personal Reflection

Share only what you are comfortable sharing.

10. **Paralysis.** The pastor asked, “Are there things in your life, in your heart, that are causing you to live in shame and paralyze you?” He named struggling with something online, a broken relationship, feeling you have failed your family, or feeling others have seen the worst of you. Is there an area where shame has made you feel disqualified or pull back from God or others?
11. **Hidden shame.** The pastor’s own shame came not from obvious failure but from feeling distant from God while doing all the right things — serving, praying, gathering. Have you experienced that kind of hidden shame or spiritual emptiness? What did it feel like?
12. **Back to fishing.** Shame is a tool the enemy uses to paralyze believers and pull them from their identity and mission, as Peter returned to fishing after his denial. Where have you retreated to an old identity or old habits because shame said you were disqualified?
13. **Called, not qualified.** Jesus equips the called rather than calling the equipped. What fears or feelings of disqualification are keeping you from stepping into what you believe God has called you to do?
14. **Comfort.** 2 Corinthians 1 says the comfort God gives us in affliction equips us to comfort others. Can you name a struggle or season of shame that God may be redeeming so you can minister to someone else?
15. **Discipline.** The pastor described finding verses that say how God values and honors you, then sitting quietly and picturing Jesus speaking them directly to you. Does that feel natural or uncomfortable? What might make it difficult, and what might make it worth trying? How might it change the way you experience God’s presence?

Closing Reflection

16. **Gospel.** The paralyzed man received physical healing, but his deeper need was the restoration of his identity and honor. How does the gospel address not just what we have done wrong, but who we fear we fundamentally are?

OUT — Looking Forward *(Mission)*

Preparing for the Mission · Going on Mission · Praying for the Mission

Preparing for the Mission *(choose one or more this week)*

- **Practice the discipline.** Set aside 15 to 20 minutes this week. Use a concordance or Bible app to find passages on how God values, loves, and honors you, and write them down. Sit quietly, picture yourself in Jesus’ presence, and read each verse slowly as if he were speaking it to you. Zephaniah 3:17 is a good place to start.
- **Guilt or shame?** Journal or reflect: is what I’m carrying a guilt issue (I did something wrong) or a shame issue (something is wrong with me)? Ask Jesus to meet you at that specific point, the way he met Peter at the charcoal fire.

Going on Mission

- **One person.** Think of someone who may be living in shame. You don’t need a plan or script. Pray for them this week and ask God to show you one small way to say, in effect, “Look at me” — lifting their eyes toward Jesus.
- **Share your story.** The comfort we have received is the comfort we can give. Before your next meeting, share with one person, in or outside this group, a moment when Jesus met you in shame or failure. Your story is enough.

Keep Going

- **Looking ahead.** Next week the series continues with part two on how to share Jesus with others. Come ready to think about the practical side of the conversations God may be calling you to have.

Praying for the Mission

- Thank Jesus for the specific ways he has pursued you even in your shame.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to show each group member the area where shame has been causing paralysis.
- Pray for the people in your lives who need to hear Jesus say, “Look at me.”
- Ask God to prepare your group to share his comfort with others as you move into the next parts of this series.

Closing

Peter was not restored by trying harder. Jesus met him at the fire, named his shame, and sent him. Pray that you would lift your eyes, hear his voice, and go.

Group Notes & Prayer Requests