
How This Study Supports the Discipleship Plan (see page 129).

LIVE UNASHAMED. Followers of Christ are called to share the gospel through words and actions. It's not always easy, but we can do it with boldness and the assurance of God's presence and power with us.

SEIZE THE DAY: EMBRACING A MISSION WITH PURPOSE

- Session 1** A Mission Full of Opportunities • Acts 3:1-10

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INTRODUCTION

SEIZE THE DAY

Since the one true God revealed in the Bible is a missionary God, His people should be a missionary people. God's mission is clear: through the death and resurrection of His only Son, Jesus, God will redeem a people for Himself from all nations, tribes, peoples, and languages. God's method is also clear: He will use the redeemed to carry the good news of salvation to all peoples.

This study in the book of Acts will help you understand what all of this means for you. You'll learn how Jesus, who came to share the good news with His own people, the Jews, then called His disciples to take the gospel to the Gentiles. You'll see how God's plan to spread the gospel to those who have not heard, has always been through the church sending out people we call missionaries. And of course, the

Great Commission also includes work for us to do here at home. You'll also discover which of the roles in mission work God has planned for you. God has a plan to reach the nations—and it involves all of us.

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Session 7



A Mission Full of Opportunities

THE POINT

We intersect daily with people who need Christ.

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

I've had the privilege of teaching five different people in my life how to drive a car, including my wife, three of my children, and a missionary kid who grew up overseas where she didn't have the opportunity to practice driving. One of the most stressful moments for a driver-in-training is the first venture through a busy intersection. There's so much to see! And the risk of an accident is always elevated with so many vehicles stopping, starting, and turning. One of the keys to navigating an intersection safely is awareness. A good driver is always aware of the other vehicles.

Busy intersections also exist in life. On most days, we intersect with other people. On some days, we intersect with lots of people. But do we take the time to notice them without simply letting them pass by? God puts us on the pathway of life to impact and influence the lives of others along our journey. Making an impact on others requires us to see them, hear them, and seek to connect with them.

Intersections are opportunities. Opportunities begin with awareness. What does that look like? Peter and John will demonstrate for us.

QUESTION 1:

What do you remember about learning to drive?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

ACTS 3:1-4

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.”

Here, in the beginning of Acts 3, two of Jesus’s apostles, Peter and John, were on their way to pray in the temple when they encountered a lame beggar calling out to them. As leaders in the young, growing church, Peter and John were no doubt plenty busy and had lots to pray about as they made their way to the temple that afternoon. But, as they approached an intersection, someone was in their way.

The intersection was at one of the temple gates, called the Beautiful Gate. Though the Bible and historical documents from biblical times don’t indicate which of the many temple gates in the large temple compound was referred to by this title, we can assume it was a busy entrance since the lame man had been brought there to beg. Most busy people coming to a busy intersection may have pretended not to see or hear him, looked the other way, and kept on walking.

As with many encounters in life, the beggar wanted something from Peter and John. They were already diligently serving the Lord and faithfully tending to their congregation. Thinking they were doing enough, they may have been tempted to ignore the beggar, maybe to even

pretend they didn’t see him—but that’s not what they did. Instead, they “looked straight at him and said, ‘Look at us.’”

Their request is fascinating, isn’t it? Why would they ask a man who has called out to them to “Look at us?” We enter the store and hear, “Welcome to Walmart!” but are we seen? At the pharmacy, we are asked, “Did you find everything you were looking for here at the corner of happy and healthy?” but does anyone care about the devastating news we just heard at the doctor’s office? Peter and John understood that many of our interactions with others are simply transactional and they may have discerned the same was true of this man as he begged from those who were walking into the temple to pray.

I recall being in a conversation with my young daughter while I was carrying on another important texting conversation with a coworker on my phone. When I looked down at the phone, she put her hands on my face and pushed until I was looking back at her. We all want to be seen. We all want to be heard. Peter and John wanted to be seen and heard because they had something important to say.

However, I believe they also wanted the lame man to know that they saw him—truly saw him.

When our lives intersect with others, we always have choices. We can choose to ignore them, carry out our business with them, and move along on our way. Or we can choose to see them, hear them, and be seen and heard by them, recognizing that some intersections may be God-ordained interactions.

QUESTION 2:

What might prevent us from seeing the needs of those around us?

ACTS 3:5-8

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. ⁸ So he jumped up and started to walk, and he entered the temple with them—walking, leaping, and praising God.

Still in a transactional frame of mind, the lame man turned his attention to Peter and John, expecting a handout. Little did he expect he would get a hand *up*, but that’s exactly what they gave him. As they took the man by his hand and lifted him from the ground, God healed him.

But it was more than a hand up or even physical healing that Peter and John offered the lame beggar. They offered him hope. How so? The Scripture records Peter as saying, “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!” They offered him Jesus.

In our missions organization, we talk a lot about our mission to bring help and hope. Both matter. The hungry need food, but their greatest need is for the Bread of Life. The thirsty need a drink, but their greatest need is for the Living Water. Those left in darkness need light, but their greatest need is for the Light of the World.

As you and I go about our lives, intersecting with people on a regular basis gives us opportunities to also interact with them. Like the beggar at the temple gate, some have needs that money or other resources can temporarily help to solve. When that’s the case, God calls us to be generous. There are, of course, problems that no amount of money can ever fix. For example, money isn’t a cure for depression, addiction, or a struggling marriage. Sometimes money can even make the problem worse! One of the big problems money can’t solve is the world’s greatest problem.

What is the world’s greatest problem? Spiritual lostness. Lostness, a relationship with God that’s been broken by sin, is the world’s greatest problem because it’s the only problem that’s eternal and universal. Lostness is an eternal problem because to die in one’s sin means that a person will spend eternity separated from God. Lostness is a universal problem because,

as the Bible says in Romans 3:23, all “have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

Those who, like Peter and John, have believed the gospel and found forgiveness of sin through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, know the solution to the world’s greatest problem. That solution is the gospel, the eternal truth that Jesus died for sinners and was raised from the dead. Any person who places their faith in Jesus, repenting of their sins, and confessing Jesus as Lord, has had their greatest problem solved. After that, it’s time to become part of the solution by sharing Jesus with others.

While on a mission trip overseas, I served alongside a career missionary family who had been working among an unreached people group displaced to the city because of drug gang violence in their jungle homeland. Having come into the cities with no education, no money, and no jobs, these families remain poor, desperate, often exploited, and hopeless. On top of all of that, an informal but easy-to-observe class system continues to work against them.

There’s an image from that trip that has not left my mind. We had stopped on the street to visit with some ladies from the people group who were sitting on the concrete sidewalk with their

children all around them. The ladies were trying to sell small pieces of jewelry they were making from wire and plastic beads. At the feet of one of the ladies was a little girl about 2 years old. She was asleep face down on the concrete. No blanket, no pillow, no shoes or socks. Just a little dark-haired girl in a dirty dress with her face pressed against the dirty, cold, hard sidewalk—asleep.

On the city streets sleep the little ones, despised by the world but loved by the Father. And on the city streets walk the beautiful feet of those in search of the little one so lost that a dirty, cold, hard sidewalk is her only bed. How beautiful are the feet that bring good news!

What Peter and John did in their day and what the missionary does in our day is what every Christ follower is called to do. We are called to bring help and hope.

QUESTION 3:

What do you appreciate about the lame man’s response to God’s work in his life?

ACTS 3:9-10

⁹ All the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰ and they recognized that he was the one who used to sit and beg at the Beautiful Gate of the temple. So they were filled with awe and astonishment at what had happened to him.

Engage

A MAP OF MY DAY

Draw a map of your daily routine, noting the places where you intersect with others. Slowly trace this route with your finger as you pray for each of the people or groups you typically encounter.

The miracle was undeniable. What an incredible change of fortune! Right before their eyes, the lame beggar the people all knew went from invalid to upright, from total dependency to independence, from hopelessness to hope fulfilled, from begging to praising. Who or what was responsible for such an extraordinary transformation? Surely, this was a miracle, and an opportunity to bear witness to Jesus, the One whose miracle-working power they had observed throughout His earthly ministry.

On their way to the temple to pray, suddenly Peter and John were presented with an opportunity to proclaim the good news about Jesus. That opportunity came about because, instead of rushing through one of life's intersections, they welcomed a divine interruption and saw others around them in desperate need of help and hope. Allowing God to use them, they were able to see God do what only He could do.

Is a miracle like the one the people witnessed here in Acts 3 necessary for people to believe in Jesus today? John 20 records that Thomas, one of Jesus's disciples, refused to believe the news of His resurrection. Thomas went so far as to say, "If I don't see the mark of the nails in his hands, put my finger into the mark of the nails, and put my hand into his side, I will never believe" (v. 25). Eight days later, the risen Lord appeared to the disciples and Thomas was there. Seeing the miracle of the resurrection with his own eyes, Thomas emphatically declared his belief. In response, Jesus said, "Because you have seen me, you have believed. Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (v. 29).

The testimony of Scripture and the life change evident in Christ followers are two of the most

convincing forms of evidence for those who believe in Jesus today. That's why sharing God's Word and living an authentic Christian life are so important to the advance of the gospel. God's greatest miracle unfolds around us every time a lost person trusts in Jesus to have their broken relationship with Him restored. Those of us who have experienced that miracle get to tell others what Jesus has done for us.

One of the things we stress in missions is the priority of "missionary presence" among people groups who have no gospel access. While modern technology provides us with lots of ways to share the gospel online, or through media avenues, nothing can replace the in-person sharing of the gospel. The most effective method of sharing, and the example we find in the New Testament, is a person who goes to proclaim the good news. When God does what only God can do, He expects us to tell what He has done. There's no greater privilege for the follower of Jesus.

QUESTION 4:

How have you been personally affected by others' obedience to Christ?

QUESTION 5:

What is our role in creating opportunities to meet needs and share the gospel?

LIVE IT OUT

We intersect daily with people who need Christ. Choose one of the following applications:

- **Pray.** Do you have a relationship with Jesus? If not, talk to your group leader about how to have your own intersection with Jesus, the Son of God. You can also find help on the inside cover of this book.
- **Practice.** If you know Him already, write the highlights of your own testimony of God's miracle in saving you. Try to use less than two hundred words. Practice telling this story to someone in your group.
- **Share.** Be on the lookout at the intersections of life this week. Be prepared to share your story with others you meet who need to hear about Jesus of Nazareth and how He is mighty to save.


