

SERMON | INFLUENCE | 07/09/18

(Welcome)

A few weeks back, Andy Sieberhagen asked me if we could talk. We met at a coffee shop, and after some general catching up, he looked me in the eye and said, “Scott, we’d like you to speak to the church in July.”

In that moment, my head was spinning. I mean, it is a <huge> privilege to be able to stand in front of a group of believers and share your heart. And as I was sitting there, trying to collect my thoughts, Andy reached out, and put his hand on my shoulder, and I’ll never forget his words, he said,

“Because the guy we originally wanted can’t do it.”

SLIDE (build)

(headline)

**Don’t think more highly of yourself than you ought:
The South African origins of Humility.**

Which is why I’m calling today’s lesson “Don’t think more highly of yourself than you ought: The South African origins of Humility.”

Actually, today, we’re at the third of our four-part “Rescue” series, where we are unpacking some of the themes we shared with our kids during our recent “Shipwrecked” Vacation Bible School.

The whole idea here is that we weren’t just rescued to be *rescued*.

We are rescued by Jesus to do *something* great in His name.

Two weeks ago, Dustyn showed us how we are rescued to *party*.
Last week, Zoe showed us how we are rescued to *receive*.

Today, we are going to learn how we were rescued to make a difference in the lives of others.

How we are rescued to *influence*.

SLIDE

(headline)

Influence

So, let’s talk about that. “Influence.”

Literally, it’s the ability to have *an effect on* something or someone. To alter its path.

As a kid growing up, I heard about it from my parents. As in “I don’t like you hanging out with that Steve character. We think he might be a *bad influence*.”

And they were right.

In political circles, we hear it equated to power. That person is *influential*. They have a lot of *influence*. They have the ability to change the course of things that are happening around them.

We hear it said about being altered by drugs or alcohol: “She was *under the influence*.”

In the world of marketing, brands are clamoring to get their products into the hands of social *influencers* in the hopes they’ll talk about those products, and the brand will get more likes, or tweets, or mentions.

For most of us, we can think of things or people who have an influence on our lives. Maybe a coach. Maybe a mentor. Or a teacher. Maybe this thing.

(hold up iPhone)

How radically has this device *influenced* our lives? This quip has been around awhile, still relevant:

SLIDE (build)

(headline)

Q: If someone from the 1950s suddenly appeared today, what would be the most difficult thing to explain to them about modern life?

SLIDE (build)

(visual)

***Images of angry tweets, comments, etc.
Images of cats***

A: “I possess a device, in my pocket, that is capable of accessing the entirety of information known to mankind. I mostly use it get into arguments with strangers and look at pictures of cats.”

SLIDE

(headline)

Jesus Influence

Today, we’re going to take a look at an encounter that is an illustration of what real *influence*—*Jesus influence*, the kind of influence that we were *rescued* to do—looks like.

Turn with me to Acts 3.



SLIDE

(copy)

Acts 3: 1-10 (NIV)

3 One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. ² Now a man who was lame from birth was being carried to the temple gate called Beautiful, where he was put every day to beg from those going into the temple courts. ³ When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. ⁴ Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, “Look at us!” ⁵ So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

⁶ Then Peter said, “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.” ⁷ Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man’s feet and ankles became strong. ⁸ He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. ⁹ When all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰ they recognized him as the same man who used to sit begging at the temple gate called Beautiful, and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him.

Alright, let’s get our bearings. First thing, here we are at the beginning of the Book of Acts. This book is an account of the transition time between the Gospels, which document Christ’s time on earth, and the growth of the early church that is laid out later in the epistles.

And it is worth noting that it’s not the Book of Interesting Ideas, or the Book of Good Intentions, or the Book of I’m Really Busy but I’ll Try to Get There—this is the Book of Acts. Actions.

Stuff. Is. Happening, people!

Jesus has just defeated DEATH!

God has just equipped Christ-followers with the power of his Holy Spirit!

Believers are fired up. At the end of Acts 2, we get a glimpse of what life was like for early Christ followers:

SLIDE

(copy)

Acts 2: 42-47 (NIV)

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

That sounds pretty good, doesn't it?

So, we've got Peter and John, who are doing what observant Jews did—they're on their way to the temple to pray, which they did three times, every day, at 9:00 am, here at 3:00 pm, and again at sunset.

They arrive at the gate to the temple and encounter a man there who has been crippled since birth. The scripture says this guy was put there *every day* to beg. Later in Acts 4:22, we find out that this man is 40 years old.

Who has been taking care of this crippled man for the past 40 years? Who has been taking him to the temple *every day* to beg?

Two thoughts here: either it was family or friends who were trying to help and support this guy, who wanted him to be in a place where something good could happen—maybe even a miracle...

Or, maybe, it was someone who *didn't* want him to be healed. Maybe this crippled man was their meal ticket. Maybe having him restored to health would **disrupt the machine**.

Several years ago, I went on a mission trip to Honduras, and as soon as we arrived and walked out of the airport, we were intercepted by a local woman, walking around, holding what looked to be a two-year-old child—and the child was completely catatonic. Eyes open, not moving, not blinking. It just tore at your heart.

"Please. Please." She rattled a cup, going from person to person, looking for something, anything. I started reaching for my wallet, and our Honduran guide said, "Hey, that child is likely drugged. It's probably a scam. Happens all the time here."

What do you do with that? It might be a scam, but that child is still a desperate case, and that woman is hurting, and I have more than they do.

It might be a scam, but that crippled man at the temple gate still hadn't stood up in 40 years.

When you see a homeless person on the street, asking for something—anything—what's your response? *He'll just use it for booze? I can't help everyone? Or I have more than they do?*

What do you do?

And what kind of shape was this crippled man in? Crippled since *birth*. Crippled for *40 years*. His legs would have been like withered sticks. And it's not like he could get up to go to the bathroom. What must have he looked like? Smelled like?

So, here's our guy. Sitting. Waiting. Begging. And here come Peter and John.

What happens next is an interesting insight into how we perceive the world around us.

SLIDE

(headline) The art of seeing

Verse 3: When he *saw* Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.

Verse 4: Peter *looked right at him, as did John*. Then Peter said, "Look at us!"

Verse 5: So the man *gave them his attention*, expecting to get something from them.

Verse 3, our guy *notices* Peter and John. Remember, he's at ground level. So, he is aware that people are approaching him because he can see their feet. Maybe he's got a routine where he sees people approaching, maybe he has a basket, maybe he says something like "Please. Please."

The beggar saw Peter and John, in that he *noticed* them, in the same way you notice a chair or a door or a passerby on the sidewalk. It's the kind of noticing where you don't really expect much to happen—the other person is just passing thru your reality. Ordinary. Normal.

Verse 4, Peter and John LOOK RIGHT AT HIM. In other times this word is used in the Bible, it is translated as "fixed his gaze," "looked intently," "fastened his eyes."

It's that look when you want your kid to understand that you mean business.

"The Look."

Now, in verse 5, "he gave them his attention." All of it. The kind of attention you give when you are expecting something good to happen.

Have you ever experienced that kind of attention from someone? For me, I remember coming home from a business trip when my daughters were younger, and I'd occasionally pick up some small gifts for my them. From the moment I walked in the door and said, "Hey guys... I have something for you" HOO BOY I was getting their full, expectant attention. Because they were expecting something good to happen.

What happens next is the first recorded miracle of the early church.

Verse 6: Peter says, "Silver and gold have I not."

And the crippled man's thinking "*Here we go with the lecture... about how I've sinned, or my father has sinned, and this is God's judgment BLAH BLAH BLAH.*"

Peter says, "But what I do have, I give to you."

What does Peter have? He has the Holy Spirit, the indwelling of God himself.

"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth..."

Walk."

What?

"Walk."

But I can't...

"Take my hand."

But I never could...

Verse 7: Taking him by the right hand, Peter helped him up, and instantly, the man's feet and ankles became strong.

These legs that have never known their purpose, that have never supported weight, this body that has never learned to balance or move under its own power was transformed on the *SPOT*, ladies and gentlemen.

Verse 8: He <jumped> to his feet and began to <walk>. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and <jumping> and praising God.

And in that moment, this crippled man, who was just hoping for something ordinary, something *anyone* could give him, got something extraordinary, and he learned how to do four things for the first time in his life:

SLIDE (build)

(headline)

- 1. Stand**
- 2. Walk**
- 3. Jump**
- 4. Praise God**

He learned how to stand. He learned how to walk. He learned how to jump. And, after 40 years of being the lowest, most broken, most pitied person in society, this might be the first time in his life he learned how to praise God.

Now, to really understand and apply what is happening here, to get a glimpse of how Jesus influence can profoundly alter the trajectory of people's lives, I believe we have to come to grips with an uncomfortable truth:

SLIDE

(headline)

Mostly, we are the crippled man

Most times, we are not Peter. Most times, we are the crippled man.

We might be emotionally crippled. Or spiritually crippled.

Maybe we're crippled in our ability to forgive someone, or to cut someone some slack.

Maybe we are crippled in our ability to forgive ourselves for our past.

Maybe we're crippled in our ability to manage our finances or live within our means. Or give with a cheerful heart.

Maybe we're crippled in our ability to control our appetites. Or our anger. Or our lust.

You name it. We've all been there. You. Me. All of us. Stuck. Unable to move. Sitting in our own sinful filth. And maybe—just maybe—the one who put us there, the author of deceit, the one whose lies we believed, who said that we deserve to be mired here, that we will always be here, maybe that deceiver wants us to stay there.

We've all been the cripple. And if we are being honest—if I am being honest—there are areas of all of our lives—of my life—that are still crippled.

SLIDE

(headline)

Sometimes, we are Peter

And into **this reality** is where we as Christ followers have been rescued to make a difference.

Jesus brought us here—he rescued us—to influence this world, person by person, moment by moment.

So what does that kind of *influence* look like?

Using the example of this miracle, I believe there are 3 Big Things to understand.

SLIDE

(headline)

3 Keys to Jesus-Influence

SLIDE

(headline)

1. See with Jesus-eyes

1. We have to see—really see, like, with Jesus eyes—the people and the hurt around us. Have you ever had that experience where you go through something, and suddenly, you see it everywhere around you? I noticed it the first time my wife Deb was pregnant. Suddenly, it seemed like everyone around us was pregnant! It happened again when her dad was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Suddenly it seemed like everywhere I looked, I saw people carrying the weight of a cancer diagnosis.

We're all crippled. Some of us our just better at disguising it. But when you have been through it, you get *really good at* noticing others who are going through it. It takes one to know one.

SLIDE

(headline)

2. Take the first step

2. The second thing—we have to take the first step. We have to reach out. The beggar didn't say, "please heal me." That beggar was already looking past them, seeing who was coming next, fixed on his own stuck situation. But into this man's world, Peter reached out his hand. In doing so, he broke through the force field of his everyday reality and in doing so, he broke down a barrier.

You know the barrier: "Hey, how's it going?" "Good. Great. Everything is fine."



SLIDE

(headline)

3. Because Holy Spirit

3. The third thing: If you're thinking that "Hey, I can't do it. I can't do what Peter did." Here's the great thing about that—you don't have to. Because *Peter* didn't even do what Peter did.

You have to understand that the only way this encounter isn't a story called "Two Guys Walk Past a Beggar" is *the Holy Spirit*. A theologian by the name of Thomas Walker famously puts it this way:

The power was Christ's but the hand was Peter's.

The power was Christ's but the hand was Peter's.

The power was Christ's but the hand was Dave's.

The hand was Rachel's. The hand was Vijay's.

The power is Christ's and the hand is yours.

I want you to hold your hands up.

I think there are two ways to think about them. Either they are your hands, and Jesus gets to use them once in a while.

Or these are the hands of Jesus. And we get to use them every day.

The way we as Christ followers can influence this world is to 1) See with Jesus eyes, 2) Take the first step, and 3) Rely on the Holy Spirit to do the rest.

The reality is you cannot save someone. But the Holy Spirit can.

You cannot heal someone. But the Holy Spirit can.

You cannot restore someone. But the Holy Spirit can.

With Christ's power. And your hands. Your feet. Your words.

When someone is hurting, instead of saying, "Let me know if you need anything," maybe say "I'm coming over to see what groceries you need, then I am going to go grocery shopping for you, and then I am going to bring those groceries back and put them away, and the only way you can stop me is to call the police."

When a single mother in the house down the block is struggling to maintain her home, maybe say "Hey, I have a couple buddies coming over to help me mulch my beds next weekend. If it's cool with you, we'll swing over and do yours too."

Real influence is the difference between "I'll pray for you" and "Let me pray for you right now."

It's the difference between "How's it going, man?" and "Man, I have been there, too."

It's the difference between "You need Jesus" and "Let me hold you with His hands."



Maybe you already have that crippled person in your life, and you're thinking "Yeah, but I've walked past her *so many times*."

Well, Peter and John were devout Jews. They went to temple 3 times a day. This crippled man had been there begging for years. How many times did THEY walk past this guy?

Start small. Be bold. And know that all you have to do is open your eyes, take the first step, extend a hand. And then Jesus is gonna do what Jesus is gonna do.

That crippled man became whole. And I only imagine what happened the next day, when that man—now walking on strong legs, with a heart that could praise God—walked into the temple thru the gate called Beautiful and came across another crippled man.

That's the influence that I believe we were rescued to.

Alright church. What do you say we go out there and **disrupt the machine**?

APPLICATION QUESTIONS

1. In what area of your life do you feel stuck or crippled? Why?
2. What is the biggest challenge or impediment in your life to engaging with others?
3. Who in your social network is God prompting you to reach out to?
4. How does it change your perspective to envision your hands as an extension of Jesus?