

The Church is Born
Growth Group Discussion: "The Lame Shall Leap"
Acts 3

Intro Question:

- Have you ever experienced a supernatural healing, or some other "miraculous" answer to prayer? If so, share about it.
- If you have not experienced this, share about a time when you asked or prayed for miraculous healing and the prayer wasn't answered as you had hoped. (Leaders: be sure to extend words of compassion when appropriate).

Opening Prayer: Pray for the Spirit of God to show you how this time of conversation, study, and prayer should impact your lives.

*The Scripture reading for this week is on the last two pages of this document, divided into "parts," so that you may read through it. Take a few moments, assign parts, and **read through the story**. You'll need a few extra copies.*

Discuss:

- Why do you think that on this particular occasion, Peter and John courageously offered physical healing to this man? What risk was involved on their part?
- Read John 14:12. How do you think Jesus' statement here might have affected Peter and John's actions on the day in question?
- Recall from the first message that Pastor Josh gave on the book of Acts, that one question we have to wrestle with has to do with whether each story is meant to be prescriptive for us, or merely descriptive. In other words, are we merely supposed to see the description of what happened on the day in question, and marvel at it, or is it somehow prescribing certain actions for us today. With that question in mind, what do you think is the case with this story? Descriptive or prescriptive for us?
- Read Matthew 28:19-20. Jesus was speaking to his first followers here, probably a group of about 120. Does the phrase, "teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you," have any bearing on us in regard to seeing miraculous things happen in his name? Should we be asking for or expecting miraculous healing to happen?
- What do you think is significant about the interaction between Peter, John, and the lame beggar in Acts 3:3-4? Why did Luke record the details of this part of the interchange?
- How many times does Luke mention that the man was now able to walk? Why so many?
- In 3:11, Luke tells us that the onlookers were astonished by what they saw. Why were they so surprised? Why would they come *running* (especially in a culture where grown, self-respecting men did not run in public)?
- Do you think that you, or we (our church family in general, or our "brand" of Christianity), have lost our sense of wonder at the supernatural life change that Jesus brings?
- Look at Peter's address to the crowd, recorded in 3:12-26.
 - What does he want them to see about the healing, about Jesus, and about themselves?

- What is the significance of his references to Old Testament history throughout this speech?
- How does he want them to respond? What will happen, according to Peter, when they do this?
- What is the significance of Luke's numerical statement in 4:4, right after telling us that Peter and John were arrested?

Draw together some conclusions and applications from the narrative by discussing the following.

- Pastor Josh made the point that Jesus still offers the healing that people desperately long for, spiritually, emotionally, and physically. Do you agree or disagree? How have you experienced Jesus' healing touch in any of these areas?
 - Are there perhaps some reasons why don't we see more of this kind of *dramatic* physical healing today? (Mark 6:4-6 may shed light on one possible reason).
 - How can our church become a sort of "hospital," where broken, hurting people can come to find healing and life change? Do we already have that kind of environment? What is still needed to get there?
 - Pastor Josh explained that we live in the "overlap of the ages, the already/not yet," when we are still under the curse of sin (and death), yet Jesus has already brought God's kingdom to bear on our lives and the world. Some people tend to over-emphasize the dramatic, miraculous events that we should experience because Jesus has already brought God's kingdom; other people tend to over-emphasize the fact that we are still in the "present age," with suffering and death, and they discount any possibility of miraculous events taking place. Which end of the spectrum do you naturally gravitate toward? Is that a good place for you to stay, or is balance needed in your perspective?
 - Doug Banister writes, "The loud power of the supernatural [reveals] the glory of God to the lost. But I also believe quiet power does too. By quiet power I mean the miracle of peace by a graveside, the miracle of a divorcee's forgiving heart, the miracle of moral purity in a sin-stained world." Have you ever experienced the "quiet power" to which he is referring?
 - How should we pray for someone who is suffering from some grave physical ailment? Should we always pray for physical healing?
- Pastor Josh said that one reason we should pursue, ask for, and expect healing of all kinds is that healing creates the opportunity to preach the gospel.
 - Have you ever had anyone ask you about the change that Jesus has made in your life? How did you respond?
 - What would you say if someone were to ask you this week about the life change that Jesus has brought to you?
 - Today, in our culture, many people are willing to believe in an insipid, generic god. Peter, too, lived at a time in which there were many "god options." How is Peter very particular in naming the God of this miracle (v. 13)? What can we learn about how to talk about God and share our faith from Peter's example?

Sharing/prayer: Spend some time sharing about your current needs with your group. Take time to pray earnestly for each other, especially where healing may be needed. Check in with one another during the week to find out about how those prayers are being answered.

Acts 3:1-4:22

Parts: Narrator, Peter, and Officials

Narrator: **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,

Peter: “Look at us!”

Narrator: **5** So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them. **6** Then Peter said,

Peter: “Silver or gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.”

Narrator: **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. **11** While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon’s Colonnade. **12** When Peter saw this, he said to them:

Peter: “Fellow Israelites, 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? **13** The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. **14** You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. **15** You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. **16** By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus’ name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see. **17** Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. **18** But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer. **19** Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, **20** and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. **21** Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. **22** For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. **23** Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.’ **24** “Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. **25** And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’ **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.”

Narrator: The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. **2** They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. **3** They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. **4** But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand. **5** The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. **6** Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. **7** They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them:

Officials: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

Narrator: 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them:

Peter: "Rulers and elders of the people! **9** If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, **10** then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. **11** Jesus is 'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.' **12** Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."

Narrator: 13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. **14** But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. **15** So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together.

Officials: 16 "What are we going to do with these men?" ... "Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it. **17** But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name."

Narrator: 18 Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. **19** But Peter and John replied,

Peter: "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! **20** As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

Narrator: 21 After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. **22** For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.