

TWO

A MISSION WITH A MESSAGE

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WHEN HAS A MISUNDERSTANDING ACTUALLY WORKED OUT FOR THE BETTER?

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

I met a man in a cafe in the Middle East. He was curious about my faith. I explained to him, “All humanity is deeply flawed by sin.” He nodded in agreement. I continued, “God is so righteous that He won’t accept sin into His presence. So, we can only be right with God if He provides a way.” He suddenly got a phone call and walked away. I never saw him again. The man was religious, but he didn’t understand how God reaches out to humanity through Christ. The people Peter addressed in today’s passage were also religious. They still needed the truth of Christ.

THE POINT

We can have a relationship with God through _____ alone.

After Jesus’s return to heaven, His disciples continued to perform miracles in His name. In Acts 3, God used Peter to heal a lame beggar. The man followed Peter into the temple, jumping and praising God. This miraculous act of God drew a crowd, eager to witness the man—once lame—now walking in full view of everyone. Peter took the opportunity to confront them with the story of Christ.

Acts 3:12-15 ¹² **When Peter saw this, he addressed the people: “Fellow Israelites, why are you amazed at this? Why do you stare at us, as though we had made him walk by our own power or godliness? ¹³ The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our ancestors, has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and denied before Pilate, though he had decided to release him. ¹⁴ You denied the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer released to you. ¹⁵ You killed the source of life, whom God raised from the dead; we are witnesses of this.**

1) Christ died, but God _____ Him from the dead.

Peter quickly shifted the focus away from himself to confront the crowd with the death of Jesus. The Romans killed Jesus, but the Jews refused to believe He was the “Holy and Righteous One” (v. 14). Likely, some of those present participated in the plot against Jesus. The Roman governor wanted to release Jesus. He offered the Jews a choice: he would release Jesus or the murderer, Barabbas. The crowd called for the release of the murderer and the crucifixion of Jesus. Peter confronted the Jews with the horror of what they did in calling for the crucifixion of the chosen of God. Despite all of this, God Himself glorified Jesus by raising Him from the dead.

Acts 3:16-20 ¹⁶ **By faith in his name, his name has made this man strong, whom you see and know. So the faith that comes**

through Jesus has given him this perfect health in front of all of you.¹⁷ “And now, brothers and sisters, I know that you acted in ignorance, just as your leaders also did.¹⁸ In this way God fulfilled what he had predicted through all the prophets—that his Messiah would suffer.¹⁹ Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out,²⁰ that seasons of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send Jesus, who has been appointed for you as the Messiah.

2) Repentance and faith in Christ _____ us to God.

Evidence of the authority of Christ was standing in front of them. The lame man’s legs were strengthened in the name of Jesus. Peter also indicated that “faith in His name” (v. 16) was involved. It was a call to the people to place their faith in Jesus. Peter softened his accusation against them, saying their sins were from ignorance. But, now that they knew better, they needed to turn from their sins and turn to the Lord. God would respond to their repentance in three ways: their sins would be forgiven, they would experience a fresh wind of God’s care, and God would send Jesus to them.

ENGAGE

Examine your heart for areas where you need to repent of sin. Write them in the margin, and ask God to forgive you and refresh you with His presence.

Acts 3:24-26 ²⁴ “In addition, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those after him, have also foretold these days.²⁵ You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your ancestors, saying to Abraham, And all the families of the earth will be blessed through your offspring.²⁶ God raised up his servant and sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your evil ways.”

3) We are blessed through our _____ with God through Christ.

After confronting the crowd with their sin and calling them to repentance, the disciples closed their message with a personal appeal. First, they highlighted the identity of those who had ventured to the temple (v. 25). By recalling their identity as Israelites and the offspring of Abraham, God’s covenant people, the disciples pointed to God’s desire to have a personal relationship with them. Beginning with God’s call on Abraham, God revealed Himself in unique ways to the Jews. God’s desire was for them to know Him and make Him known. God had blessed them and called them to be a blessing.

LIVE IT OUT

What actions will you take in response to today's study?

- **Respond.** If you've never trusted Jesus as your Savior, this passage is for you. You can experience a right relationship with God for all eternity. Talk to your pastor or small group leader. The inside front cover of this book can also help.
- **Repent.** Ask God to show you areas of sin in your life that you need to turn away from. Consider sharing with a trusted Christian friend and asking them to hold you accountable.
- **Share.** The lame man's healing provided an opportunity for Peter to share the gospel. Share the story of the lame man with someone you know this week and invite them to learn more by attending church with you or meeting one-on-one, so you can share how Jesus has changed your life.

TALK IT OUT

Want to go a step further? Gather with two or three Christ-followers of the same gender. Read Acts 3:12-20,24-26, then use the following summary and questions for a deeper discussion.

After the lame beggar was healed, Peter used the curiosity of the crowd to preach the gospel of Christ. He directed them to the power of the name of Jesus that had healed the man. He confronted their sinfulness, especially in handing the Holy One of God over to the Romans to be killed. But he also assured them of God's willingness to forgive their sins and grant them salvation.

When people respond to the gospel in faith and repentance, God promises to forgive their sins, refresh their souls, and unite them with Himself through Christ for eternity.

- 🕒 **Share how you came to faith in Christ.**
- ❓ **How can service lead to opportunities to share the gospel?**
- 🕒 **List the people you know who need to hear the message of Christ. Pray together for these individuals.**

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Our ultimate aim in life is to bring glory to God.

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Anne Graham Lotz

DAY 1: Jesus deserves the glory.

Read Acts 3:11-13.

After the lame beggar was healed, the temple crowd rushed to where the man stood with Peter and John. Taking advantage of the opportunity provided by the miraculous healing of a lame man begging at the temple, Peter and John shared Christ with those who gathered.

First, Peter and John made it clear that neither the miracle that had taken place nor the message they had to share was about them. They asked the people in the crowd, “Why do you stare at us, as though we had made him walk by our own power or godliness?” (v. 12). Con artists and false teachers typically have this in common—they attempt to manipulate people for personal gain. Peter and John distinguished themselves by being honest and humble enough to deflect the personal attention and turn it to the One whose power the people had seen in the miracle of the lame man. The disciples took no credit for what had happened and immediately gave credit to God.

Much of what Peter said drew on Old Testament Scripture. His audience was Jewish. They believed the Scriptures. Peter talked about the God of the Bible—the God they learned about in the Torah, the God of their forefathers, the God they claimed to know and serve.

Peter reminded the crowd of what they did when Pilate tried to set Jesus free. Pilate knew the religious leaders were trying to kill Jesus because of jealousy (Mark 15:10), so he offered the Jews an easy choice: free Jesus or free a treacherous murderer named Barabbas. Unbelievably, the crowd followed their leaders, called for the release of the murderer, and yelled for the crucifixion of Jesus. The blood of Jesus was on the hands of the Jews.

? Peter focused attention on Jesus instead of himself. Who gets the glory when you perform an act of kindness for another? How can you ensure the glory goes to Jesus?

DAY 2: Hope is tied to the resurrection.**Read Acts 3:13-16.**

Peter didn't pull any punches with the Jewish crowd. He made three specific accusations about them.

- They were guilty of handing the prophesied Servant of the Lord over to the Romans.
- They “denied the Holy and Righteous One” (v. 14). Jesus was holy. In all of humanity, Jesus alone was without sin.
- They “killed the source of life” (v. 15). Everything was created through Jesus. Peter was telling the crowd that Jesus gave them life, and they took life from Him.

But God raised Jesus from the dead! Because the Jews were guilty of Jesus's death, they were condemned to death themselves. But the hope for the Jews was tied to His resurrection.

The resurrection seems to be a sticking point for many in coming to faith in Christ. It defies logic and human thought—a man can't come back to life after he's dead. While this is true based on our observation of physical evidence, God did something beyond nature, something only He could do. And His resurrection was the core of the disciples' message.

Finally, Peter returned to the healing of the lame beggar, the event that drew the crowd together. By faith in the name of the resurrected Lord, the man was healed. The focus of this passage isn't the faith required for healing. The focus is the power in the name of Jesus to heal.

- 🕒 **What causes people today to reject the truth of Jesus's resurrection? List your thoughts in the margin and consider a response to each one in preparation for conversations you may have with skeptics.**

DAY 3: Trusting in Jesus brings forgiveness and reconciliation.

Read Acts 3:17-20.

Peter's goal wasn't to condemn his hearers. True, he confronted their tacit participation in the death of Jesus. Yet, Peter's goal was for his hearers to find forgiveness from God through Christ. He approached this with three points.

- **Peter acknowledged that the Jews had acted out of ignorance.** They should have recognized Jesus as the Messiah. They should have chosen to follow Him. But their eyes were blinded by their own traditions. The Jews believed sins of ignorance were different from willful sins. They were guilty of sin, but from their perspective, their sins would have been worse if they'd known Jesus was the Christ.
- **Peter told the Jews that God used their sins to accomplish His purposes.** The Old Testament prophesied that the Messiah would suffer (Psalm 22; Isaiah 53). Jesus came to die for our sins. His death wasn't a mistake out of God's control, but the reason Jesus was born. This didn't excuse their sins, but Peter showed them the work of God despite their failure to believe.
- **Peter called the Jews to respond to Jesus as Messiah.** Peter told them to "repent and turn back" (v. 19). The two words are similar. The first indicates turning away from something. The latter suggests returning to something. So, in this case, Peter meant to indicate that the Jews would need to turn away from their unbelief and sinful attitudes and return to God.

Peter identified three things that would happen when they turned to Jesus. First, their sins would be "wiped out" (v. 19). Second, "seasons of refreshing" (v. 20) would come. Finally, God would "send Jesus" to them.

Far more than simply believing the right things about Jesus, placing faith in the name of Jesus means trusting in Him as the source of salvation. It means trusting in His death and resurrection as the only source of forgiveness and eternal life. By trusting in Him, our greatest need is met—the need to be forgiven and reconciled to God.

- 🕒 **Use the space in the margin to explain in your own words how repentance leads to restoration in Christ.**



DAY 4: God brings hope and healing to a broken world.

Read Acts 3:21-23.

Just before Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples asked him, “Lord, are you restoring the kingdom to Israel at this time?” (Acts 1:6). Jesus answered them in verse 7 by explaining that it wasn’t for them to know when the Father would restore all things. The disciples were talking about Old Testament prophecies that pointed toward a leader who would restore the kingdom of God to His perfect rule. Peter seemed to have this event in mind as he talked to the gathering of Jews in Acts 3:21-23. This idea of “restoration” (v. 21) refers to God’s plan to renew creation and fulfill His promises, bringing healing and wholeness to a broken world.

Peter suggested that turning to God through Christ was preparation for the return of Christ. The appointed Messiah the Jews had been waiting for was Jesus. If they were followers of Jesus, they could trust that He would come back for them. Peter explained that Jesus had been brought into heaven “until the time of the restoration of all things” (v. 21). The time was coming, but it wasn’t yet.

Peter then pointed to Moses, who prophesied that God would raise up a prophet like himself from among the people, referring to Jesus. The people were warned that anyone who refused to listen to this prophet would be cut off from God’s covenant community. Peter urged his audience to recognize Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and to respond with faith and obedience or face spiritual separation from God.

These verses emphasize both the hope of restoration through Jesus and the seriousness of rejecting God’s chosen One.

? Verse 22 says, “You must listen to everything he tells you.” What does listening to the Lord look like in your daily life?

DAY 5: God desires for us to know Him and make Him known.

Read Acts 3:24-26.

After confronting the crowd gathered at the temple with their sin and calling them to repentance, the disciples closed their message with a personal appeal based on three realities. First, the disciples highlighted the personal identity of those who had ventured to the temple (v. 25). By recalling for the worshipers their identity as Israelites and the offspring of Abraham, God's covenant people, the disciples pointed to God's desire to have a personal relationship with them. Beginning with God's call on Abraham, God revealed Himself in unique ways to the Jews. God's desire was for them to know Him and make Him known.

Next, the disciples pointed to the reality that God sent Jesus first to the Jews (v. 26). As the son of Mary and with Joseph serving the role of Jesus's earthly father, Jesus was indisputably a Jew. Throughout His ministry, He taught in the Jewish temple and synagogues and performed miracles primarily among the Jews.

With their closing words, the disciples once again pointed to the reality of the people's sin and their need for personal repentance (v. 26). A personal relationship with God always begins with turning from sin and turning to Jesus. Without faith and repentance, even the Israelites, God's covenant people, would remain spiritually lost in their sin and spend eternity separated from God.

Apart from Jesus, no one can have a relationship with God. The gospel comes to every individual as a personal appeal, requiring a personal response, and resulting in a personal relationship. After responding to Jesus, God desires to bless others through us by using us to share His good news with those who don't personally know Him.

- 🕉 **If you've never placed your faith in Christ, open your heart to Him today. Talk to a trusted Christian friend or mentor. If you belong to Christ, share your story with someone who doesn't know the blessings that await them because of Jesus's death and resurrection.**