

REFLECTION GUIDE

ACTS 3:1-26 - LEAPS OF FAITH, LAST HOPES OF HUMANITY

KEY TERMS

The hour of prayer - The time of the afternoon sacrifice (3 pm), which Israelites often set aside each day in order to pray and when many Israelites living in Jerusalem would go up to the temple in order to pray together.

Alms - The practice of giving charitable gifts to the poor; the concept is present in the Old Testament (see Deuteronomy 15:7-11) but is more clearly a major part of regular religious practice by New Testament times (See Matthew 6:2-16, Acts 3:2, 10:2, & 24:17).

Solomon's Portico - A colonnade on the east side of the temple complex where Israelites would often gather before and after worshipping at the temple; both Jesus and his disciples (John 10:23) and the early church (Acts 3:11 & 5:12) gathered there.

DID YOU KNOW?

The term *Holy One* is used over 50 times in the Old Testament as a title for God that highlights his separateness or otherness (*I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst.* - Hosea 11:9).

Peter applies this title to Jesus in Acts 3:14, which would be blasphemous if he didn't believe that Jesus was divine.

BACKGROUND

As Luke continues to record the events that happened in the life of the early church, he tells us that one day when Peter and John *were going up to the temple at the hour of prayer* (v. 1) they encountered a *man lame from birth* (v. 2) who *asked to receive alms* (v. 3). In the 1st century, it was common for those in need to gather at the temple and ask for money and it was also a common religious practice to give charitably to those in need, so this was not an unusual situation. However, what happened next was very unusual as, instead of giving the man money, Peter told him to get up and walk and he did (v. 6-8). With the healing of the lame, Isaiah 35:6 (*then shall the lame man leap like a deer*) continues to be fulfilled through Jesus even after his ascension to the Father. A crowd then gathers and Peter explains that it was by Jesus' power, not their own, that they were able to heal this man. Peter's words are hugely significant to this group of people because he quotes from or alludes to several passages from their Scriptures - the Old Testament law and prophets (Exodus 3; Isaiah 52:13; Deuteronomy 18:15, 19; Leviticus 23:29; Genesis 12:3) - in order to explain that Jesus is the promised Messiah.

GOING DEEPER

In this passage, the apostles heal someone *in the name of Jesus* (v. 6), demonstrating that the power Jesus used to miraculously heal people is active through them. Take a look at these other passages where Jesus' power is used to do miraculous things: Luke 4:31-37, 5:1-26, and 7:1-17. Does amazement and awe equal faith? How do observers react? Why is the miracle performed? Find other passages where Jesus' power is on display in a miraculous way and ask the same questions of those passages. Why do you think miraculous healings seem far less common today?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read Acts 3:1-26. Who is present? What is the result? What stands out to you?
2. What does the healing of the lame man tell us about how God works in or through faith? Why should their responses be considered reasonable and normal when experiencing God at work?
3. When Peter shares the gospel...
 - what three essential facts did he give about Jesus (vs 14-20)?
 - what three promises are offered to all who turn to Christ by faith (vs19-21)?
 - what two things does Peter tell his listeners they must do to respond to his message about Jesus (vs 19)?

LIVING THE WORD

4. Peter proves from the Bible that Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah. Why is it important for us to see the centrality of Christ through the entire Bible (both the Old Testament and the New Testament)? What implications does this have for our spiritual lives?
5. What does it look like for you to leap, run, rejoice, wonder, and worship God for the rescue Jesus has brought to you by his mercy and grace?
6. We can learn a lot about our witness and evangelism from Acts 3. Why is it important that we both demonstrate the practical love of Christ and declare the biblical truth of Christ?