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theme: Healing in the Name (Acts 3:1-26)

materials: Bibles, news story

welcome

What do you do when someone asks you for money? Why?

Bring in a news item about your neighbourhood, city, country or world that you can discuss with the cell. Where do you see God in this story? Ask other members of cell to bring in stories to discuss in subsequent weeks.

worship

Where have you seen God this week? Where have you experienced community this week?

What words or names would you use to describe Jesus? Share them, and use those names in a prayer of praise and thanksgiving to Jesus.

Share some food together, and as you do, have someone read out **Luke 24:45-49**.

Ask if there are any prayer requests, and spend some time praying in Jesus' name for one another.

word

Read **Acts 3:1-26**.

What do you think is the point of this passage?

Why was the man waiting outside the Temple gates to beg for money? Why this location?

How is this similar or different to the way we do charity now?

Why did Peter and John not give the man money?

How was the man healed? Why does Luke describe him as leaping around in the Temple?

What was the focus of Peter's sermon?

What names or descriptions did Peter use for Jesus? Why are they significant?

What blessings are in store for people who repent and believe, according to Peter?

How, and why, did Peter link the healing, the work of Jesus, and the Hebrew prophets from Scripture?

Without necessarily looking ahead, what do you think the result of this public healing and preaching was for the young Church?

What would the results be for your Church if this kind of healing and preaching happened in a public place?

What does this passage tell you about the new Christian community in Acts?

What applications can we make for the Christian community today?

witness

Peter used the healing as an opportunity to give glory to Jesus and to call people to repent and believe. He also explained exactly why they should believe, and the blessings they will receive through believing. What do you tell people about Jesus? Why do you think people should repent and believe (if you do)? Is it in your mind



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every morning to use every opportunity available to give glory to Jesus and call people to faith? Make that your resolution this week, and come back to cell next week to report on how it went.

If you are in Vancouver, join in with one of 614's outreach ministries such as League of Mercy, Night Vision, or Street Combat.

action points

Continue reading through the entire books of Luke and Acts with one other person. If the other person is a fellow believer, read them through in a public place, like a café (not yelling it out or anything, just reading it to one another). Make a regular time to come in and read together, and more likely than not someone will eventually ask you what you are reading and why.

If the other person is not a fellow-believer, perhaps choose a less public place to read, but again set regular times, daily if possible, to get together and read the Gospel. You don't have to read it all at once. Read two to three chapters at a time, and then meet another day to read some more.

This passage shows that the wealth Peter and John had access to was far greater than silver and gold. Lack of money was not the main problem for the crippled man. This should not be used as a rationale to not be generous with our financial resources, however. Other passages in Acts clearly show how the new believers offered up their silver and gold to those in need. How can we share our resources in such a way that is not simply mechanical charity, but actually addresses the needs of the people around us in a way that protects dignity?

Don't forget also to share your resources with the community of Christ in the form of tithes and offerings.

leader's guide

This story of a crippled man's full healing and of Peter's address to the crowd comes directly after Luke's idyllic description of the new Christian community in Acts 2:42-47. It is tempting to just rest in that beautiful description of study, prayer, sharing, breaking bread, signs and wonders and effortless evangelism. But it is not to be. In the third chapter of Acts we begin to see the story of how the young Church lives out its calling in the world, and what the reaction of the world is to it.

This chapter is still peaceful, though. It records the first two-thirds of an event that would set something of a pattern for the new believers. A miracle is followed by a proclamation about Jesus, and a call to repentance and salvation. It is not until chapter four that we witness how the people and the powers of the world respond to these signs and sermons.

The important thing to remember as we read of the miraculous healing of the crippled man is that this is the continuing work of Jesus, now through his disciples, empowered by the Holy Spirit that he poured out on them. Peter makes it evidently clear that the power to heal the man does not reside in his own flesh and blood, but in the name of Jesus. These signs and wonders, so characteristic of Jesus while he was on earth, will now be seen in the world through his followers, these strange weak and faulty fishermen, tax collectors and others who meet daily, break bread together, share everything, and won't stop talking about this one they said had risen from the dead.

The crippled man in this story is brought by friends every day to the Temple gates; not *inside* the Temple, because he was not allowed into this place of worship, given his disability. Everyday he would wait outside the place of worship and community, begging for change from the people who came out. Giving alms to the poor was a religious duty, so it was a likely place for a man born crippled to make some money as the pious praying people came to the Temple. This was the best that the religious establishment had to offer to this man: no



access to the place of worship, no chance at employment or community, but the recipient of carefully prescribed charity. Is our charitable giving in this day and age all that much different?

Peter and John, on their way into the Temple to worship (the Christians continued meeting daily at the Temple), see this man, and cannot pass by. They did, of course, have some access to money (though it seems were not carrying any money at that point), but realised that money was not the primary need of this man. So Peter offered what he himself had received: the forgiveness of sins, the reception into the Kingdom of God, the healing and life-giving name of Jesus Christ. Invoking the name of Jesus, and offering his hand, Peter becomes a conduit through which the crippled man's lifelong disability is healed.

The man's instant reaction to his strengthened legs is to enter the Temple, leaping around with praise on his lips. This would have been the first time in his life he entered into that holy place, and he does so with a joyous noise. A passage from Isaiah describes what the salvation and glory of the Lord would look like in Israel, and one of the promises is that the lame man will leap like the deer (Is 35:6). This formerly lame man making deer-like leaps in the Temple courts was part of the fulfilment of ancient promise, and it was happening through the obedience of the new Christian community. The man is restored to full health, and to the full ability to join in the worship of God.

This holy commotion was sure to attract some attention, and so Peter took the opportunity to preach to the crowd. His message squared the attention not on himself, but on Jesus. He explained the connection between Jesus and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, thus putting Jesus fully in line with the Hebrew Scriptures and prophecies. He described how Jesus was God's honoured and glorified Servant (as in Isa 52:13), who had been dishonoured by his own people. Jesus was rejected and killed, but God reversed this by raising him to life, something that Peter and John themselves were witnesses to. It is faith in this name of Jesus, honoured above all by God, that brings the power to heal a man lame since birth.

Peter continued on in this Jesus-centric way, using a variety of names and descriptions to get across his point. Jesus is identified as Jesus Christ of Nazareth; God's Servant; the Holy and Righteous One; the author of life; and the prophet foretold by Moses. These titles served to demonstrate the uniqueness of Jesus in his character, mission revelation, redemption, and fulfillment of divine prophecy and promise. The name of Jesus offers something that no one else can offer.

Jesus was rejected, Peter asserted, because of ignorance, and forgiveness is possible. But it will take repentance - that is, turning away from the old life of sin, towards faith and obedience. The result of this is having your sin wiped out, obliterated, as if words on a page were wiped completely clean. Another blessing to result from turning to Jesus is that God's people will be refreshed, upheld in his Presence and power. The final blessing described is that Christ will be sent again to his people to make all things new. Peter then once again references how Moses, Samuel (and all the prophets), and Abraham are all pointing in various ways towards the blessing of Jesus, who, as the seed of Abraham, will bring about the blessing of the entire world. It is this power, the power of God prophesied through Scripture, embodied through Jesus Christ, and now infilling those faithful followers who bear the name of Jesus that enables the lame man to be healed from his disability, and that can enable all people to be healed from their sin.

This was one of the defining characteristics of the new Christian community: they believed Jesus Christ was still active in the world, by his Spirit, through their very words and actions. The message and ministry of Jesus was going to spread through the entire world through them, and this would include miraculous healings, exorcisms, and other signs and wonders. Though still small in number and opposed by the powerful (as we will see in the next chapter), they held that they were acting in the power and authority of the true King of Creation, the author of life, the Holy and Righteous One, God's honoured Servant, Jesus Christ of Nazareth. This is demonstrated by the restoration of the lame man into full health and worship, and by the rapid advance of the gospel as it took hold in Judea, Samaria, and the rest of the world down to this present day.