



cell outlines
APRIL 2019

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UNPACKING PETER AND JOHN HEALING AT THE TEMPLE (ACTS 3)

RESOURCES

- * Paper
- * Sticky tape
- * Felt tip pens

WELCOME

Watch: The Holy Spirit a video by The Bible Project

 www.youtube.com/watch?v=oNNZO9i1Gj

Game: *A Community of Believers*

This week's game is **Pass the Pulse**.

Line up chairs back to back (as if playing musical chairs). Every person must have a seat, but two people who are not taking part in the game must stand one either end of the row.

At the end of the row, place a water bottle on a chair just slightly out of reach. Each row (team) must hold hands, and at the opposite end to the bottle the leader squeezes the hands of both team members at the same time. As the pulse is passed down the row the winner is the first to grab the bottle when the pulse reaches them. The winner moves to the beginning of the row and everyone moves up one seat.

The winning team is the one to get all team members back round to the starting position. This game is all about teamwork – you can only win by being completely in sync with your teammates!

Say: As we read more of the book of Acts, we find stories of Jesus' disciples and the community of his followers fulfilling the purpose that God intended for the Jerusalem Temple – a place where Heaven and earth meet. Last month we read in chapter 2 about God's people being 'filled with the Holy Spirit' (Acts 2:4). Now in verses 42-47 we see the beautiful picture of Jesus' followers devoting themselves to his teaching; their communion and prayers were followed by incredible action done through the Holy Spirit.

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 favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Now, amidst great tension between the Jewish leaders and Jesus' followers, Peter and John encountered the lame beggar at the gates of the Temple – a place that they visited every day for prayer at around 3pm (chapter 3).

What was different about this day that made them stop? Luke writes in Acts that this beggar was placed at the Temple gates daily (3:2), he was lame from birth and he was more than 40 years old (4:22). Surely Peter and John had encountered this man before. However, this time 'Peter looked straight at him, as did John' (3:4), knowing that every wonder they performed in Jesus' name was indirectly and unintentionally an act of rebellion against the Jewish leaders. Did Peter and John hesitate? Read the chapter to find out what happened...

WORD

Read Acts 3: 1-10

¹ 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 recognised 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.

Discussion questions:

It is important to consider what Luke is saying in this chapter about the characteristics of both the lame beggar and Peter and John.

The lame beggar:

1. Discuss how the lame beggar might have felt that morning being carried to the Temple gates again.
2. Have there been times in your life when you have felt like the beggar and you have doubted God’s sovereignty (his control over all things) and power?
3. *Optional Question if discussion opens up from previous question: Consider Romans 11:33 and what this passage says about God’s sovereignty.*
4. How does the lame beggar react in verse 8?
5. It is likely that none of us has miraculously been cured of paralysis. However, when have you been close to being this thankful for something? Share any stories of healing with the group.
6. How does our praise affect those around us – both positively and negatively?
7. Consider Acts 3:9-10.

After these verses, Peter preaches his second sermon. ‘Many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand’ (4:4).

8. Do you think that worship and praise are infectious? Explain yes or no.
9. Praise is the only appropriate response to the blessings God gives us each day. Consider how often your friends and those around you witness you praising God. If it is just on a Sunday, how can we do more to worship God in the week?

Peter and John:

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’ (3:6).

1. What is it that Peter has to give to the lame beggar?
2. Peter and John were only able to notice the man, and then go on to help him, because they were walking in the Spirit. Have you ever had a feeling of seizing the moment, where you have had a strong feeling that God is calling you to do a certain action? Share your stories with the group.
3. The moment when Peter and John see the lame beggar is a miraculous moment from God. What might we notice more of when we learn to walk in the Spirit?

4. Notice how in verse 6 Peter and John were not concerned with what they did not have. Instead they used what they did have. What talents and gifts do you have that you can use 'in the name of Jesus'?

WORSHIP

Listen to: 'I Will Offer Up My Life' – Matt Redman

 www.youtube.com/watch?v=RWXWHdgapjI

Take a few moments alone listening to this song. What is God asking you to use for his glory? As we continue to listen to this song, consider the talents of your friends in the room.

WITNESS

Each person has an A4 piece of paper stuck on his or her back. Take ten minutes to go around the room and write on your friends' backs with markers. What characteristics do they have that God is using that you admire? As you write on their back, say a prayer for God to use all of their life!

Take time in reflection to read over your own piece of paper.

Close in prayer.

WHAT DOES PETER AND JOHN'S HEALING AT THE TEMPLE MEAN FOR US TODAY: SPEAKING AND ACTING BOLDLY.

WELCOME

Welcome the group. Ask for two highlights and a lowlight from the week.

Last week we read the miracle that took place in Jesus' name through the power of the Holy Spirit in Acts 3. Without reminding the group of the story, let's jump straight into the game.

Game: *Acts 3 Skit*

This week's game has a dramatic twist. Identify a judging panel of two to four individuals. Split the rest of the group into teams of three to retell the story they studied last week in a creative way. After a ten-minute rehearsal, each team will perform their skit/story for the judges. Points should be allocated for: creativity, use of space, use of props, expression of body etc. (The more eccentric the categories the better, to get the teams thinking outside of the box and having fun! Note the skit does not have to be set in biblical times.)

WORD

 **Read Acts 4:23-31**

²³ On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. 'Sovereign Lord,' they said, 'you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵ You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

“Why do the nations rage
and the peoples plot in vain?

²⁶ The kings of the earth rise up
and the rulers band together
against the Lord
and against his anointed one.”

²⁷ 'Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. ²⁹ Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.'

³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

We belong to a church rooted in bold evangelism. William Booth famously said:

“ ‘No sort of defence is needed for preaching outdoors, but it would take a very strong argument to prove that a man who has never preached beyond the walls of his meeting house has done his duty. A defence is required for services within buildings rather than for worship outside of them.’

Are we striving to live out this call of sacrificial ministry in our daily lives? Being a different, set-apart people can be scary – but God promises he will be with us.

Challenge: Can you match up these quotes from Scripture where God promises he will be with us? You might want to print the following page and cut up...

SESSION
TWO

<p>Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.</p>	<p>Matthew 28:20</p>
<p>Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.</p>	<p>Joshua 1:9</p>
<p>Be strong and courageous. Do not fear or be in dread of them, for it is the Lord your God who goes with you. He will not leave you or forsake you.</p>	<p>Deuteronomy 31:6</p>
<p>Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.</p>	<p>Isaiah 41:10</p>
<p>Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.'</p>	<p>Hebrews 13:5</p>
<p>For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.</p>	<p>Romans 8:38-39</p>
<p>Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.</p>	<p>Psalms 23:4</p>
<p>Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?</p>	<p>1 Corinthians 3:16</p>

Discussion questions:

This week let's discuss practical ways that we can live out our faith by speaking and acting boldly. Encourage the group not just to think of generic ideas, but to brainstorm in groups specific ideas related to their own weekly activities, individual friends' interests etc.

Discussion questions 2:

1. In Acts 3, Peter shares the testimony of the healing in his preaching to a large crowd. We all have testimonies of how God has worked in our lives – for example, your story of becoming a Christian! All testimonies are beautiful and important because they point to God. By sharing them we can share about the good news of Jesus with our friends. Can you think of a testimony of when God has moved in your life?
2. (Acts 4: 29-31) Consider the importance of prayer when it comes to being bold in our faith.

WITNESS

Finalise in groups the *specific* acts you will take on this week to be bold for Jesus! This may not be so much about talking to others about Jesus, as it is taking steps to get to know Jesus more for yourself.

Decide on a way to keep each other accountable. For example: set a reminder on your phone to text someone in the group or post on your group chat. Alternatively, create accountability partners who are designated to have regular contact and sometimes ask the difficult questions.

WORSHIP

It is important that in our worship we continue to lift up other believers (Acts 4:24).

Stand in a close circle. Place your hand on the shoulder of the person on your left. Everyone speaks prayers aloud for the person on their left and then on their right.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE – FASTING

**Warning – This session should include a 30-minute time of silence/lament. This may not be suitable for the group because of age, or you may choose to reduce the time. However you choose to make the session work, this practice of being still and quiet for uncomfortable periods of time gets us used to being in the presence of God with NO distractions.*

WELCOME

Welcome the group. Discuss last week's challenges.

Watch: *The Skinny On Fasting* (a funny commentary on the different reasons some might fast):

▶ www.youtube.com/watch?v=IVawgv8gA3o

Say: Fasting might be a new and alien concept for you. Used repeatedly throughout Scripture as a way to increase our soul's appetite for God, it remains a key way that followers of Jesus express their longing for God – but it's a practice that many have either forgotten or dismissed as irrelevant.

Instead it's being replaced with Juice Fasts and 5-2 Diets. The word 'fasting' has come to mean something different in our western society. You might associate fasting with losing weight, or a 'Christian' justification for spending less time on Facebook and more time doing coursework.

What if fasting could be so much more! This week we will look at how abstaining from some good gift given to us from God, is us saying to him: 'This much I want more of you, O God!' (John Piper, A Hunger for God).

Note to leader: This session will hopefully help your group to discover how the spiritual discipline of fasting can be much more varied than abstaining from food. It will be important to reiterate this throughout the session, or to keep the focus away from food completely if you feel it would be unhelpful for your young people, particularly if disordered eating or eating disorders are prevalent amongst your group. There is also a helpful book from Youthscape that might be worth purchasing to help you if any issues or questions arise: www.youthscape.co.uk/store/product/a-parents-guide-to-eating-disorders

WORD

📖 **Read Matthew 6:16-18**

¹⁶ When you fast, do not look sombre as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

Watch: *Spiritual Disciplines - Fasting*

▶ www.youtube.com/watch?v=8UwWiO61Z3w

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it important that we don't announce the fact we are fasting?
2. Compare this passage to the one in Matthew 6:5-6. How are they saying similar things?

WORSHIP

How often do you fill your life with external distractions rather than focusing all your energy on listening to what God has to say? One of the best ways to understand what God is saying is to open his word.

Use these next 30 minutes as a 'time of lament'. Open your Bible (hard-copy Bible rather than phone to minimise

SESSION
THREE

distractions), don't speak to anyone and don't read a book. Simply sit, or wander around, in silence. Have your eyes closed or open, write in a journal or read your Bible.

Here is a prayer to use whilst in silence:

The **Jesus Prayer**, is an old simple prayer used in Eastern Christianity to help you stay centred and to avoid your mind wandering to what you might watch on TV tonight.

“ ‘Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, the sinner.’

Rejoin after 30 minutes to reflect on the experience.

WITNESS OR ACTION

Challenge: This week let's try and add five minutes of silence into our days.

Discuss with the group:

1. Set a time that suits you. If you know that you are rubbish at waking up in the morning, for example, don't set yourself an unachievable goal. Try your silence before dinner instead.
2. Set a reminder on your phone and stick to it. Repetition is key to forming a habit.
3. Once your alarm sounds, switch your phone OFF. In our digital age distractions are all around us; for Christians these are just more obstacles to our focusing on God.
4. You might like listening to music when in silence. However, if you allow the music to become another distraction as your mind wanders elsewhere, then turn it off!
5. If five minutes each day is easy, why not increase it to 10!
6. And finally, if you would like to experiment with fasting from food, give this article a read for practical tips before you do: www.desiringgod.org/interviews/why-do-christians-fast

When fasting continue to drink plenty of water, and if you have pre-existing health conditions speak to your doctor first.

ACTS INTO ACTION: BOLDNESS IN THE WORLD

Note to leader: This week we have provided you with two options for your session depending on what would work best for your group. You can go with option A which will follow the regular cell format, or option B which will allow for a more practical outworking of some of the ideas of what it means to practise the radical love that Jesus taught.

OPTION A

WELCOME

This community of believers in Acts were empowered by prayer and devotion. Discuss how your week of spiritual silence and/or prayer and fasting has been. Have you found it hard? What were the most challenging parts? What could you change for next week?

Game: Being bold in what we **say!**

The group should arrange their seats in a circle. Give the group a story starter at the beginning of the round. Starting with the person whose birthday is closest to today and then moving around the circle, each person providing just five words of the story. After one person is done, the person sitting to their left adds five more words where the first person left off. Continue around the circle, adding five words at a time, until the music stops or until you give another signal. Whoever is in the middle of their sentence or is struggling to think of a sentence or the right number of words when the music stops is out. They must leave the circle. Carry on, either continuing the story or with a new story starter. Play continues until the final round when the person who is not speaking when the music stops is the winner.

WORD

Read Acts 4: 1-31

¹ 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: 'By what power or what name did you do this?'

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

¹³ When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised 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. ¹⁶ 'What are we going to do with these men?' they asked. '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.'

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, '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.'

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.

Discussion Questions:

- “ ‘Peter and John were not skilled interpreters of Scripture. They didn’t travel down the long educational path to be groomed for Jewish leadership, and yet they had this “boldness”. It’s more than a general confidence. Peter and John’s “boldness” was in what they said about Jesus. Or more specifically, their boldness was in how they were so outspoken about the identity of Jesus.’

Jonathan Parnell, 2013

The Jewish leaders must have been astonished that these ex-fishermen were quoting Scripture so freely and identifying Jesus within this Scripture.

1. What is the difference between speaking with confidence and speaking with arrogance?
2. How can we strive to guard against arrogance?
3. Why is it important to meditate on Scripture before we speak to others about Jesus' identity? How does this passage show this importance?
4. From reading this passage, what is more important in evangelism – telling people who Jesus is or telling people they should change?
5. In John 14:6 Jesus says, 'I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.' How is getting to know WHO Jesus is linked to being bold?

WORSHIP AND WITNESS

Jesus taught and practised radical love. For us to be bold disciples of his, we must learn to do the same. This week, as well as developing the practice of silence learnt last week, let's go one step further. How can you show radical love to your neighbours/friends/colleagues/family?

As the song plays (see below), jot down your actions for this week.

Some examples:

1. Show radical love by doing something in secret! Maybe this could be buying some items for your local homeless shelter and dropping them off anonymously.
2. Could you do the washing up at work instead of leaving it for someone else? Or tidy up after others at school/work/church/home etc?
3. Is there someone who needs your love this week who is having a hard time? Arrange to meet a friend who is lonely.
4. Spend time with someone no one else wants to. Sit with someone in class who is usually by themselves.
5. Thank your teacher/lecturer/parent/colleague for the advice they have given you or the times you haven't thanked them in the past.
6. Do a chore that your parents/housemate usually does, and do it while they are out or without them knowing!

Listen to: 'What Love Is This' – Kari Jobe

 www.youtube.com/watch?v=SsgUdVDfaoM

Close in prayer:

Lord, I thank you that I am a child of yours. Thank you for never changing, for giving your life for me so that I could get to know you! This week help me to speak more of you to those I come into contact with. Give me strength to be bold when I don't have the words to say. Help me to better understand your word and who you say you are! Help me to show love when words fail.

OPTION B

WELCOME

Ask the group if any of them have been able to partake in the challenge set last week of putting some specific time aside in each of their days for silence. If anyone managed to do it, how did they find it?

Say: Jesus taught and practised radical love. For us to be bold disciples of his, we must learn to do the same. In today's session we are going to make a plan of action for how we can show radical love to our neighbours, friends, colleagues and family and maybe even start to do some of it now.

Depending on the number in your group you could split down into smaller groups or work as one big group if that would be better.

Try and make the environment feel as relaxed and creative as possible to allow for lots of ideas to flow. Get the group discussing the following points:

- * What things could we do in secret that would show radical love to others?
- * Think of somewhere that you spend a lot of time. What small, simple acts could you do there that would show respect and love to others?
- * Is there someone who needs your love who is having a hard time?
- * Are there ways in which you could say thank you to someone you haven't thanked enough in the past?
- * What chores could you do at home that someone else usually does, without them knowing!
- * What things could you do in your community as a group that would show radical love to your neighbours?

When it feels that the group have come up with lots of options and ideas, get them to make a list of things that they could do right now, later on today, at some point this week and at some time next month.

Spend the next part of the session by getting started with some of the ideas that they can do right now! This might involve doing various things around the building in which you gather, or making contact with people outside of the group, arranging to do something for someone in the church etc.

PRAYER

At the end of your time together, and hopefully after being able to make a start on some of the ideas that the group has come up with, gather everyone back together to pray. Affirm the group as they set off into the week fired up with the challenge of showing love just as Jesus has taught us!