

See and Hear

February 26, 2023

Lesson Summary

Main Passages

Acts 3:11-26

Session Outline

1. Time to Hear (Acts 3:11-16)
2. Call to Repentance (Acts 3:17-21)
3. Warning (Acts 3:22-26)

Theological Theme

The first miraculous healing after Pentecost and Jesus's ascension drew a lot of attention. Peter took advantage of the opportunity to boldly preach the gospel to the gathered crowd.



Leader Guide

See and Hear

Introduction

A fun and popular kids' game is Simon Says. The leader—"Simon"—calls out commands to the group, and they are to follow any instructions he or she gives that begin with the words "Simon says." The leader aims to trick the group into doing things that Simon didn't say or that weren't ever instructed. One method for tricking people is to perform a different motion than one speaks, such as raising a hand while telling the crowd to touch their noses.

Many people will follow what they see a leader doing even if he or she is saying something different. Children will often emulate what they see parents doing more than they obey the instructions they hear. Seeing and hearing are important and most effective when they work together.

- ❓ Have you ever played Simon Says? How easy or difficult is it for you to be deceived in this game?
- ❓ Why do you think people sometimes follow what they see more than what they hear?
- ❓ When have you experienced the power of seeing and hearing with kids?

Session Summary


Once the Holy Spirit came upon them at Pentecost, the disciples carried on the work of Jesus's ministry. Peter and John encountered a lame man who they healed through the power of the Holy Spirit. This healing drew the crowd's attention, and they gathered to see what happened.

Peter saw the crowd and the opportunity he had to share the truth with them, so he preached a message in the power of the Holy Spirit, calling everyone to repentance and faith in Christ. Peter and John are an example for believers today that God is at work around us and wants to use us for His glory and purpose in all things. Our role is to see what God is doing and take advantage of opportunities to share the truth with the lost world.

The gospel message through the power of the Holy Spirit brings real change.


1. Time to Hear (Acts 3:11-16)

Although Peter and John had been part of the man's miraculous healing, they were quick to make sure no one gave them the credit or glory for the healing. The crowd was amazed when they saw the lame man walking and dancing in praise to the Lord. **When God's work is on display, people will be interested in what they see.** Peter questioned why they were amazed since they also had been around when Jesus lived and performed other miracles.

 Why do you think the crowd was so amazed by the healing they saw?

Once Peter had their attention, he took advantage of the opportunity and began to preach the truth to the crowd. It was vital that they heard the gospel message because seeing a miraculous work can cause amazement and interest, but it is not what saves people. Peter began to boldly share about Jesus and made sure to use language that would clearly identify who the man's healer was. He spoke of Jesus as the perfect Savior so all would be certain of whose power was at work.

Peter also called out the people for the part they played in the Jesus's crucifixion. While those listening might not have been directly involved, it was important for them to understand that they had rejected the very One whose power now amazed them.

 Why was it important that the people recognize the role they played in rejecting Jesus? Why must we also recognize this before coming to faith in Jesus?

In his sermon, Peter used the word "you" to personalize the message. Religious tradition in that day was impersonal. The concept of a personal relationship with God was foreign. In personalizing the role they each played in the crucifixion of Jesus, they could move one step closer to accepting the truth of Jesus as the Messiah. It is equally important for people today to recognize and accept the effects of our own sin. Instead of looking to find someone to blame for what we have done wrong, taking ownership and moving toward repentance is the key to a relationship with Jesus.

Rejecting the Messiah

Preaching to a Jewish audience, Peter began by pointing to their rejection of Jesus as Messiah and their responsibility in His death. Then he pointed to the evidences that Jesus is the Messiah, the "author of life"—His resurrection and His power which healed the lame man. He stated that their rejection of Jesus need not be final. Jesus is coming again, and they could repent and be ready for His second coming. Finally, he appealed to the Old Testament for confirmation from "Moses and all the prophets" that Jesus has ushered in the final times.

The authority and power used to heal the lame man had nothing to do with Peter or John and everything to do with Jesus. When God's people do good things in the world or are used as part of God's plan, it is vital that all are done in the name of Jesus and for His glory alone. Though it might require man's effort, courage, or boldness, we should always remember that unless we serve and do good deeds in the name of Jesus, we are missing the true power that changes lives.

- Application: How can our group be intentional about serving and doing good in the name of Jesus? What is our mission project this quarter?

2. Call to Repentance (Acts 3:17-21)

Peter's message continued with a personal connection. He referred to the people as brothers and sisters. Instead of condemning them for their role in the death of Jesus, he connected with them over the fact that all people sin and reject the Lord. He sought to build a bridge with them so that they might be more receptive to what he was saying.

- Why is a personal connection often effective in preaching and teaching?


Peter noted that the people had acted in ignorance and didn't fully understand how they were sinning at the time. They had sinned because they did not fully understand the plan of God. This is a great reminder that God's will never changes—even when people plot evil against Him and His people. He can always carry out His plans.

When we sin—whether willfully or ignorantly—we need to respond as Peter called the crowd to that day by repenting from our sin. The act of repentance can be described as stopping movement toward sin and making a complete turn toward God. This is as much about what we turn toward as what we turn away from. We turn away from our sinful desires and actions as we turn toward our Savior and seek to follow Him.

- What is your experience with repentance? How would you describe repentance to a friend?


As Peter called the people to repent, he also shared with the benefits of repentance. When we truly repent, we are forgiven, and the record of our sin is blotted out or erased. This would have been an unusual concept for the people to grasp. Instead of offering different animals to make restitution for their sins, they could now repent and trust Jesus, and those offenses would be erased or wiped away as if they never happened. These truths were life changing.

Peter also said repentance brings refreshment. This refreshing may be both personal and corporate. When a person trusts Jesus and repents from his or her sin, there will be a refreshing from the Spirit. They will be cleansed and made new. Peter's words also indicated the repentance needed by the Jewish people. If they would repent, they would be refreshed when Jesus returns in glory. It is important for God's people to look forward to and pray for revival, believing God can and will bring seasons of refreshing both personally and corporately.


 Application: What do you need to repent from today so that you can experience refreshment from the Lord?

3. Warning (Acts 3:22-26)

The Jewish people were very familiar with Moses and knew his teachings well. Peter stressed that the prophet Moses spoke about was Jesus the Messiah. There are still those today who struggle to recognize that Jesus is the One they have been waiting for and need so desperately. Think about the people around you who seem to be looking for someone to meet their needs, fill the empty spaces in their lives, be a friend they can count on, or stand as a safe place to rest. Just as the Jews were watching and waiting for the prophet Moses spoke about but missing the fact that it was Jesus, the same is true of people today. Many are looking for help, a Savior, or a friend but missing Jesus.

 Who do you know who seems to be looking for Jesus but missing Him? What can you do to help them? (Prayer? Get coffee with them? Do a project together?)

If the direct benefits of knowing Jesus weren't enough motivation for the people, Peter also wanted to warn them of what would happen should they continue rejecting Jesus. The indirect benefit of their belief would be avoiding terrible destruction. The prophets prophesied about the destruction and devastation that will happen to those who do not receive Jesus. This was not a new message or warning for the Jewish people. It reinforced all they had been taught as part of their religious upbringing. Think about the things you've been taught over the years if you grew up in the church. How often have you heard some of the same things but never understood or believed them for yourself? That is similar to this crowd. Peter boldly reminded them at some point they would be out of chances to believe. Today is the time to choose Jesus and repent of your sins.

 What have you put off accepting and believing about Jesus though you may have heard it several times before?

In the covenant God made with Abraham, God promised to bless all the earth through the seed of Abraham. **All the earth is a reminder that we are to take the gospel to every corner of the planet without reservation or distinction between cultures, races, or ethnicities.**

Here are some unreached people groups for whom we can pray:

First quarter this year we are praying for three unreached, predominantly Muslim groups in Kenya: Somalis living in Kenya, the Garre Oromo, and the Majikenda Digo.

Please pray in these ways:

- Pray for the believing minority who suffer great persecution and martyrdom
- Pray for courage and strength for those who are boldly sharing their faith.
- Pray for safe fellowship and encouragement for isolated believers.

Conclusion

After witnessing a miraculous healing, the people crowded around Peter, John, and the man who had been healed. When Peter saw the crowd, he took advantage of the opportunity to boldly proclaim the truth about Jesus. The people had seen the power of God at work through the Holy Spirit, but they still needed to hear the truth and accept Jesus as their Savior.

In sharing the truth about Jesus, Peter connected some of their former Jewish teaching to what they had just experienced. He was clear that they needed to recognize the role their own sin played in the crucifixion and addressed their rejection of Jesus. Peter called them to repentance so that they would receive all the benefits of accepting Christ.

Peter also addressed the benefit of not being destroyed as the prophets predicted throughout Scripture. Every person who chooses Jesus will be blessed by God, who has promised to pour out His blessings and do good for us. In turning to Jesus, we also turn away from sin. Peter stressed that all the people of the earth would be blessed through Jesus. It is the responsibility of believers to take the gospel message to the ends of the earth.

- ① What sin have you been hanging onto and need to repent for?
- ① What opportunities do you need to take advantage of to boldly and relationally share truth about Jesus?
- ① What will you do differently because of what you have seen and heard about Jesus today?

Prayer of Response

Thank the Lord for His generous blessings. Ask for sensitivity and boldness to see the opportunities you have to speak the truth about Jesus and to commit to speaking up.

Additional Resources

- *Acts* by R. Kent Hughes
- *Acts* by I. Howard Marshall
- *Acts* by D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

For information on Missions, visit: brentwood.church/missions

Disciples Multiplying Disciples



Gospel Conversations mean sharing the good news of Jesus with the lost and searching, trusting the Holy Spirit with the results.

Groups are ongoing biblical communities that grow, care, and equip.

Going means service to one's campus, neighbors, and the nations to imitate Jesus' love for believers and for those yet to believe.

Gather means believers assembling together (at least) weekly to worship God through singing, preaching, and encouraging one another to good works.

Questions to Guide Your Group's Discussion

1. What does this passage say?
2. What did this passage mean to its original audience?
3. What does this passage tell us about God?
4. What does this passage tell us about man?
5. What does this passage demand of me?
6. How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (*How can you use this information this week at work or with friends and neighbors?*)
7. How does this passage prompt me to pray to God?

*Adapted from Seven Arrows by Matt Rogers pastor of The Church at Cherrydale, Greenville, SC

DxD This Week

Call to Action

Encourage your congregation to engage their communities through acts of love and service or to get involved with a ministry partner or with a global worker.

For Next Week

Session Title

- Boldness

Main Passages

- Acts 4:23-31

Session Outline

1. Acknowledge the Lord (Acts 4:23-24)
2. Powerful Prayer (Acts 4:25-28)
3. Request and Results (Acts 4:29-31)

Memorize

“Therefore repent and turn back, so that your sins may be wiped out, 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.”

- Acts 3:19-20

Historical Context of Acts

Purpose

The book of Acts emphasizes the work of God through the Holy Spirit in the lives of people who devoted themselves to Jesus Christ, especially Paul as he led the Gentile missionary endeavor. It is no exaggeration to say that the Christian church was built through the dynamic power of the Spirit working through chosen vessels. Another important concept is the radial spread of the gospel from Jews to Gentiles, from Jerusalem to Judea, from Samaria and on to the rest of the world (1:8). Thus Christianity transformed from being a sect within Judaism to a world religion that eventually gained acceptance everywhere, even in the heart of the pagan Roman Empire: Rome itself.

Author

The book of Acts is formally anonymous. The traditional view is that the author was the same person who wrote the Gospel of Luke—Luke the physician and traveling companion of Paul (Col 4:14; 2Tm 4:11; Phm 24). As early as the second century AD, church leaders such as Irenaeus wrote that Luke was the author of Acts. Irenaeus based his view on the “we” passages in Acts, five sections where the author changes from the third person (“he/she” and “they”) to first-person plural (“we”) as he narrates the action (16:10–17; 20:5–15; 21:1–18; 27:1–29; 28:1–16). Irenaeus and many scholars since his time have interpreted these passages to mean that the author of Acts was one of the eyewitness companions of Paul. Luke fits this description better than any other candidate, especially given the similar themes between the Gospel of Luke and the book of Acts.

Setting

The date of composition of the book of Acts is to a large extent directly tied to the issue of authorship. A number of scholars have argued that Acts should be dated to the early 60s (at the time of Paul’s imprisonment). Acts closes with Paul still in prison in Rome (28:30–31). Although it is possible that Luke wrote at a later date, a time when Paul had been released, it is more plausible to think that he completed this book while Paul was still in prison. Otherwise he would have ended the book by telling about Paul’s release.

Special Features

The book of Acts provides a glimpse into the first three decades of the early church (ca AD 30–63) as it spread and multiplied after the ascension of Jesus Christ. It is not a detailed or comprehensive history. Rather, it focuses on the role played by apostles such as Peter, who ministered primarily to Jews, and Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles.

Extended Commentary

Acts 3:11-26

3:11. Solomon's Colonnade was a covered portico running the entire eastern portion of the temple's outer court. On that porch, a large crowd gathered as a result of the miracle. Peter's third of seven addresses in Acts was about to commence. The pattern of this chapter seems not at all unlike our Lord's ministry, particularly as John recorded it. I like to call it the "miracle-message method." Jesus would perform a miracle (like the feeding of the five thousand) and follow with a message related to the same theme (the bread of life in John 6). Whether Peter intended it or not, that is precisely what he did.

3:12. All effective ministry begins with self-denial. John the Baptizer once said, "He must become greater; I must become less" (John 3:30).

Peter challenged their astonishment at a miracle, aware of course that apart from what Jesus had done, miracles had been nonexistent in Israel for years. His listeners must understand that the source of the miracle and the source of the ministry could not be found in the two men now clutched by the healed cripple. They had neither power of the spirit nor power of moral example to be able to claim to do miracles.

3:13–15. All Christian ministries center on Jesus. God's work did not begin with Jesus' earthly life. The gospel rests in history so Peter began there. As a Jew speaking to Jews, he invoked the revered names of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He had no interest in abstract theology, nor did he bother (with this audience) to develop an elaborate introduction, as we shall see later with both Stephen and Paul.

Interestingly, Peter's recollection of the crucifixion seems to exonerate, or at least ignore, Pilate. The good people of Jerusalem, those who worshiped regularly at Herod's temple, disowned the Holy and Righteous One and chose rather a murderer. Don't miss the direct accusations: you handed him over; you disowned him; you asked that a murderer be released; you killed the author of life.

Peter left no doubt about the blame for the death of Jesus, God's messianic servant (Isa. 52:13–53:12). All this was certainly stunning revelation to people who had acted in ignorance (v. 17). Their ignorance did not diminish their guilt. Verse 15 is particularly stunning: You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. The very architect of breathing had his breath taken away by these people. The Creator of the universe gave that breath back.

We dare not miss the last five words of the verse—we are witnesses of this. In the first chapter we noted how the word witness stands so strategic in Luke's history of the early church in Acts. As we study through the sermons in Acts, we will find these early preachers moving as rapidly as they can to the fact and meaning of the resurrection. They saw him. They touched him. They watched him ascend into heaven. Nothing could daunt their faith nor diminish their resolve to be his witnesses.

3:16. Effective Christian ministry proclaims faith in the name of Jesus. Luke uses this phrase thirty-three times in the Book of Acts. Here we have the key verse of the chapter, the answer to the questions raised in verse 12. How was this man healed? How is all this possible? Because of Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him. The beggar need not understand resurrection, the ascension, or any other Christian theology. His response to Peter's command and outstretched right hand demonstrated faith which God had placed in his heart.

We must remember that Jesus had probably entered this very gate of the temple many times and would have been well-known to a man who sat there every day. When Romans talked about the name of Caesar, they implied all the authority and power of the emperor. So here Peter referred to Jesus and everything about him as he delivered what we might call the first pure gospel in Acts.

3:17–18. What a magnanimous gesture in this spontaneous sermon. Without backing away from his condemnation of their guilt, Peter acknowledged they had no idea what they were doing, nor did their leaders. Furthermore, crucifixion fulfilled prophecy because God had said the Messiah would suffer. Peter continued to jolt his audience with word after word. The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob actually prophesied and then fulfilled the death of his own Son, the Messiah! This gracious appeal to Israel to accept the gospel reminds us of Jesus' words on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing" (Luke 23:34).

3:19–20. Don't touch that dial; there's more. The Messiah is alive, he has ascended, and he will return. If the nation would only turn to God for the washing of sins, times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and Jesus would come again. Peter used two unprecedented expressions in these verses. His references to times of refreshing in verse 19 and the time ... for God to restore everything (v. 21) have had commentators scratching their theological heads for years. One truth emerges with clarity: prophecy which determined Christ's death also will determine a time of restoration. It seems that Israel will repent before Jesus comes again, though we probably cannot conclude from the passage that Christ's return depends upon Israel's repentance.

Meanwhile, Jesus will remain in heaven until the promised restoration (Ps. 110:1). We need not conclude that Peter had specific prophetic passages in mind, though that certainly might have been the case. In general, he intended to remind his fellow Jews that the hope of Israel's restoration should not be forgotten and, indeed, could only be fulfilled in Jesus.

3:22–23. Faith in Christ, coupled with repentance, is required for salvation, so Peter used a messianic proof text from Deuteronomy 18:15, 18–19. Any group wanting a hearing in Israel had to link itself with the heroes of the past, and it surely didn't hurt to drop Moses' name in the process. As well-taught Jews, Peter's hearers would have immediately understood the identification and continuity—belief in Moses should produce belief in Jesus.

Belief in Jesus in no way destroys belief in Moses. When John the Baptist began preaching, the priests and Levites asked him: Are you the Prophet? (John 1:21). Of course not! Now Peter picked up the same theme to say that the prophet of whom Moses spoke was the very one through whose power the lame beggar had just been healed.

3:24–26. Peter's Jewish audience represented the natural heirs to promises dating all the way back to Genesis (22:18; 26:4). The earliest Christian preaching rested on Old Testament theology which emphasized the importance of a faithful remnant waiting for the Messiah. This spontaneous proclamation on a temple porch provided a brilliant example. Every genuine prophet looked forward to the coming of Messiah, and those prophets lived from Samuel right up to John the Baptist, or better yet, to Jesus who was raised up as God's servant.¹

References

1. Kenneth O. Gangel, Acts, vol. 5, Holman New Testament Commentary (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1998), 46-48.

Author Bio

R. Kent Hughes (Acts)

R. Kent Hughes (DMin, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School) is senior pastor emeritus of College Church in Wheaton, Illinois, and former professor of practical theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Hughes is also a founder of the Charles Simeon Trust, which conducts expository preaching conferences throughout North America and worldwide. He serves as the series editor for the Preaching the Word commentary series and is the author or coauthor of many books. He and his wife, Barbara, live in Wyncote, Pennsylvania, and have four children and an ever-increasing number of grandchildren.

I. Howard Marshall (Acts)

I. Howard Marshall (1934–2015) was professor emeritus of New Testament exegesis and honorary research professor at the University of Aberdeen, Scotland. His many books include New Testament Theology: Many Witnesses, One Gospel and Beyond the Bible: Moving from Scripture to Theology.

D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones (Acts)

Martyn Lloyd-Jones (1899–1981), minister of Westminster Chapel in London for thirty years, was one of the foremost preachers of his day. His many books have brought profound spiritual encouragement to millions around the world.