

Placed
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Acts 3:12-26

There is a quote from politics and leadership: *“Never let a good crisis go to waste.”* While that quote may seem cynical, what does it mean? How might it apply to someone with a health problem or substance abuse issue they refuse to address? Think about the COVID 19 crisis. It was awful but what good things came out of it?

The point: Often, God (for His glory) chooses to display some of His most spectacular work during a time of crisis in someone’s life. When He does that, the Holy Spirit can soften the hearts of unsaved people toward the gospel. Followers of Christ must be ready to share as witnesses to what Jesus has done for us and wants to do for them.

Before the text, some context. Though the disciples had trusted Christ, they still observed some Jewish traditions as they sought to spread His message to the Jewish people. One of those traditions was going to the Temple for prayer services. Peter and John were headed into one of those prayer meetings when they encountered a man who had been born lame and was in his regular place begging outside the Temple. Of course, he asked them for money.

(NLT) — 4 Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, “Look at us!” **5** The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money. **6** But Peter said, “I don’t have any silver or gold for you. But I’ll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!” **7** Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man’s feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. **8** He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them. **9** All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God. **10** When they realized he was the lame beggar they had seen so often at the Beautiful Gate, they were absolutely astounded!

God chose to miraculously display His power and it got the attention of the crowd around the Temple. Peter saw an opportunity to share the good news of Jesus.

12 And when Peter saw it he addressed the people: “Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk? **13** The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified his servant Jesus, whom you delivered over and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he had decided to release him. **14** But you denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, **15** and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. **16** And his name—by faith in his name—has made this man strong whom you see and know, and the faith that is through Jesus has given the man this perfect health in the presence of you all. **17** “And now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your

rulers. **18** But what God foretold by the mouth of all the prophets, that his Christ would suffer, he thus fulfilled. **19** Repent therefore, and turn back, that your sins may be blotted out, **20** that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that he may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, **21** whom heaven must receive until the time for restoring all the things about which God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets long ago. **22** Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers. You shall listen to him in whatever he tells you. **23** And it shall be that every soul who does not listen to that prophet shall be destroyed from the people.' **24** And all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and those who came after him, also proclaimed these days. **25** You are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant that God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed.' **26** God, having raised up his servant, sent him to you first, to bless you by turning every one of you from your wickedness."

- Why would the crowd of “regulars” around the temple not think the lame man was a “plant” who wasn’t really lame? (see 4:22.)
- What an eloquent and complete evangelistic sermon from Peter! It’s great that he spent all those years in seminary studying, right? ☺ If some people around the Temple knew Peter and John, why would Peter’s sermon have been amazing?
- Verse 12 in the NLT says, *“Peter saw his opportunity and addressed the crowd.”ⁱⁱ*
- In the American Revolution there was an elite group of the militia called “Minute Men.” Why were they called that?ⁱⁱⁱ How can we apply that to sharing the gospel?
- This is the same Peter who would later write to persecuted Christians in 1 Peter 3:15, Always be *“prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect...”^v*
- Just before 1 Peter 3:15, in verse 14, Peter wrote, *“...even if you should suffer for righteousness’ sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled,¹⁵ but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy...”^v*
- He was writing to scattered and persecuted Christ-followers that they should share the gospel even if they risked being punished or killed. Peter was risking the same thing with his sermon outside the Temple.
- When we look at Peter’s gospel message, we can see he was ready to share.
- Verse 13: Peter immediately gave the credit for the healing to God; THEIR God, the one TRUE God, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Peter also connected the dots from the faith of their ancestors to faith in the Messiah, Jesus.
- Step one of sharing our faith is to point people to God. When someone asks a Christ-follower, *“How have you endured this difficult chapter in your life?”* we should immediately give the credit to God and to our faith in Christ.
- Verse 15: Peter didn’t shy away from the truth that some of these very people were the ones who asked Pilate to crucify Jesus the true “source of life.”
- This was a gutsy move! What gave Peter the courage to be so bold?
- Warren Wiersbe writes, *“This is probably not the kind of message we would give at an evangelistic meeting today, because it was designed especially for Peter’s Jewish audience. As at Pentecost, Peter was addressing people who knew the Scriptures and were acquainted with the recent events in Jerusalem (see Luke 24:18).”^{vi}*

- If you are witnessing to your Jewish friends, I wouldn't start with Acts 3.
- Verse 17: Peter didn't absolve them of their guilt for turning Jesus over to be crucified but said they acted out of ignorance that Jesus was the Messiah.
- Jesus said on the cross: *"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."*^{vii}
- As horribly as they tortured Jesus in His suffering He forgave them.
- Peter's sermon was specifically for that group but there is a lesson for us. We should not water down the gospel when we share it. We might be hesitant to share that "all have sinned" (Rom. 3:23) but everyone must see their sin before they can see their need for a Savior. We must share the truth, and as Peter said, *"do it with gentleness and respect"* trusting the Holy Spirit to give us courage.
- One commentator wrote: *"Peter doesn't want to make his listeners feel guilty about what they have done. He wants them to turn to Jesus. There's no need for us today to hammer away at others' sins. What they need is not to feel more guilty, but to hear the good news that God forgives."*^{viii}
- Verse 15: Peter testified that God raised Jesus from the dead and said, *"we are witnesses of this fact."* One of the qualifications to be an apostle in that day was to have witnessed that Jesus had been resurrected.
- When we share the gospel we need to talk about the resurrection.
- We can't claim to have seen Jesus in the flesh, but we CAN attest to how He has worked in our lives in ways the cause us to believe He is alive today.
- Verse 16: Peter said "Faith in Jesus' name" healed the man.
- Peter and John had faith Jesus would heal him.
- The man had enough faith to take Peter's hand and stand.
- Salvation and eternal life only come through faith in what Jesus did on the cross.
- When we share the gospel, we must point people to faith in Jesus to save them.
- Verse 19: Peter called on them to repent of their sins and turn to God so their sins could be "wiped away." What does it mean to repent? How is it different from feeling sorry (especially from "sorry because I got caught")?
- The Greek word *"metanoia"* means "a change of mind" resulting in a change of life(style),^{ix} I agree with God that I'm a sinner and with His help I want to change.
- If we repent and believe that Jesus paid for our sins through His death on the cross (Rom.5:8) God promises to "blot out" or "erase" our sins FOREVER.
- When we share the gospel, we must talk about the need for repentance.
- How can we do that without pushing someone away from faith in Christ?
- We should be respectful, transparent, non-judgmental, and focus on the good news that we can have forgiveness of all our sins because *"Jesus paid it all."*
- Verses 20 and 21: Repentance and faith in Christ brings refreshing and restoration. This points to the day, when Jesus returns and the nation of Israel will turn to Him and be restored as His chosen people.
- Those who trust Christ as Savior and Lord as individuals will experience spiritual "refreshment" now and participate in the new Heaven and earth when He returns.
- So, what was the outcome of Peter's sermon? How did the people respond?
- Acts 4:1-4 records two outcomes:
 - The religious leaders were upset and arrested Peter and John.
 - Many of the people (likely 2,000 per Acts 4:4) believed and trusted Christ.

- Since we will not be together next week, check out Acts 4:1-21 for yourself!

So, What's the Takeaway?

- Often, God chooses (for His glory) to display some of His most spectacular work during a time of crisis in someone's life. When He does that, the Holy Spirit can soften the hearts of unsaved people toward the gospel.
- It might be a crisis in life of an unsaved person that makes them open to Christ.
- It could be an unsaved person witnessing the strong faith of a Christ-follower who is going through their own crisis.
- Sometimes it can be the positive change like marriage or the birth of a first child that makes a couple begin to get serious about the things of God.
- Sometimes, when people see a dramatic change in a hardened sinner who comes to Christ the Holy Spirit can begin to do a work in their hearts.
- When God chooses to soften hearts during a change or crisis, followers of Christ must be ready to share with them what Jesus has done for us and for all people.
- In this text it was the miraculous healing of a man after forty years of suffering that presented Peter with the opportunity to share the gospel.
- Peter was not a trained theologian, but he did know the basics of the gospel message. We also don't have to be seminary-trained to share our faith, but we should know the basics outlined in John 3:16 and the "Roman's Road" (check out this link: <https://www.logos.com/grow/nook-romans-road-salvation/>).
- If the Holy Spirit can empower a rugged fisherman to preach to this great crowd, He can certainly give us the courage and the words to share what Jesus has done for us. We just need to be sensitive to the opportunity to share what Jesus has done for us and wants to do for others.

ⁱ <https://wholebeinginstitute.com/crisis-10-nuggets-pandemic/>

ⁱⁱ Tyndale House Publishers. (2015). [*Holy Bible: New Living Translation*](#) (Ac 3:12). Tyndale House Publishers.

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Minutemen>

^{iv} [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (1 Pe 3:15). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

^v [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (1 Pe 3:14–15). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

^{vi} Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). [*The Bible exposition commentary*](#) (Vol. 1, p. 413). Victor Books.

^{vii} [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#) (Lk 23:34). (2016). Crossway Bibles.

^{viii} Richards, L. O. (1991). [*The Bible reader's companion*](#) (electronic ed., p. 710). Victor Books.

^{ix} Swanson, J. (1997). In [*Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek \(New Testament\)*](#) (electronic ed.). Logos Research Systems, Inc.