

Acts

The Gospel on the Move

Study 4

The Power of the Spirit in the Early Church

Acts 3:1-26

A. Peter Heals a Lame Beggar

Acts 3:1-10 (NIV)

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 recognized 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.

1. a) Objective Question. Choose the most appropriate answer. Which is the best definition of “miracles”?

- A. Event impossible to explain by natural causes/ an exception to the natural law
(Does not include God, Assumes God does not use some natural causes, Minimises actual miracles which are answers to prayer but not impossible to explain by natural means)
- B. A direct intervention of God in the world (Assumes the world is independent, But God causes rain to fall and grass to grow)
- C. God working in the world without using means (Very few miracles from thin air, feeding 5,000, no means = means no fish)

D. A miracle is a less common kind of God's activity in which he arouses people's awe and wonder and bears witness to Himself

b) Reflection Question. "Miracle" in Greek is *Simeon* which means a sign. Share if miracles were significant in your belief in God/the gospel.

c) Discussion Question. According to the video lecture and Isaiah 35:3-6, why didn't Jesus levitate, transform into a giant, or fly around like Superman to prove He is God as a sign to the people?

- Jesus' healings were the only natural things in a world that is unnatural, demonised and wounded.

- We are enemies of suffering and will alleviate it whenever we can

- We can handle suffering knowing it will be vanquished in the future... we are the winning side

- God became vulnerable in the form of a weak human baby. The way we minister in this world is not through power, legislation, or political activity, we actually minister the world through weakness and that is what this miracle teaches us.

Quick Verse Reference

Isaiah 35:3-6

New International Version

3 Strengthen the feeble hands,
steady the knees that give way;

4 say to those with fearful hearts,
"Be strong, do not fear;

your God will come,
he will come with vengeance;

with divine retribution
he will come to save you."

5 Then will the eyes of the blind be opened

and the ears of the deaf unstopped.
6 Then will the lame leap like a deer,
and the mute tongue shout for joy.
Water will gush forth in the wilderness
and streams in the desert.

d) Discussion Question. According to the video lecture, what are the characteristics of a miracle?

- Occur at the sovereign will of the Father through the Son
- It is not a right or power wielded by people
- Must authenticate the gospel in the eyes of unbelievers
- By themselves are insufficient to convert
- Should follow biblical patterns

e) Objective Question. Choose the most appropriate answer. Which mode of evangelism is the norm?

- A. Power Evangelism (the transformative impact of sharing faith through miracles and acts of God's power)
- B. Proclamation Evangelism (talking to people about Jesus and inviting them to receive Him as their Lord and Savior.)

B. Biblical Evidence of Jesus as the Messiah for the Jewish Audience

Acts 3:11-18 (NIV)

11 While the man held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. 12 When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. 14 You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. 15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. 16 By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has completely healed him, as you can all see.

17 “Now, fellow Israelites, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders.
18 But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Messiah would suffer.

- 2. Reflection question. The Jewish audience had prophetic literature to refer to when we wanted to share the gospel. How do you tailor to a Malaysian audience when sharing the gospel?**

C. Response to the Gospel

Acts 3:19-26 (NIV)

19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20 and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. 21 Heaven must receive him until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. 22 For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. 23 Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.’[a]

24 “Indeed, beginning with Samuel, all the prophets who have spoken have foretold these days. 25 And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed.’[b] 26 When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways.”

- 3. a) Reflection question. How often do you repent?**

b) Reflection question. Do you firmly believe your sins are wiped out every time and that God has unlimited patience with our wicked ways?

c) Reflection question. Do you see the progress of spiritual maturity in your life?

Takeaway

In Acts 3, apostle Peter through Jesus' power healed the lame beggar and used the incident to proclaim the Gospel so that people repent.

Case Study

Case 1 – Miracles Today

Mira Khew quotes Matthew 7:7 which says “Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you.

She says that if a miracle does not happen, it is because your faith is too small.

1 Cor 14:1 asks us to desire spiritual gifts:

“Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.”

1. a) Discussion question. Mira attend your bible study group, what would you say to Mira?

- Miracles are not normative, they only happened in clusters of biblical times (during the time of Moses and the Law, the time of Elijah and Elisha, when introducing prophets, and the time of Jesus and the apostles.

- 1 Cor 12:27-31 suggests that not everyone can get the gift of miracles. Different people get different gifts.

- In Matt 8:28-34 the two demon-possessed men didn't need faith to be healed.

b) Discussion question. What are the reasons against the cessationist's view (those who believe miracles have stopped)?

1 Corinthians 13:8–12 suggests that miracles stop “When completeness comes”.

If one thinks “completeness” refers to the completion of the bible, then miracles have stopped. (cessationist's view)

If one thinks “completeness” refers to the time of new heaven and new earth, then it is not time for miracles to be completely stopped yet.

Case 1.1 – Miracles Today

Mira then quoted a book and incident: The Toronto Blessing: Slaying in the spirit - The Telling Wonder Paperback – 1 Jan. 1996, by Nader Mikhael

During the 1800's, cripples, paralytics and the blind were healed "as in the days of old, by laying on of hands in the name of Jesus," under a New York missionaries ministry. Healing recipients, praising God, rushed to gather ill friends and neighbours who were also healed. Seeing the miracles, converts clamoured to receive baptism and join the church.

c) Discussion question. What would you say to Mira?

MIRACLES ARE NOT PROOF OF SPIRITUALITY, those miracles happened to the Mormon cult.

Matthew 7:22 “ On that day many will say to me, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name? ’ 23 And then will I declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.

d) Discussion question. If miracles are not proof of spirituality what is the proof of spirituality?

e) Discussion question. Does this mean there are miracles-performing non-believers in the church today? If yes, what should we do with this information?