

Bridges To Breakthrough

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Devotional - Bible Study Series

Understanding the scriptures and our relationship with our Lord Jesus is of paramount importance to this church, because of the powerful vision that the Lord has given to us...

"...to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work." (Ephesians 4:12-16)

Therefore...

"We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labour, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me." (Colossians 1:28-29)

The Vision of this Ministry

Our Vision is of a Biblically functioning Community, where God alone is worshipped and the people are mature in Christ, free from captivity and bondage, and are equipped to reach out to the world, bearing fruit to the praises of God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!

Question: Are you functioning Biblically? Is God first in your life, or is your life cluttered with idols? Anything that comes before God in your life is an idol and will certainly get in the way of true relationship with the Lord God, and true spiritual maturity. "You will defile your idols...throw them away... and say to them "Away with you" Isaiah 30:22

Transformation

First things first:

start with a prayer: Ask the Lord to give you an open mind and a receptive heart for His word. Ask for the Holy Spirit's guidance and teaching as you study.

The invitation

Begin your study by reading and meditating on John 10:10; Revelation 3:20; John 5:1-6

Jesus tells us clearly what he is able to do for us, but he will not force himself into our lives. Instead, he knocks on the door of our hearts and waits for us to invite him in. If we do, he then asks us "Do you want to get well?" and waits for our reply. If we answer "Yes" we are giving him permission to begin his work of transforming our lives.

Prayer points:

- Thank God that you can approach the throne of grace with confidence, to receive mercy and find grace to help you in your time of need (see Hebrews 4:16).
- Think about the different areas of your life. Is there any area you have been refusing to let Jesus into? Ask Jesus to come into that area and begin transforming it.
- Think about people you know who are refusing to let Jesus into their lives. Pray for God to unblind their minds (see 2 Corinthians 4:4) and bring people across their paths who will show Jesus to them. Pray that they will not perish but come to repentance (see 2 Peter 3:9).

Contrasting lives

The story begins...

"One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer- at three in the afternoon. Now a man crippled 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. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them." Acts 3:1-5

Let us look at the differences in the lives of Peter and John and the "man crippled from birth" as revealed in these verses:

- ❖ Peter and John were walking to the temple... *at the same time as the "man crippled from birth" was being carried there. The man had never walked in his life.*
- ❖ Peter and John had the freedom to choose where they would go... *the crippled man was put in the same place every day. He had to stay where he was put.*

- ❖ They were going inside the temple to pray... *he was staying outside the temple to beg. He was by "the temple gate called Beautiful" but denied access to the interior of the temple. He was entirely dependent on people.*
- ❖ Peter and John had a personal relationship with God... *the crippled man did not know God. No one had helped him to get near to God.*
- ❖ The man was thinking about temporal things... *He was thinking only of money. Peter and John had their minds set on eternal things.*

A divine connection

The story continues:

"Then Peter said, "Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them, into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God. When all the people saw him walking and praising God, 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." Acts 3: 6- 10

Peter told the man he had no money to give him, but what he had was far more precious, the name of Jesus. The healing power in that name flowed through Peter, and the man "crippled from birth" became the man who was "walking and jumping, and praising God."

Unseen by any man, Almighty God had been carefully working out his plan to bring Peter and John and "the man crippled from birth" together.

And when they met, by the grace of God, there was a divine connection...the lifelong problem met the eternal solution. God was glorified, as the man's life was completely transformed, and he received the praise that belonged only to him. All the money in the world could not have changed the man's life the way God did.

Test your understanding

In this section, you will be asked to think about what you have looked at so far, go further into the topic and prompted to consider how the teaching can be applied to your life.

Lesson 1

Exercise A.

Consider the scriptures you have looked at so far and answer the following questions:

1. What kind of life does Jesus say he can give us?
2. What do you think it means to have the kind of life Jesus can give us?
3. In what way does Jesus approach us?
4. What question does he ask us?
5. What do you think was the main difference between Peter and John and the other people “going up to the temple at the time of prayer”?
6. Why do you think Peter and John responded to the man in the way they did?

Exercise B.

“Put yourself in their place...”

- Consider these situations as if you were actually there.
- Answer the questions imagining that you are the person identified.

1. Imagine you are one of the people “going up to the temple at the time of prayer”:

You see the man “crippled from birth”. You have seen him in the same place every time you have gone there. How do you respond to him?

- Do you ignore him and walk straight past him?
- Do you feel sorry for him?
- Do you give him money?
- Do you respond to him a different way? If so, in what way?
- What do you think the way you respond to the man reveals about you?

2. Imagine that you are “the man crippled from birth”. Think about your life, before you met Peter and John:

- What has your life been like so far?
- How do your family treat you?
- What is your opinion of yourself?
- How do other people in the community respond to you?
- What do you think about, when you are begging every day from the people going into the temple courts?
- What kind of future do you picture for yourself?

Now imagine yourself as the man healed, “walking and jumping and praising God”:

- How has your thinking changed?
- How has your opinion of yourself changed?
- How has your life changed?
- What possibilities are there now for your future?

Prayer points:

- Ask God to forgive you for any time you have passed judgment on other people or showed ungodly attitudes to them. Ask him to help you see people and situations through his eyes.
- Ask God for the grace to forgive anyone who has wronged you.
- Ask God for his help to live as a new creation in Christ Jesus and to be an effective minister of reconciliation (see 2 Corinthians 5:17-19)

Life transforming...

Lesson 2

Exercise A.

Read and meditate on Matthew 8:1-3; Leviticus 13:45-46; Luke 4:38- 40; Matthew 8: 14-16, then read the verses below and answer the questions.

“As he went along, he saw a man blind from birth. His disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” “Neither this man or his parents sinned,” said Jesus, “but this happened so that the work of God might be displayed in his life.” John 9:1-3

1. What are your first thoughts when you see a sick or disabled person?

2. Why do you think the disciples asked Jesus that question about the “man blind from birth”?
3. Consider the life that people with an “infectious skin disease” had to live (Leviticus 13:45-46); what impact do you think it would have had on them?
4. Consider “the man with leprosy” (Matthew 8:1-3):
 - How do you think he felt as he approached Jesus?
 - Why do you think the leper asked if Jesus was willing to make him clean?
 - What difference do you think Jesus’ words and actions would have made to the man’s life?
5. What have you learned about Jesus’ attitudes and abilities from Luke 4:38-40?

Exercise B.

Meditate on the following verse and then complete the exercise.

“...Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.” Romans 12:3

- Summarise Romans 12:3 in your own words and identify how it applies to your life.
- Take a few minutes to think about your life, before and after you learned how Jesus can transform lives.
- What needs to change in order that “the work of God might be displayed” more in your life than it is now?

Prayer points:

- Ask the Lord to help you “think of yourself with sober judgment” and to believe what he says about you. Ask him to separate you from any negative words spoken over you and to you.
- Ask God for the grace to resist conforming to the pattern of the world and to reveal to you his good, pleasing and perfect will for your life. Commit yourself to renewing your mind with the word of God and ask the Holy Spirit to illuminate the scriptures to you and guide you into all truth (see Romans 12:2; John 16:13).

Bringing people to Jesus

Read the following paragraphs and consider how faith and compassion are needed for the transformation of people’s lives.

“When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came to him, asking for help. “Lord,” he said, “my servant lies at home paralysed and in terrible suffering.” Jesus said to him, “I will go and heal him.” The centurion replied, “Lord, I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. But just say the word and my servant will be healed. For I myself am a man under

authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, "Go" and he goes; I say to this one, "Come" and he comes. I say to my servant, "Do this," and he does it." When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such faith... Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go! It will be done just as you believed it would. And his servant was healed that very hour." Matthew 8:5-10, 13

The centurion demonstrated his care and concern for his servant, when he came to Jesus, asking for help. He did not want the servant to continue suffering. He believed that Jesus could heal him when he spoke the word; that Jesus had authority over sickness and disease. The centurion believed his servant would be healed. Jesus validated his faith and "his servant was healed at that very hour."

When we consider Acts 3:1-10 we can see how Peter and John were not prepared to go in to the temple and worship God, leaving a crippled beggar in the same position he had occupied every day for many years. They knew that money was not the solution to the man's problems. Even if someone had given the man the equivalent of millions of pounds, he would still have remained a cripple. Peter and John had been with Jesus; they knew that Jesus could heal, and they demonstrated that faith in the way they spoke and acted. They wanted the man to have what they had and to know the power and love of the one who is able to heal and to save.

Acts 4:22 says, "...the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old" so over the years many thousands of people must have walked past him, on their way into the temple, salving their consciences by putting a few coins into his outstretched hands.

Peter and John knew that the "man crippled from birth" needed Jesus and that was who they shared with him. The man's life was immediately transformed. His "feet and ankles became strong" and he was "walking and jumping and praising God". Because he had received Jesus into his life, he was now a child of God, an heir of God's kingdom, (see Galatians 4:7) and he would never have to beg any more. The man was now free to discover and live out the unique purpose that God had created him for, (see Ephesians 2:10).

Exercise C.

Read the scriptures given below, and consider the points raised.

- "Surely (Jesus) took up all our infirmities and carried our sorrows." (Isaiah 53:4)

Jesus took them on himself, on the cross; should we still be carrying any of them now?

- "Is any one of you sick? He should call the elders of the church to pray over him and anoint him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven. Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other that you may be healed." (James 5:14-16)

God does not want us to accept or tolerate sickness.

- "The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work." (1 John 3:8)

So if we accept "the devils work" in anyone's life we are cancelling out what Jesus did.

- "...God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us." (Romans 5:5)

God has made it possible for us to love people unconditionally, as he does.

- "...I pray that you may enjoy good health and that all may go well with you, even as your soul is getting along well." (3 John 2)

God wants us to enjoy good health, and we should want the same for everyone.

Prayer points:

- Ask God to help you love people unconditionally, not holding their sins against them (see 2 Corinthians 5:19).
- Ask God to make you more sensitive to the devil's schemes (2 Corinthians 2:11). Use the authority Jesus has given you to stand against the schemes of the devil in your life and the lives of others (see Luke 10:19; Mark 16:17-18).

Lesson 3

Exercise A.

Identify any important revelation(s) you have received so far about the healing power of Jesus.

Exercise B.

Fill in the missing words:

1. Surely he _____ our _____ and carried _____, ...and _____ we are healed
2. Therefore _____ to each other and _____ for each other so that _____
3. The reason _____ came was to destroy _____, so _____ has been defeated
4. Peter said, "_____ I do not have, but _____ I give you. In the name of _____, walk"
5. "...this happened _____ might be _____ in his life"
6. There is _____ in the name of Jesus
7. Jesus said "I have come that _____, and have it _____"

Exercise C.

Meditate on the following verse and summarise it in your own words.

“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called us out of the darkness into his wonderful light.” 1 Peter 2:9

- How does the verse relate to your life?
- How does your life need to change to demonstrate this truth more fully?

Confession:

“By the grace of God, I am chosen to serve him as a royal priest. I belong to God and Satan has no claim on me. I choose to praise God in my heart and in my speech. Thank you, Lord. Amen.”

Prayer points:

- Ask God to purify and cleanse your heart of anything he has not planted in it.
- Ask God to shine his light brightly in you and from you as you go about your daily life.

Lesson 4

Exercise A.

Read the following scripture and answer the questions below.

“These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go...to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: ‘The kingdom of heaven is near.’ Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Do not take any gold or silver or copper in your belts, take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff, for the worker is worth his keep.” Matthew 10:5-10

1. Consider what Jesus has “freely given” to you; do you think you could ever have earned what he has given or received it from any person?
2. What would you like to do for Jesus to thank him for what he has done for you?
3. Do you believe Jesus has given you all you need to accomplish whatever you have identified?
4. Why do you think the disciples were told not to take any money or other provisions when Jesus sent them out on the mission?

Prayer points:

- Thank God for everything he has done for you. Ask him to help you to have a truly thankful heart for all his blessings in your life.
- Think about who you would like to bring to Jesus right now. Lift them up in prayer, asking for God to reveal himself more fully to them and to heal them in any area of sickness or hurt.
- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you anything more you can do to serve God and to extend his kingdom on earth.

Exercise B.

Read and meditate on the following scriptures, then write down what each scripture says we have and can accomplish through Jesus:

2 Peter 1:3-4 _____

Hebrews 4:14-16 _____

Hebrews 5:7-10 _____

Matthew 28:16-20 _____

Mark 16:15-18 _____

Exercise C.

What can we learn about Jesus from:

Matthew 11:28-30? _____

Matthew 18:5-6? _____

Luke 13:10-16? _____

Colossians 1:15-20? _____

Exercise D.

- Meditate on Isaiah 53:1-9 and write down in bullet points all that the verses say about Jesus and what he did for us.
- Ask yourself if you are functioning Biblically. Does God have first place in your life, or is your life cluttered with idols? An idol is anything that comes before God in your life and will certainly get in the way of a true relationship with the Lord God, and true spiritual maturity. Listen, this is what God wants for all of us... "Then you will defile your idols overlaid with silver and your images covered with gold; you will throw them away like a menstrual cloth and say to them, "Away with you!" Isaiah 30: 22

Conclusion

Has this study made any difference to what you knew about Jesus' power to heal and what he has given us to carry out his work on earth?

If your answer is "**Yes**", write down what the difference is and what impact it has had on you.

Be ready to share and discuss your insights with your instructor.