

## Transcription of 17ID3035

Acts 3:1-11

"Learning Whom God Uses!"

November 29, 2017

Let's open our Bibles this evening to Acts 3:1.

The book of Acts is Luke's second installment written to his buddy, Theophilus, of all that, really, the Lord did - both in terms of the birth of Jesus, His public ministry, His death and His resurrection (in the gospel of Luke) and then his look at the first thirty years or so of the early church, after the people began to be born again and the Holy Spirit was poured out upon them, and the Lord told them that they should be witnesses for Him starting there in Jerusalem and going out to the end of the world. It is an important book because it gives you the template for life in the church. If you ever want to know what God intended, it is better to go right to the beginning where He began that work and to look three or four hundred years later where some of it may have gotten lost or we kind of fail in areas. But it's a pretty good example - this book of Acts - as to how the Lord would work in us, and we've tried to ask you (over the last six weeks we've been in this book) to mark in your Bibles when you discover things that say here're the kind of people God uses. And we'll give you quite a few of those in eleven verses tonight as we continue our study here through chapter 3. We'll stop at verse 11 tonight. But that's really the focus - it's a blueprint for church life and ministry.

So, we looked at the forty days of Jesus' appearance after He rose from the dead, gave the disciples "infallible proofs" that they could believe He was alive. We are given in verses 8 and 9 of chapter 1 the last words Jesus speaks before He ascends into heaven, and His words are basically, "Wait here until you receive power from on high, and then you'll be My witnesses throughout the world." We looked at what happened those ten days between the ascension of Jesus and then the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit was given. We are told about Peter's activities and some of the boys'. And then, in chapter 2, we were given what happened on Pentecost, what happened that morning that the Lord poured out His Spirit upon the people - some of the accompanying signs; and we talked about them being one off, they happened once. They set the day apart from every other day. They aren't repeated or meant to be so. And then we looked at, as we watched the crowds gather to question what was going on, Peter's powerful message - the first one preached under the power of the Holy Spirit. Three thousand souls get saved

that day, repent of their sins, turn to the Lord, and then God began to add, as we read, "to the church daily those who were being saved."

The first couple of chapters are pretty idyllic in the sense that everything seems to be moving in the right direction. There's no opposition. There's no difficulty. People are loving one another. They're with one accord. There's a selflessness in serving and giving. We read at the end of chapter 2 (verse 47 there) that the Lord added to the church, they were given "favor with all the people." And it sounds almost too good to be true, and it is. It was good for a moment. But like everything else, God's work is most often accomplished in the valleys, not on the mountain tops. Maybe you've learned that in your own life. And so the favor of the people quickly begins to lose its savor, and chapters 3, 4, 5 and 6, in particular, are really the beginning of the opposition as the people of God face the wiles of the devil, both from within and from without - physical violence, moral compromise, false teaching, attacks from within and without. Satan's tactics haven't changed much over the years because they're effective, and they work; and because they work, they seem to be the same in the 1<sup>st</sup> century as they are in our century. We will find Peter in jail and the church divided and the accusations of blasphemy and threats of persecution. And this is against a church that is just a few months old. This isn't years of waiting.

In chapter 2, Peter ministers to tens of thousands, 3,000 of which got saved. In chapter 3, Peter's second sermon is given on the porch, Solomon's porch, at the Temple. And he speaks it, because of the ministry that he took on, to one person out of the limelight and really just led of the Spirit. It would lead to his arrest. But in the meantime he gets to preach, and the number grows from 3,000 to 5,000 men plus women and children. And we can watch this work of God's Spirit. It leads to the healing of one, the salvation of many, and then the incarceration of Peter and John. So, the honeymoon is over in chapter 2 already, though God has much more work to do.

So tonight we'd like to, like I said, look at the first eleven verses, and I want to point out for you some things that you might want to write in your margin - what kind of people does God use?

Verse 1, "Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to

ask alms from those who entered the temple; who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms. And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, 'Look at us.' So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them." So, early on in the church, interesting pairing - Peter and John. Now Peter, for a long time, was with Andrew in the gospels. John hung out with his brother, James. These two guys are now put together in ministry, and they're pretty much exactly the opposite. These aren't guys that you'd pair up. If you're looking around church going, "I want to minister with somebody," pick the opposite of whoever you would pick; that's what they have here. So Peter was a doer, John was a dreamer; he's kind of a mystic, right? One talked all the time (Peter). John very rarely seemed to say anything. One acted and then considered. The other did a lot of considering before he did any acting whatsoever. They are so different, yet they are both called by the Lord. And notice that, as they go to pray, God opens a door for them to minister.

Here's the first point you want to make - God uses people that pray. It was the hour of prayer. These disciples came to pray. The Jewish day, in your Bible, starts at 6:00 in the morning, roughly. So all of the divisions of Jewish time are from there, forward. There are three daily prayer times for the Jews - 9:00 in the morning, noon, 3:00 in the afternoon - and they are practiced to this day by Hasidics and by others. You can read in Psalm 55:17 David declaring, "Evening and morning and at noon I will pray, and cry aloud, and He shall hear my voice." Daniel, three times a day, you remember, in chapter 6:10, went out to pray when it was outlawed to be in prayer at all. So this has been a readily-established Jewish custom, if you will, and these three times of prayer were commitments of those who valued prayer highly. In fact, to those who to this day make that as a practice, they will take off of work, they will work later to compensate, they will structure their time around their times of prayer. And here're God's people, the young church, heading off to pray, valued highly by the saints.

Now, according to the Jews (and they'll tell you if you ask), this prayer hour, for generations, has consisted of fifteen minutes of meditations and quiet to think about who you're speaking to, the God that you serve, what His characteristics are. No one prays, no one talks. You just sit and contemplate who it is that you're speaking to, followed by thirty minutes of petitionary prayer for yourself, for others, seeking the Lord, and then it concludes with fifteen minutes of worship. All of the prayer times were exactly the same - realize who you're speaking to,

bring Him (in confidence) your concerns, and then leave with worship, knowing nothing is too hard for Him.

So, this was the third prayer time of the day, and Peter and John were headed back to the temple for the afternoon prayers. God uses people who consistently pray. So ask yourself - am I a consistent prayer person? Back in chapter 1:14, it says, "These all continued in prayer." In chapter 2:42, "And they continued steadfastly in prayer." Chapter 3:1 here they are again, off to pray.

And I want you to notice, and you'll get it as we go through the book of Acts, that the young saints, the Christians, felt very comfortable in the Jewish synagogue. That's what they were used to. That's the only place that they had ever gone. Jesus was a Jewish Messiah. And I suspect that the Jews, like the early saints, would have stayed in the synagogues much longer had they not been driven out. Because eventually the leadership said, "We don't want you here anymore. Your belief conflicts with ours." And they put them out. But here, up to this time, that's the place that the early church would meet - in homes and in the Temple - gathering together.

On the way to this place of worship, they passed a man who was lying by the wayside in a very pathetic condition. He had been lame from his birth, according to verse 2. He is over forty years old now, according to verse 22 of chapter 4. (We'll get to that in a few weeks). But he had spent his entire life unable to walk and reduced, at least in his adult life, to begging; being placed by someone, every day, on the path that led into the place of worship because it would seem that there is no better place to ask for help than from those who are on their way to meet with God. If you go anywhere in the world, you will find beggars outside of churches to this day. Every place a church is open, that's where the beggars go because they count on your softness of heart. Only in America are the beggars in the pulpit; usually they're outside. (Laughing) So.....I'm sorry. I couldn't pass that up. I want you to put yourself with Peter and John for a minute, though, because they go three times a day to pray in Jerusalem at the Temple. And so they would have passed this guy a lot. He's been there for the better part of thirty or forty years. They'd seen him. In fact, we will read in chapter 4 that everyone knew who he was. He was a staple around the Temple. It was someone that everyone recognized. And I'll take it one step further - because of his age, it is certainly understandable and probable that Jesus walked by him a lot because Jesus was at the Temple often. In and out He would go, and this man was there, and Jesus would have

passed him. Maybe Judas, who carried the money bag for the apostles, had put some money in his little box from time to time as they walked by. That was Judas' responsibility - out of the purse. Josephus, the Jewish historian, says that this Beautiful Gate was called the Nicanor Gate. It was gold, it had a 75' high arch over the top of it; it was the most beautiful gate that separated the Court of the Men from the Court of the Women. But, as is usual as we read, this man was used to begging for alms as the people came three times a day, "Would you help me?" And notice that, as you read it, it seems like his hand was extended for help, but he was bored, and this is something he did every day, and the task had taken the heart out of it for him. His mind seemed to be elsewhere because Peter has to say, as he said, "Give me something," "Look at us." So it was kind of like, "My hand's out, come on, give me somethin'," but he's not making eye contact with him anymore. He doesn't have time for that. That's not what he's interested in. He's despaired of his life. "Just give me what I need." And he doesn't really engage himself much at all. And so Peter, this day (notice in verse 4) gazes at him, and he says, "Look at me. Look at me."

Who does God use? Those that are sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, who have an ear to hear. Look, this is new for Peter. He's just been born again for the last little while. The Holy Spirit has come to dwell within him and fall upon him to be a witness. And John and Peter, on this particular day, at this particular time, on this day of prayer in the last of the afternoon, this time (of all of the other times he might have walked by) he is led to stop to minister to this guy. Now Jesus did that a lot, too. I know if you cursorily read the gospels, you come to the conclusion everyone that Jesus got near, He healed. That's not true at all. It isn't true in any sense of the word. When He went home to Nazareth, He was hampered by the unbelief of many, and He did very few works. When He went to the pools of Bethesda - where there were tons of people lying there because there was a fable that if the water stirred and you got in first, you'd get healed, so people were cramming and crowding - Jesus walked into the midst of all these people and went to one guy; walked right by hundreds of others. Because Jesus is our example. He was led of the Spirit. And Jesus went to one man and asked him if he wanted to be made whole. So Peter, here, says to this man, whose hand is out but his heart is somewhere else, "Look at me. I want to talk to you." And he got his attention. The first words out of Peter's mouth must not have been too promising.

Verse 5 says, "So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, 'Silver and gold I do not have.' " "Well, what are you doin' talkin' to me, then? Why are you bothering me?" I guess Peter hadn't heard about the prosperity doctrine because he didn't have any silver and gold. Poor guy. The apostle wasn't on board. I read a story years ago, and it's a true story - it's been verified, but Pope Innocent IV was taking Thomas Aquinas through the Vatican in Rome, and he was showing him all the wealth of the papacy which, unfortunately, they had gathered from lots of countries over the years. And he said to Thomas, "I guess we can't say, 'Silver and gold have I none,' can we Thomas?" And Thomas said, "Nope, and neither can you say, 'In the name of Jesus Christ, rise up and walk.' " So, Peter didn't have what the world had to offer. What this guy wanted was money to get by for another day. Peter had more interest in mind than that.

God uses people that have pure motives. And Peter was a man of pure motives. When the church sells out its purity for prosperity, it quickly loses its power and God's glory. So, Peter said, "I don't have any money," and I'm sure that the guy went, "Let's not talk. I've got work to do here." But he didn't stop talking (Peter) because the next words out of Peter's mouth were these, " 'But what I do have I give you.' " Peter was a man rich in faith. He was walking close to Jesus. He was being led by the Holy Spirit. He had much more to offer this lame man than the world or the money that he could find in the world, and he said to him, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk." In the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus said, back in John 16:24, "Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." In other words, "My name, your relationship with Me, opens the door of fellowship to the Father." "You can come boldly to the throne of grace" (Hebrews 4:16). It's an access where He gives you His name so that you can stand before the Father in His righteousness. "In the name of Jesus." I know you hear it a lot. People usually throw it in at the end of their prayers. I'm not even sure if they stop to think about what they're saying, sometimes. It's almost like a formula, and it loses its impact. But that's really not what God intended. Peter realized that if anything was to happen, Jesus would have to do this work. In fact, in chapters 3 and 4 of the book of Acts, you will read, "In the name of Jesus Christ" eight different times because it was a practice of the early church. They expected to have His help. They were ambassadors for Him. He had sent them out. They needed His glory. They needed His power. They saw it as privilege. And Peter recognized that he didn't have anything to give this guy, but as the representative of Jesus, he could offer him life and healing and deliverance.

So Peter does, verse 7. And we read, "And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength." Peter obeyed the leading of the Spirit with great faith. He yanks a lame guy up from the ground. That takes some faith. Doctor Luke, who writes this book, uses medical terms to describe (that you won't find anywhere else in the New Testament) atrophy and the strengthening of tendons; very complex, if you will, Greek words written by a doctor who knew what he was talking about. And he was on the scene to explain a miracle of God. And it moved him, and he wrote it out. How important is it for you and me to be listening when God speaks in that still small voice? How hard might you think it had been for Peter to do this? He walks by three times a day. He might have thought, "Man, this poor man. I wish I could help him, wish I could give him something." And yet nothing happens. And then today, God speaks to his heart, and he says, "I want to minister to this guy," and the Lord moves, and Peter obeys, and he does the most unlikely thing. He grabs him and pulls him up. Don't you think there was a voice in there somewhere that said, "Hey, don't do that, man. You're gonna tip him over. You're gonna be sued. What's wrong with you, Peter?! Have you no compassion? Walk away!" Peter couldn't.

I can't understand how that works, but I can tell you that there have been times in my life - and I'll bet you there have been less than ten - where I just knew that God spoke to me, and I wasn't in doubt or I was in wonder, or I wondered if, "Maybe this is the Lord, maybe it's not." You probably have those, don't you? Not sure. You have to kind of prove it out. But there've been times in my life where I just absolutely knew it was the Lord. I probably shared with you before, but when I was a young Christian, maybe two or three years old in the Lord, I went to that Christian book store over there in Santa Fe Springs (that was there for so long). And when I walked in, there was a man looking at a rack of books, and the Lord said to me, clear as day, "His daughter just died. Go tell him I love him." And I went, "Yeah, fat chance," and I went right to the back of the store. I never even showed up anywhere near him, and I literally wandered for 45 minutes looking at stuff I didn't intend to buy - just so he would go away. And he didn't. And so, 45 minutes later I was just hosed, man. "Okay, I'm gonna go tell this guy, and .....I'm gonna be so embarrassed." So I started with the apologies. "Dude, I'm sorry about what I'm about to say. I've been walking around for 45 minutes." And I just laid it out on the table thinkin', "I'm hosed." And I told him, and by the time I got to, "Your daughter has died," he started bawling. He was there looking for a book to try to explain to him how God could take his little girl home. And I just learned

something about God speaks, and sometimes you just have to listen to what He has to say.

We had a good friend, Jural, who was fighting, for years, with diabetes. He had lost both his eyes. They put a glass eye in this eye (his left one), but he called me one day on the phone. He goes, "Hey, dude, could you pray that the Lord open my right eye so I could read to my kids?" And I said, "Sure. Let's pray right now." And I'm thinkin', "Man, this is ridiculous." "Lord, please open his eyes. Amen. Okay, buddy." (Pastor Jack shakes his head). "We'll be prayin'." Six hours later, he drives into the office with his wife. "I can totally see." And the Lord healed his eye, and, for the next twelve years, before he passed away, he read to his kids. He had his license. Was it my faith? Oh, no. I was along for the ride. But this guy just believed that God was going to do something in his life, and the Lord spoke to him. And I must tell you I wasn't ..... I'm not a good participant or a man of faith so often. You know? But God spoke.

We had a dad of a pastor's wife in Calvary Chapel (here in California) who called us one time and said, "Would you come and pray for my father-in-law? They said they're calling in the family. He's going to die, and he's only got hours to live, and there's a lot of family. Maybe you could just help me minister to them." I said, "Oh, we'll be right over." It was 2:00 or 3:00 in the morning, and we pulled into the parking lot of the hospital, and I said to my wife, "The Lord just told me he's going to live." And she goes, "You probably shouldn't tell anybody that because" (Laughing) "they just called everybody and said he's going to die." And she was right, and so I didn't ..... except I told the pastor. And he lived. And he lived for almost twenty years before he died. The Lord had a plan.

But I can't tell you that that happens very often. It happens way too infrequently. I wish it would happen more. But I find myself hesitating to step out because I don't want to look foolish, I don't want to embarrass myself, and I don't want to embarrass the Lord. But yet look at Peter! Look what Peter was willing to do. Pure motive, sensitive to the Lord's moving of His Spirit, on the way to pray and seek the Lord, and he's right where the Lord wants him to be. And I think we can be really fooling ourselves with excuses why we don't speak up and act more often than we do. It's a difficult exercise to stand in faith. But if the Lord is leading you, and you are established on God's Word, there shouldn't be anything to hold you back. Nothing ventured, nothing gained. Right? You have to step out. Paul wrote to the Hebrews, in chapter 5:14, "Strong food belongs to those who by reason of

use have developed their senses to be able to discern between good and evil. Those are the ones of full age." These are grown-ups who can hear God and discern the difference. And it takes a while, and it takes making mistakes sometimes. But, man, I have found that, more often than not, if I'm praying and seeking the Lord, and God impresses something on my heart, act on it. You're not going to hurt anybody. I just want to do what God wants. And yet it is always a difficult venture, which highlights, I guess, another point.

Who does God use? God uses people who will respond in faith. When's the last time, when you ran into somebody and you said, "How are you doing?" they say, "I'm sick," you said, "Can I lay my hands on you and pray for you right now, that the Lord would heal you?" When's the last time that happened to you? Or you just go, "I don't want to touch 'em. I could get cooties. It could be infectious. Stand back" (Pastor Jack holds his hands up and crosses his fingers). "Stand over there. Go hug somebody else." Rather than praying with them. Or the Lord gives you a word from His Word, and you run into someone who's discouraged, and He brings that to mind, but you don't say a thing.

The power here was the Lord's. The hand was Peter's. That's a pretty good symbiotic relationship. Right? God uses the vessels that are available to Him, and God uses usable vessels - those with ears to hear and hearts that are willing to obey. Now you can go through the Bible and begin to look about faith and whose faith was it. And we don't have time to do that this evening. But needless to say, sometimes God doesn't tell you. I know that fellow who was blind with diabetes blindness wasn't my faith. I was the most shocked when he pulled in to my house with his wife, three kids, "I can see! Put your fingers up. I'll tell you how many fingers you have." "Come on! You're goofin' with me." Except we'd known him for fifteen years, and he'd never been able to see anything. Loved the Lord, though. That guy loved the Lord with faith. So, here is a man that is healed. Peter, I think, is the guy that now believes what God has said.

Who does God use? God uses people that are flexible. Notice Peter and John are on their way to prayer meeting. They had places to go. They had things to do. They were on a schedule that, no doubt, had to be interrupted as they now began to minister to this man. And I wonder how often we miss out on God's work because we're always going somewhere. We're always in a hurry. We're always, "I ain't got time to pray, man. The game is on. Breakfast is ready. I've got reservations! Oh, Lord, use me ..... from 2:00 to 4:00 on Thursday" (Laughing) "and

after 9:00 on Friday if I happen to be home. Oh, God, use me more!" It is so easy to miss the needs around you, and the opportunities you have to minister, when all of your day is planned, and you're running late to everything. "No, no, no. Don't go out there, honey. Those people will see us. They'll keep us for an hour. Duck out the back." God uses the flexible, the ones who are able to say, "Lord, interrupt my plans. I just want to be where You are." And then watch Him work.

And I want you to notice something else. God uses people that are prepared. I mean, this was a big challenge of faith. Peter didn't arrive here lightly. There are times when the Lord puts you in a position where you realize you're going to balk because you're unprepared to handle what you're about to face. It's what Jesus said, there in Matthew 17, at the base of the Mount of Transfiguration when His disciples couldn't get rid of that demon in that little boy; and they said, "Lord, how come we couldn't do this?" And the Lord's answer was, basically, "You're not prepared! Your relationship with God is not such that, with prayer and fasting, you laid hold on His power and confidence with Him." And so He said, "Just bring him to Me. I'm prepared even if you are not." They were prepared. It is really too late to get your act together when someone stands before you in need, and you realize you're powerless. God uses the prepared. Stay in the Word, be convinced of the Scriptures, know the Bible, be available, trust in the Lord to work. And He will, and He does, and He's faithful.

Verse 8, "So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them - walking, leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God. Then they knew that it was he who sat begging alms at the Beautiful Gate of the temple; and they were filled with wonder and amazement at what had happened to him." I love the description: "walking, leaping, and praising God." Would you expect anything less from this man? I mean, he's never walked in his life. "Somehow this guy Peter, who doesn't have any money, now yanks me to my feet, and, as I go up, all I feel is my ankles strengthening and my legs straightening out. And I'm not even dizzy or out of balance. This ..... woo!!!" And he's line dancing. I mean, it's only been five minutes. (Laughing) In the Temple, he's boogeyin'. Right? But would you expect anything less from him? In a moment in time, he's given everything he would have hoped for and never expected to get. He was not somber. I think he was making enough noise to wake the dead. That's what I think. He was causing a stir in a very somber place in the Temple, and everyone came running. The prayer meeting was effectively over because the worship time was about to begin. People sometimes say to us, as Christians, "You guys are so

fanatical." But how can you not be fanatical about a God that does this kind of stuff?! It's amazing.

We go to a lot of hockey games and watch people go nuts. I love hockey. But they're overly-emotional about a game played by millionaires who the world could easily survive without. And yet we serve a God who the world can't survive without Him. And we know Him. So when I go to the Ducks games, for example, all of my little section of people just cheer and they yell. Even in the lean years, they're faithful to their team. When they get beaten and pounced and destroyed, they just yell a little louder. And no one in the stands seems to complain because it's very fitting and appropriate in the day of a game to be up and standing and screaming. It would be really weird if we went there on the day there was no game and started to do that. Right?

But, look, we're the body of Christ. So when we gather together, and we see the Lord begin to change things, it can be an emotional experience to hear people get saved or to hear a young man like Lucas (one of the young adults who gave his testimony before tonight's study) to say - look at the home life he came out of, how many bad breaks did he get, maybe? But the Lord didn't see it that way. God used it all. And, as a result, we cheer the Lord on. Man, isn't God amazing! I think this guy was perfectly reasonable in his response. If you have nothing to cheer about, then something's wrong with you because we have plenty to cheer about. And God has a way of using those who are filled with His glory.

Verses 8 and 9 say this - God uses men who will seek His, not their own, glory. Notice in verse 8 and in verse 9 that we read of a man who is praising God. You would think he would be praising Peter. Wouldn't you? How did Peter do this in a way that the man's initial response isn't, "Oh, thank you" but rather, "Thank the Lord"? What did Peter say? How did he go about this? Whatever it was, Peter did something in such a way that we read in Matthew 5:16, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven." And you see that in Peter. I don't know how he did it, but I just know you can go around and do things in a way that brings you honor or that just honors the Lord. In fact, notice in verse 10 that, as the people began to gather "and they were filled with wonder and amazement," verse 11 says "the lame man who was healed held on to Peter and John." He wasn't lettin' these guys go! "All the people ran together to them in the porch which is called Solomon's, greatly amazed." All of the people ran from prayer to see this work of God and this man through whom He had

worked. And this was a dangerous time for Peter. Peter could have gone, "Yeah, I did like this" (Pastor Jack raises his arms) "and did one of these and called upon the name of the Lord. And I have great faith, and in the name of Jesus, would you like me to do that for you? Get a book of mine, page 86." It was dangerous, man. This is a place you could just step forward and get glory, and you'd get plenty. The crowds were unbelievably moved and astonished. But Peter did things in such a way that he left no doubt as to how it was done. Oh, the lame man might have been hangin' on to him for dear life. "Man, you prayed for me. I can't believe it. I can walk." You expect that. What you don't expect is Peter distancing himself from the work and making sure that God is the One who gets the glory. You would think, and some people might, that this would be a perfect time to put this man in the pulpit. "Give 'em your testimony, man. You've been saved three minutes." Or healed. Not even saved, maybe. Write a book. That wouldn't have been wise.

So, they look at Peter and John. Hazardous for them. At this point, their whole ministry could have gone down the tubes. But here's what happens. God uses those who have come to the cross and died to themselves. And these men had. They were done with themselves and interested in the Lord. Paul will write to the Philippians (3:10), in a few years, "I just want to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering. I want to be conformed to His death. I just want to know Him. That's my interest." Paul would write to Timothy, "Don't put a (newbie) novice in a place of eldering because he'll be puffed up with pride, and the condemnation of the devil will take him out" (1 Timothy 3:6). But Peter wasn't there anymore. God could use Peter because Peter realized who Peter was. Peter had tried that thing before. You remember? He bragged a lot about what he could do and what he would do for the Lord, how he was different from the other guys, how more faithful he was.....until he had a little girl scare him at a fire. And then he came back on his knees, and when the Lord finally restored him to ministry (in John 21), three times Jesus said, "Do you love Me, Peter?" And Peter goes, "You know I love You." And then Jesus goes, "Do you really love Me, Peter?" And Peter goes, "You know everything, Lord." And then the third one is, "You know I'm tryin'." I mean, Peter realized he couldn't make any more brags before the Lord. And God says, "Then I'm going to use you." And so here's that Peter.

Now, what would you do, standing right here with a healed man who was just leaping and praising the Lord? What would you say to them? How would you respond to

them? And the answer is - I'm going to tell you next week (Laughing) as we start in verse 12.

What type of people does God use? Those who are consistently committed to prayer, those who are sensitive to the leading of the Holy Spirit, those who are in tune with the voice of God, those whose motives are pure in faith, those who are flexible, those who are prepared for what God might put before them, those who seek God's honor and not their own, those who have been to the cross and have died to their own plans. That's a lot to think about in eleven verses, don't you think? We don't want to go any further. You don't need any more than that. Start with that.

Let's have communion. What do you think?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson  
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