

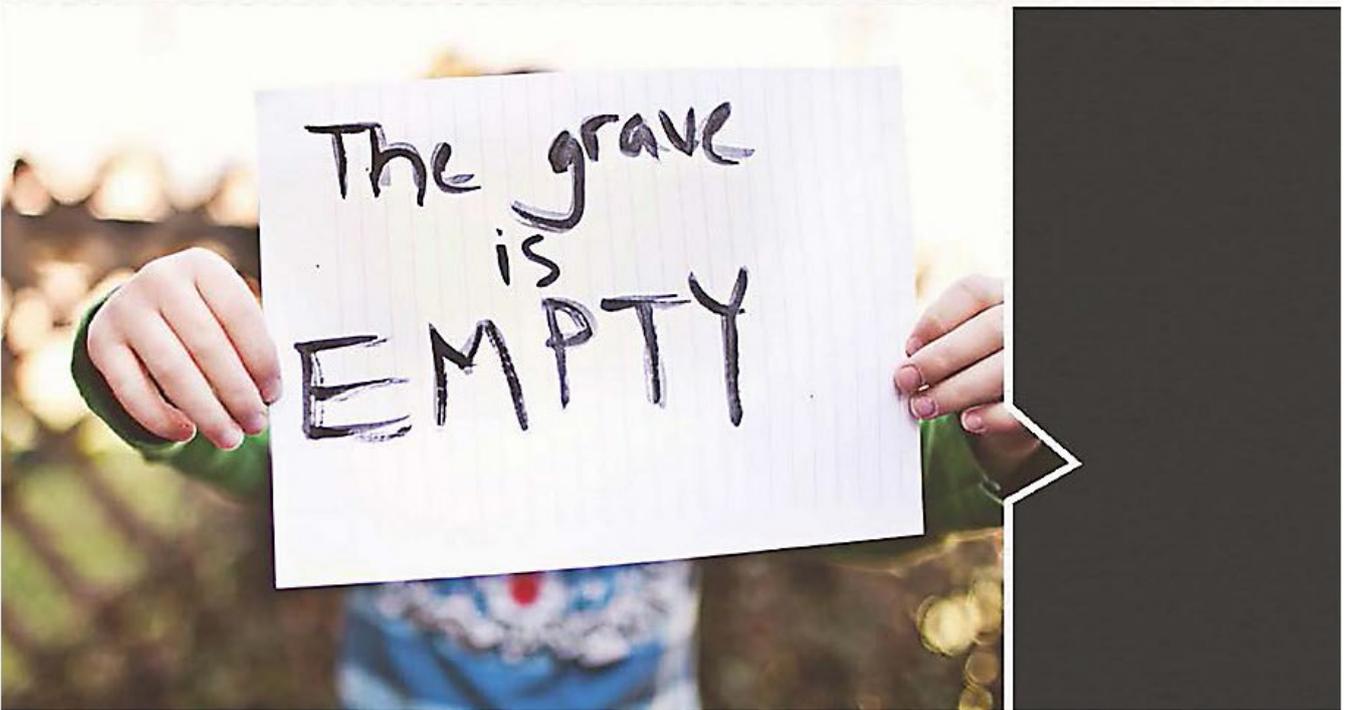
6-SESSION
BIBLE STUDY

BIBLE
STUDIES
FOR LIFE

Session 4 (Leader's Guide)

SMALL GROUPS

UNSTOPPABLE GOSPEL



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Biblical Solutions for Life

SESSION 4

UNSTOPPABLE OPPORTUNITIES

QUESTION #1: *When has a “chance” encounter changed your life?*

THE POINT

We intersect daily with people who need Christ.

Passage: Acts 3:1-10

Bible Meets Life

In the early 70s, Bill Fernandez had two friends named Steve. Out walking around the neighborhood one afternoon with one of them, Bill saw the other Steve washing his car. It seemed like the perfect opportunity to introduce his two friends.

And that’s how Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak met. The two hit it off immediately, both having an avid interest in technology. Years later, the two Steves co-founded a little company called Apple®. A chance meeting led to the founding of one of the world’s most highly valued businesses.¹

Wait a minute. A chance meeting? As a follower of Christ, I hesitate to call the encounters I have with people mere “chance” meetings. These unplanned intersections can be “divine appointments”—opportunities that can change the direction of a life.

In Acts 3, Peter and John took advantage of just such an unplanned meeting to do something incredible for God.

The Setting: The early Christian church in Jerusalem was comprised of Jews. Most if not all of them continued to participate in the Jewish rituals and

worship. One day, as Peter and John were going up to the temple complex to take part in the afternoon hour of prayer, they encountered a lame man begging at the temple gate. They used this opportunity to demonstrate the power of Jesus Christ to this lame man and all those present at the temple.

What does the Bible say?

Acts 3:1-4

¹ Now Peter and John were going up together to the temple complex at the hour of prayer at three in the afternoon. ² And a man who was lame from birth was carried there and placed every day at the temple gate called Beautiful, so he could beg from those entering the temple complex. ³ When he saw Peter and John about to enter the temple complex, he asked for help. ⁴ Peter, along with John, looked at him intently and said, "Look at us."

Peter and John chose a busy intersection in Jerusalem. Three o'clock in the afternoon was one of the times designated daily for prayer; it was also the time for one of the two daily sacrifices. Therefore, it was a busy time at the temple with large crowds coming to pray and offer sacrifices. Peter and John likely chose this crowded time and place as a forum to share the gospel.

Before they started, Peter and John saw a disabled man begging from those who passed. This was similar to scenes we might see in urban America. I say we might see, because so many of us choose not to see. We walk on, avoiding eye contact.

Notice two truths from Peter and John's interaction with this lame beggar:

- **Individuals matter.** Peter and John had just seen 3,000 people come to Christ in one day, but they still saw and cared about an individual. They did just what Jesus did—they looked at the lame man as if, at that moment, no one else in the world mattered.
- **Intersections bring opportunity.** Just as we often drove through crossroads without really seeing what's there, we can also fail to notice the people we intersect with each day. God put us on this pathway called life, and we need to be aware of those who come and go in our lives.

Up to this point, the beggar at the temple may have felt like no one ever noticed him. But no more. Peter said to him, "Look at us." Peter was acknowledging the man's presence and worth: "We see you. You are not invisible to us. We want to help."

Thanks to the willingness of Peter and John to turn a divine interruption into an unstoppable opportunity, this man's life was about to change. Forever.

As Peter and John were going up to the temple complex to take part in the afternoon hour of prayer, they encountered a lame man begging at the temple gate. They viewed this not as an interruption but as an opportunity to demonstrate the power of Jesus Christ to this lame man and all those present at the temple. Every day we intersect with people, but we don't always take the time to notice them without simply passing by. God puts us in places to impact and influence lives along our journey.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION POINTS TO TRANSITION INTO THE STUDY.

1. Do you more often tend to view people as scenery, machinery, or ministry? Explain.
2. What will you do this week to seize opportunities rather than view them as distractions?

QUESTION #2: How can we get better at noticing the opportunities God gives us to love others?

Acts 3:5-8

⁵ So he turned to them, expecting to get something from them. ⁶ But Peter said, "I don't have silver or gold, but what I have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!" ⁷ Then, taking him by the right hand he raised him up, and at once his feet and ankles became strong. ⁸ So he jumped up, stood, and started to walk, and he entered the temple complex with them—walking, leaping, and praising God.

Response:

1. What's your initial reaction to these verses?
2. What do you like about the text?
3. What new application do you hope to receive about how intersections can become opportunities?

There is an old Quaker proverb that states:

"I expect to pass through this world but once. Any good therefore that I can do, or any kindness that I can show to any fellow creature, let me do it now. Let me not defer or neglect it, for I shall not pass this way again."



Those words reflect Peter and John's attitude toward the beggar. They didn't rationalize the way many people do when accosted by panhandlers: I don't have any money. Someone else will help. He'll always be here begging. His relatives should provide for him. He should get a job. Instead, Peter and John saw someone in need and viewed his need as an opportunity God had placed in their path.

"Peter said, 'I don't have silver or gold, but what I have, I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!'" He took the disabled man by the right hand and pulled him to his feet. The man, who had been "lame from birth" (v. 2), may have expected to topple to the ground immediately; yet his feet and ankles supported him perfectly.

Think of the wild emotional ride the man surely must have experienced: disappointment when Peter told him he would receive no money; terror at being yanked to his feet; and finally, overwhelming joy when he was suddenly whole.

QUESTION #3: *When have you seen Jesus make a dramatic difference in someone's life?*

This question invites members of the group to share stories of how they have personally witnessed the power of Jesus making a dramatic difference in someone's life.

Optional follow-up: When have you felt led to care for someone in need as a result of the obedience of others?

Community Intersections

Think of ways you can seize opportunity to bring the gospel to friends, colleagues, family or community.

Plan as a small group on how to support each other in their outreach.

"God needs no one, but when faith is present He works through anyone."

—A.W. Tozer

Think about these truths whenever you have a chance to give:

- Peter and John gave what they had. God always supplies what we need to do His work; otherwise, He wouldn't have brought us to that intersection. Even when we feel ill-equipped, we can take a step of faith.
- Peter and John relied on Jesus. The apostles didn't have the power to heal; Jesus did. When they said, "In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk," they were acknowledging the power and authority of Jesus to heal.

When we begin to open our eyes to the needs around us, it can be overwhelming. People in physical, emotional, and spiritual need are everywhere. Where do we begin—and how do we help with problems so deep-seated?

We must rely on the Holy Spirit to guide and empower us.

Note: The following question does not appear in the group member book. Use it in your group discussion as time allows.

QUESTION 6: What obstacles have prevented you from seeking out opportunities to share the gospel in your everyday life?

Acts 3:9-10

⁹All the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰and they recognized that he was the one who used to sit and beg at the Beautiful Gate of the temple complex. So they were filled with awe and astonishment at what had happened to him.

The crowd responded with awe and astonishment. And why not? The man had been lame since birth. When a man has been unable to stand or walk for “over 40 years” (4:22), he just doesn’t suddenly get better. So when the crowd saw this man standing, walking, and even leaping and praising God, it rightly got their attention!

Because Peter and John responded to the man in their path, they had the opportunity to preach to a crowd. Multitudes responded, bringing more opportunities for ministry.

What does that mean for you? Say, “Yes.”

Answering this question requires group members to examine the things in their own lives that have kept them from seeking opportunities to share the gospel. Remind them that they aren’t alone as you encourage their honesty.

LIVE IT OUT

How will you make the most of the intersections and opportunities that come your way this week? Consider the following suggestions:

- **Look.** Search for such opportunities. Allow your schedule to be interrupted in order to minister by listening, offering encouragement, praying with someone, or meeting a need.
- **Go for it.** Take the steps of obedience that you've been putting off recently. Take a leap of faith and do what you know God has been calling you to do.
- **Sign up.** You don't have to wait for opportunities to fall in your lap through the regular intersections of life. Consider talking with a staff person at your church and signing up for ministry opportunities that match your gifts.

To follow Jesus is to serve a sovereign God—a God familiar with every nuance of your life and the lives of others. That doesn't leave much room for random chance. Therefore, be ready to respond when opportunities come your way.

Thoughts

Challenge: To follow Jesus is to serve a sovereign God—a God familiar with every nuance of your life and the lives of others. That doesn't leave much room for random chance. Think about the intersections and opportunities that have made a difference in your life. Spend time this week thanking God for these.

Pray: Ask for prayer requests and ask group members to pray for the different requests as intercessors. As the leader, conclude by confessing that you have missed opportunities in recent months to intersect with people in a meaningful way. Reaffirm your desire—as an individual and as a member of your group—to make the most of the seemingly random encounters God brings your way each day.