

Jumping for Joy

“What are words that give life?” asked the man, reading the back of Elise Oates’ t-shirt in a grocery store.

Elise straightened up from resting on the grocery cart and turned around to see a man with bright, inquisitive eyes.

“Words that Give Life is my website,” she said. “It has Bible study resources for Bible study teachers and those wanting spiritual growth.”

“Really? Then you must be an answer to prayer.”

“How so?” asked Elise. “My name is Elise. What is yours?”

“I’m Tabari. I accepted Christ three years ago, and there is so much I don’t know. I’ve been witnessing to two old friends, and they’ve asked me to do a Bible study! They come to my church when they can. Still, I want to dig deeper into the Scriptures.”

“Oh, wow!” Elise said, not moving up in the checkout line.

“Can you step out of line and talk more?” Tabari asked.

When the two pushed their carts aside, Elise continued. “I have lessons online that are available for children, teens, and adults. All the resources are free.”

“You must have a lot to be able to do this?”

“Goodness, no. I don’t have much,” said Elise.

“So, what do you get out of it?” Tabari asked.

“I get joy in knowing,” smiled Elise, “that I am helping the Body of Christ.”

1. What offers have you seen that are supposed to bring your life satisfaction?

2. What does Jesus have to offer people that the world doesn’t?

3. Why is it important that you give to others in the name of Jesus Christ?

An Expectant Heart

Acts 3:1-5, KJV

1 Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour.

2 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 of them that entered into the temple;

3 Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms.

4 And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us.

5 And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them.

Acts 3:1-5, NIV

¹One day Peter and John were going up to the temple at the time of prayer—at three in the afternoon. ²Now 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. ³When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money.

⁴Peter looked straight at him, as did John. Then Peter said, "Look at us!"

⁵So the man gave them his attention, expecting to get something from them.

In Acts 3, two of Jesus' disciples, Peter and John, went to the temple at the hour of prayer. The Jews prayed at three times during the day: 9:00 A.M. (the third hour), 3:00 P.M. (the ninth hour), and sunset.

When approaching the temple gate called Beautiful, the two came upon a man who had been lame from his birth. His condition was so severe that he had to be carried to the temple, where he would ask for alms from those enroute to the temple courts, a method by which God provided for those who could not work and provide for themselves. To give alms to someone in need was a commendable act of compassion. As the Lord said, "Give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you" (Luke 11:41, KJV).

Upon seeing Peter and John approach, the man did what he had always done to people while there at the

temple gate: he asked them for alms. However, instead of giving the man some money and simply continuing on their way with hardly a glance, the disciples stopped and looked directly at him with a fixed gaze. Then Peter demanded that the man do the same. Something truly wonderful was about to happen, and it was important for the lame man to understand fully who was responsible.

The man's heart was expectant and open to what Peter and John had for him. The Scripture does not say what he expected, but it was likely money, and perhaps significantly more than usual, considering the somewhat unusual nature of the disciples' interaction with him.

4. *Where were Peter and John headed and why?*

5. *Whom did they find there, and what was he doing?*

6. *How did the disciples get the man's attention, and what did he expect?*

An Unexpected Gift

Acts 3:6-8, KJV

6 Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.

7 And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength.

8 And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

Acts 3:6-8, NIV

“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.

Having gotten the lame man's full attention, Peter began by telling him that they did not have what he was expecting, which was silver or gold. Rather, they had something

far more valuable to offer the lame man than what he was expecting.

Though the lame man may have been disappointed after hearing the first part of what Peter said, what came next was absolutely amazing. In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, Peter commanded the man to walk.

No sooner had the man gotten to his feet with Peter's help than he knew that he had been healed—his feet and ankle bones instantly received full strength from the Lord. Having jumped up, he was immediately able to walk, as well. If walking were not enough, the once-lame man also began to jump with joy and to praise God as he accompanied the disciples into the temple courts. The man did not simply limp along with the help of a crutch or by leaning on Peter and John. Rather, his jumping for joy clearly showed that he was fully healed. And since the man had never walked in his life, not only were his feet and ankles healed, but the ability to maintain his full balance, even while jumping around, had also been miraculously bestowed upon him. When our Lord acts on our behalf, He does so with absolute perfection and in full measure.

7. *What did Peter have to offer the lame man?*

8. *How did Peter help the man?*

9. *What was the man's response?*

An Astonished Crowd

Acts 3:9-11, KJV

9 And all the people saw him walking and praising God:
10 And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the temple: and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him.
11 And as the lame man

Acts 3:9-11, NIV

⁹When all the people saw him walking and praising God, ¹⁰they 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.

which was healed held Peter and John, all the people ran together unto them in the porch that is called Solomon's, greatly wondering.

¹¹While 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.

As the man entered the temple courts walking, jumping, and praising God, it did not take long for others to notice. Furthermore, it soon became clear to the crowd that he was the man who had sat at the Beautiful Gate asking for alms. And with the recognition came a sense of wonder and amazement. Such is the case when God acts on behalf of His people. We are filled with joy, awe, and wonder when the Lord answers our prayers for the terminally ill person who is declared cancer free by a baffled oncologist. But we should also be just as awed and joyful when God answers the prayer for salvation of the hardened sinner who after many years finally trusts in Christ for forgiveness.

Once the people had come to grips with the wonder of what had happened, they came running to the three men, joining them at Solomon's Colonnade. This awe-inspiring event opened wide the door for Peter to present the Gospel to the amazed crowd with great success. As later noted, "many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand" (Acts 4:4). This, in turn, pushed the religious authorities to the point of arresting Peter and John and hauling them off to an impromptu trial. Those in charge understood that preaching in the name of Jesus of Nazareth was becoming a direct threat to their power and way of life so they commanded the apostles to stop speaking in the name of our Lord, but to no avail. Peter and John were committed to continue ministering in Jesus' name (vss. 5-22).

10. *What did the people observe and recognize about the man?*

11. *What were the people then filled with?*

12. *How did the people approach Peter, John, and the healed man?*

Like the Good Samaritan

The story of the good Samaritan reminds us that as Christians, we have much to offer the world in Jesus' name. When the man going down to Jericho from Jerusalem was viciously attacked by robbers and left to die, a priest and then a Levite—fellow Jews who should have been concerned for the man—passed him by without helping. Instead, a hated Samaritan took pity on the man, bandaged his wounds, and took him to a nearby inn for rest and recuperation. The Samaritan even offered to pay all the man's bills for his stay.

Like the Samaritan, as Christians, we have much to offer others in the name of Jesus Christ. And it is a great blessing and privilege to be able to minister to others in His name. Furthermore, considering the example of Peter and John, money need not play a big role, if any, in that ministry. We can provide a meal, give a ride to church or the store, visit a shut in, pick up a prescription, spend a little time on the phone, send a card or text, etc. God's people have so much to offer others in Jesus' name when we put our minds and hearts to it. And when we do, we will find that we are blessed as much or more than the ones to whom we minister.

Clearly what happened to the once-lame man was very important to him and those who cared for him. However, it runs a distant second to a far more important outcome, namely bringing glory and praise to the name of Jesus Christ. It is good to be a blessing to others, but it is far better to be a blessing in the name of Jesus.

13. *What led the good Samaritan and Peter and John to help those they did?*

14. *What are some simple ways you can offer Jesus to people and bring glory to His name?*

15. *Why should we not take credit for blessing someone in Jesus' name?*

God's Glow

How is your light shining for Jesus in the world? Supernatural healings such as the healing of the lame man are wondrous, but there are other ways we can offer Jesus to others. As He said, "Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16, KJV).

► *Where can you be shining a light for Jesus today? For example, you can offer a listening ear in Jesus' name to someone who may be suffering from the death of a loved one, loss of employment, divorce, or any of life's tragedies.*

KEY VERSE

And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God.

—Acts 3:8, KJV

He jumped to his feet and began to walk. Then he went with them into the temple courts, walking and jumping, and praising God.

—Acts 3:8, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS FOR NEXT WEEK'S LESSON

Week of May 15 through May 21

(See *The Quiet Hour* and *Cross* devotionals on these passages.)

Mon. Acts 6:8-15—The Witness of Stephen.

Tues. Acts 7:48-8:2—The First Martyr.

Wed. Isaiah 60:9-14—The Far Countries Wait for God.

Thurs. Zechariah 8:1-8, 20-23—Many People Will Come.

Fri. Psalm 139:1-10—God Is Present Everywhere.

Sat. Acts 8:4-17—Samaritans Embrace the Gospel.

Sun. Acts 8:26-40—The Spirit Guides Us.