

LIVING
IT OUT



**DAILY
BIBLE
STUDY**



CEDARCREEKCHURCH

Now What?

February 4, 2019

Today's Bible Reading: [Acts 1](#)

I love the start of new things: new days, new months, new years. Sure, Feb. 1 doesn't carry the same level of motivation as Jan. 1, but the start of any month feels so full of opportunity to me—to evaluate the past month, set goals for the next few weeks, and get excited for whatever God has planned next.

In today's LivingItOut, we're starting the month with our next book of the Bible: The Acts of the Apostles. Acts is the only book in the Bible that records the growth of the Christian church immediately after Jesus' ascension. In Acts, we see a movement that didn't have a lot going for it. One that probably should have quickly died off, but instead, as we got to read in Acts, it took off.

What do I mean by "not a lot going for it"? Well, Christianity was a relatively new, untested religion. Its leaders, the apostles, were not terribly experienced (and not exactly well-funded either). It carried a message of hope, but with that came harsh teachings that some people didn't want to hear. And followers of Christianity faced serious persecution.

To this point, Christianity's greatest strength had been Jesus. People were drawn to him: his love, wisdom, teachings, and miracles.

And in the first chapter of Acts, Jesus up and left.

Acts 1:8-9

⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."⁹ After saying this, he was taken up into a cloud while they were watching, and they could no longer see him.

If I'd been one of the apostles, my next statement would've been, "Now what?" Sure, Jesus had just done some amazing things, and the apostles had every reason to have faith in him, but like I said, the Christian church had a lot going against it. Personally, I would've been intimidated.

Maybe you're at a place where you're wondering, "Now what?" or "What's next?"

It could be that you're going through a rough patch. Or you received some bad news, and you're not sure how to deal with it. It could be that things have been really great, but you don't have a lot of clarity on where to go from here. Or maybe you've been stuck in the same place for a while, and there doesn't seem to be any change in sight.

In these moments, we can learn a lot from the apostles. The apostles had a lot of things working against them, but they knew that Jesus was for them. Instead of panicking, worrying about what they were going to do next or how they were going to do it, or trying to accomplish the tasks before them on their own, they trusted that Jesus was in control. They stayed united, they waited as Jesus had told them to (Acts 1:4), and they prayed.

Acts 1:14

They all met together and were constantly united in prayer, along with Mary the mother of Jesus, several other women, and the brothers of Jesus.

Whatever we're facing, we can't accomplish it on our own. Fortunately, we don't have to. We have a community of believers in the local church to do life with, and with God, we can accomplish *anything*.

Questions:

In what area of your life are you wondering either "Now what?" or "What's next?"

Next Steps:

When facing a "Now what?" moment, follow the example of the apostles.

Stay united with the people who are with you on your spiritual journey (your family, close friends, your Group). Let them know what you're going through, whether it's good or bad. Pray. Ask God for his guidance and wisdom.

If you're not clear on what step to take or where God is leading you, wait! God is with us, but we must be with him and follow his will for our lives instead of hoping he'll bless our will.

And once you have clarity on your next step, trust that God is in control, and act.

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, thank you for the miracle of your church. It flourished even with so much working against it, because it was from you. We place our trust in you,

God. We know that as long as you are with us, nothing can stand against us. When we're unsure where you are leading us next, teach us to turn our eyes to you. Give us your guidance and wisdom. Then, when it's time to move, give us the faith and courage to act. May your will be done in us and through us. Amen.

This post was written by Payton Lechner, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

A Bold Comeback

February 5, 2019

Today's Bible Reading: [Acts 2](#)

Have you ever heard the saying that “the comeback is always greater than the setback”? I’m not sure where that saying originated, but it sums up Peter’s life story in a nutshell! Just last week, we were reading in the book of Mark that Peter, one of those in Jesus’ inner circle, let Jesus down when Jesus had asked him to “stay here and keep watch with me” (14:34). Peter literally fell asleep as his friend was “deeply troubled and distressed” and “crushed with grief to the point of death” (v. 34). To top it off, Peter blatantly denied even knowing Jesus, saying, “I don’t know what you’re talking about” (v. 68).

But that is not the end of Peter’s story.

Fast forward to the book of Acts where Peter is seen **BOLDLY** proclaiming the gospel—that Jesus was “nailed to a cross and killed” and that God “raised him back to life” (Acts 2:23-24). He ties in Old Testament Scripture with the truth of the present gospel as he quotes Psalm 16 in Acts 2:26: “My flesh will rest in hope” (HCSB). I find this choice of wording interesting because just a short time ago, Peter’s *flesh caused* him to stumble in his walk with Christ. But here, Peter is filled with the Spirit, proclaiming that the only way to conquer flesh is through the HOPE that we have in Christ. He’s applying the truth of the Psalms when he quotes, “You have shown me the way of life, and you fill me with joy of your presence” (Acts 2:28). Peter turned back to following and being faithful to Christ and was filled with joy once more because he was again walking with him. He returned to fulfilling his purpose and sharing his all-important message to “repent of your sins and turn to God, and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins” (v. 38). His message reminds us that this promise and hope is for each one of us, even those who may be “far away” (v. 39).

Did Peter mess up? Yes, he sure did. But that was not the end of his story. That was not the end of his ministry. God went on to use Peter’s boldness to spread the great news of the hope we can have in Christ. Many people accepted Christ and “were added to the church that day” (v. 41), and even more were added as Peter continued faithfully serving God and proclaiming Christ.

Questions:

Have you ever felt like you have “failed” Jesus, let him down, or even denied him? Have you ever felt that your “mess up” has blown your potential future purpose or ministry? Does looking at Peter’s life give you hope that God still has a plan for you?

Next Steps:

Reflect on the hope that we have in the gospel, as it is for all of us. If you’re walking in a season where you, through your life, actions, thoughts, etc., are denying Christ, repent, ask for forgiveness, and turn back to God. He still has a great plan for your life and can use you for his purposes.

Prayer:

Lord, sometimes the many ways I have failed you overshadow the hope that I have in you. Help me to be faithful to you and to trust in the hope that I have in you, namely that you died and rose again for my sins, knowing that my flesh would fail. May my flesh and my soul rest in you. Thank you that you still have a purpose and a plan for my life despite how I have denied you in the past.

This post was written by Kendra Grubinski, a first-time contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

Is it Time Yet?

February 6, 2019

Today's Bible Reading: [Acts 3](#)

Today, we read in Acts 3 about how Peter healed a crippled beggar. The beggar had been lame since birth and was brought to the Beautiful Gate **daily** to beg for money. The gate was called "beautiful" because it was covered in Corinthian brass, which had tarnished over time to reveal splendid colors. On this day, the beggar expected the same as he did every other day: money. Instead, he was the recipient of a miracle, not by his faith, but by the faith of Peter. There was something special about this lame man who God wanted to use as an example.

Acts 3:1-8

¹ Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service. ² As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple. ³ When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money. ⁴ Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, "Look at us!" ⁵ The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money. ⁶ But Peter said, "I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!" ⁷ Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. ⁸ He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them.

Jesus performed many miracles while he was on Earth and gave power and authority to his 12 apostles to continue his work after his ascension (Luke 9:1-2). One of my observations from this passage is that timing is crucial. A biblical timeline sets Acts 3 in the year 30 AD. If the man had been crippled from birth, he was over 40 years old and a familiar sight at the temple gate. Jesus may have passed him on more than one occasion. Why hadn't Jesus healed the man while he was alive? Because God's timing is as important as his will. Greater glory was given to God when Peter healed the beggar through the power of the Holy Spirit in him. Peter did not have all the answers, but he did have Jesus.

Believers today have the same power to help people change their lives through the power of the Holy Spirit. The crippled man would have been satisfied with a monetary donation to support his condition. I sometimes wonder if I am satisfied with my current state because I am willing to settle for less than what God wants to give me. Have I been expecting the wrong things from God?

Another important point to note is that once the crippled man was healed, he did not immediately return home. Instead, he clung to Peter and John and entered the temple jumping and praising God. As new believers, you should surround yourself with other believers, show them how God has changed you, praise him for it, and be ready to share the good news!

Questions:

Are you spiritually crippled, sitting outside of the presence of God? What will it take for you to get up and walk, telling others what God has done for you, and praising him? Do you believe that God can do the unexpected in your life? If not, why?

Next Steps:

You were born at a specific time, in a specific place, and for a specific purpose. Identify what makes this the right moment for you on God's timeline by reflecting on your talents and experiences. Journal how these could help others and watch how God uses you, through the Holy Spirit, to do great things. Be sure to give credit where credit is due ... Jesus Christ!

Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, help me to recognize the power of the Holy Spirit in me. Keep me ever mindful of your full potential to do the unexpected through me. Use me today to do things I would never have expected myself to be capable of. Help me to show others that I am different because of your grace. In your Son's name I pray, Amen.

This post was written by Jenn Macke, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

It is Never Too Late for Change

February 7, 2019

Today's Bible Reading: [Acts 4](#)

I am amazed by the changes Jesus and the Holy Spirit made in the disciple Peter. I always respected Peter because he wasn't afraid to step out of his comfort zone. Once, when he saw Jesus walking on water, he asked Jesus to let him walk on water, too. Peter got out of his boat and walked on water, until he let his fears take over. Once he took his focus off Jesus, he began to sink pretty quickly. Peter was known to act impulsively and recklessly at times. I picture him being a bit arrogant and loud. Peter really loved Jesus, but he is often remembered as the disciple who denied knowing Jesus, not once, but three times. I am convinced Peter felt great guilt that he had denied Jesus. Understandably, he was afraid of what would have happen to him, had he admitted being a follower of Jesus.

I love how Acts 4 depicts the changes in Peter. John and Peter were thrown in jail for preaching about the Good News after healing a lame man. The next morning, they were brought before the leaders and asked how they had healed the lame man. Peter spoke so eloquently and boldly, with so much knowledge, that the religious leaders were amazed. (This is the same Peter who was known for constantly putting his foot in his mouth.) Peter was changed; he was a new man. The leaders commanded Peter and John to speak never again of Jesus.

Act 4:19-20

¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, "Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him?"²⁰ We cannot stop telling about everything we had heard and seen."

Peter continued to spread the Gospel, and thousands of people were saved. Peter believed so strongly in Jesus and his teachings, he continued to preach even though it put his life in jeopardy. Eventually, Peter would be sentenced to be crucified for spreading the Gospel message. Peter requested to be crucified upside down, because he was not worthy of being crucified in the same way as Jesus.

I am amazed by the changes in Peter! If Jesus can change Peter, he can change you and me. I am so thankful for the peace and hope Jesus has given me. I used to really struggle with worry and anxiety. I have learned to trust Jesus and cast my worries and cares on him. I believe he is in control and has a wonderful plan

for my life. I know people can see huge changes in me. When I have the opportunity, I bring glory to God by explaining how he changed me.

Questions:

How has Jesus changed you? Are you willing to step out of your comfort zone for Jesus? When is the last time you shared what God is doing in your life?

Next Steps:

Make a list of the ways Jesus has changed you. Pray for Jesus to help you realize what he wants you to do next. Make a list of his answers. Step out and obey.

Tell someone how Jesus has changed you and remember that sharing our struggles helps others' faith grow.

Prayer:

Jesus, I am so thankful for all you have done for me. I am so grateful for your precious Word. It gives me so much hope to realize how much you changed Peter. Please change me and work through me to accomplish mighty things for your Kingdom. Amen.

This post was written by Marsha Raymond, a regular contributor to the LivingItOut Bible Study.

A Sacred Bond

February 8, 2019

Today's Bible Reading: [Acts 5](#)

Acts 5 starts off with a curious story about a husband and wife both being struck dead by God for lying to him. They had sold a piece of property and decided to hold back part of the money before putting the rest at the feet of Peter.

Acts 5:3-4 (NIV)

³ Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? ⁴ Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? You have not lied just to human beings but to God."

Peter scolded Ananias for having lied and having held back part of the money. And so Ananias fell down and died. The same happened later to his wife Sapphira when she was asked the same question and chose to lie as well.

This story really resonated with me because I recently have been lied to repeatedly by someone I love. Unfortunately, it completely destroyed my trust in this person. I now constantly ask myself whether this person is telling me the truth during our conversations. Or whether I should still speak to this person at all.

This made me think more about how God must have felt when Ananias and Sapphira lied. Since God knows everything, it must have been very hurtful to him when his children knowingly tried to deceive him. When someone you love lies to you, and you know that it is a lie in that moment, it feels like a stab in the heart. Surely for God, seeing one of his children lie to him must have been immensely painful too. I imagine it also pains him greatly to see us lying to each other because, just as Peter pointed out in Acts 5:4, when we lie to others, we are also lying to God.

In an intimate relationship, emotional honesty allows the other person to know who we are, thus creating a special bond. If we lie, we shatter that sacred bond of trust and lose that intimate connection. It is very important to remember that secrets and lies have serious consequences for our relationships with others,

especially for our relationships with those whom we love—and for our relationship with God. Trust is very fragile, and once it is lost, it is hard to regain.

Questions:

Have you recently lied to God, others, or yourself? What were the consequences of your lies?

Has anyone recently lied to you? How did that make you feel? What needs to happen for you to be able to trust that person again?

Next Steps:

If you have lied to someone recently, make a list of steps to take to make amends. Ask for forgiveness. Ask then what you need to do to regain that person's trust.

If your trust was broken by someone lying to you, ask God to help you heal your heart and find a way to forgive.

Prayer:

Dear Father, thank you for the sacred bond that I have with you and for the trust you have placed in me. Please let me never fail you by lying to you, others, or myself. Please give me strength in my heart to forgive those who broke my trust, and wisdom to see if their attempts to regain my trust and repair our relationship are coming from a true heart. Amen.

This post was written by Cordula Mora, a regular contributor to and editor of the LivingItOut Bible Study.