

The Acts Project – Volume 1

*Studies in Acts 1-7 Called to
a Life of Power*

From the Series *Kingdom Living in a
Twisted World*

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Chapter 3

Power in the Name

Lesson 1

What's in a Name? (Acts 3:1-10)

What's in a Name? brings up the interesting idea that there is more to a name than meets the proverbial eye. Marketing people understand the power of the name. People down through the ages have changed their names to change their image. They understood the “power of the name”. Consider Ralph Lifshitz who didn’t think his name would capture the world for the business he wanted to create so he changed his name to Ralph Lauren. Or consider one of my all-time favorite actors – Archie Leach, known to most people by his stage name, Cary Grant. Or what about Marion Michael Morrison whose name breathed “hero” to young and old alike? His stage name was John Wayne. Here’s one that definitely benefitted from the change: Frances Ethel Gumm became Judy Garland.

The idea didn’t begin with marketing managers and actors. There are lots of name changes in the Bible because names meant something in the biblical culture. A name didn’t just identify a person; it often communicated some essence of character of the person or something about them. In some ways, names were given to express the very nature of person himself or herself.

In today's lesson, Peter, who experienced a name change of his own -- from *Simon* ("he hears") to *Peter* ("small stone").¹ This releases the power of Jesus through speaking His Name. Thinking logically, had Jesus not still been alive at that time, no power could have come from the name. The Jews recognized this clearly as will be seen in their astonishment at the events that unfold before their very eyes. The Risen Christ is still in the midst! The Voice of Authority is still speaking.

Background Information

In this lesson's snapshot of the early church we see a new alignment of personalities as Peter and John are now seen ministering together. We see believers going about the business of living, the way the church ought to be. It is in the normal course of the day that the Spirit often works.

As Peter and John walked to the temple for a prayer meeting, a man, lame from birth was placed at the Beautiful Gate before the temple so he could live out the normal course of *his* day, begging for a living. It is what he does day after day. It is *his* normal going about the day living. Yet this day brings a new normal to the man who calls out to John and Peter. As they stop, he looks up expectantly and, as the Spirit comes upon Peter, Peter explains he has no money, but he does have the Power of the Name available. And with that, he reached out, grabbed the man's hand and Scripture records the man was instantly healed.

And God, through the power of the Name of Jesus Christ, uses the healing of a man and the witness of a changed life to draw a crowd of amazed people so Peter can once again call them to repentance through the *Power of the Name*. God uses signs and miracles, not to get people to believe, but to startle them, perplex them, get their attention to give Spirit-filled people a chance to speak. There is much to learn and see in today's lesson that impact our own walk, so let's get right to it!

¹ The name *Peter* actually means *pebble or small stone*. There is irony here. Jesus is the *Rock*. Just like *Christian* means "little Christ", so Peter is a "little rock".

Power Principle

As believers we need to understand that *we* aren't the power source. We are the instruments through which God chooses to work. We either limit or allow the power of the Spirit to flow through us by our yielded and surrendered lives. When we make room for His movement in our cluttered lives and souls, He can breathe truth into our souls and whisper into our ears about His own heart.

When Jesus was in His human form, He experienced fatigue (We caught him napping in Mark 4:38.), also weariness, grief, sadness, anger and a host of other emotions. Even so, He was constantly giving out because He was always taking in strength and direction from the Father. In *Acts*, with the presence of the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Jesus) in us, the Spirit speaks directly from the throne room where the power source is unbroken (Hebrews 4:16) and flows directly to us through the Spirit's indwelling.

Let me remind you that "indwelling" means "permanent residence". You have available the power of God flowing directly to you through the Spirit's dwelling in your life.

Historical Quote

"When God changes a name, He is pointing out a new destiny." – Paul Hamett

Map Alert

Circle Jerusalem on the map at the back of the book.

Find Out For Yourself

Today's Reading: Acts 3:1-10

Focus on Acts 3:1-2 for the following questions:

Peter and John were not too busy with the thousands of new believers that they had no time for the one – they learned well what Jesus taught them.

1. **Where were Peter and John going in 3:1?**
2. **From Acts 3:2, list everything you learn about the lame man.**

The whole picture presented here of a man sitting at the “Beautiful Gate” but not entering in is a picture God gives to us and to the Jews as a spiritual lesson. Lame/broken/sinful humanity can sit before the gate, but is unable to go in. It was not until the man was touched by the Power of the Name that he was able to enter into wholeness and the Presence of God. We can only come in through Him. It is a picture of how we “get in” and are able to come before God in His holiness. The Jews saw the underlying concept because they had the Scriptures to help them.

Read Acts 3:3-5

3. **Who initiated the contact? (:3)**
4. **How did Peter respond to the man? (:4)**
5. **What do you think it means to “fix your gaze” as Peter did on the man?**
6. **What was the man expecting to receive?**

Read Acts 3:6-10

7. **What did Peter have to give to the man?**



It is important to our own understanding of the *Power Principle* that what Peter had to give the man is the same power that resides in each of us today.

Whether we use the power resident within us may be likened to having a car parked in the garage. The power doesn't move the car until the engine is turned on and given the push to go through our placing foot on the gas pedal.

8. **Who healed the man? How? Who was the instrument through which the man was healed?**

9. **Can you think of an example or a parable to explain the difference between the power (Jesus) that healed the man and the instrument through which the power came (Peter)?**

10. **How long did the healing take?**

11. **Where did the man go after being healed?**

12. **What was the response of the people to the man's new life? (:9-10)**

13. **Read Isaiah 35:4-6. What is it about this prophetic passage that caused the Jews to connect the prophecy to what was happening here?**

What a wonderful story to introduce the church. Men going about their day, being stopped by the Spirit to touch a man's life. It is not unlike how we are called to go about our own days – listening for a small whisper; feeling a nudge or sometimes an outright shove to

touch someone's life – and all through the power of the Name. We are the instruments through which God chooses to work – these unholy hands, this fiery tongue, this broken heart. It is how He reaches out to a broken world to inspire hope for the future. But it is also how God chooses to limit His work. God was limited by Peter's actions. It was Peter's act of faith that moved God to reach out and touch. Not unlike how He still works today.

Jesus must have passed by the lame man often while He was on earth. Why didn't *He* heal him? We must learn the kingdom living principle that Jesus lived by. He didn't minister according to *people's needs*, but according to the direction of the Spirit and the will of the Father. The same way the Spirit speaks today

There is also another principle at work here as well, *kairos idios*. *Kairos* means “right time; opportune moment”. *Idios* pertains to self. In other words, everyone has their right moment for change. You do and so do I. Waiting is purposeful, even though we sometimes don't realize it or see it. We can trust that movement and healing come at the right time in God's economy. God reserved this man's moment for His own purposes and the end result brought 5,000 hungry souls into the kingdom of heaven.

Recall too, the picture of broken humanity represented by the lame man – finally coming *in* through the Beautiful Gate. Whereas before, he could only sit helplessly by and watch as others went in, now he too comes in – leaping for the joy of it. It is how we all come. Someone reaches out a hand to us and we respond to the power of Jesus residing in them. Peter was a link between man's helplessness and God's power just like we are today. We must speak in the Name. People don't come to Jesus by their power – it is God who draws each one; it is His power through the resurrected Christ working in us that people come. We are only the instruments through which He draws people.

