

## Di121 Effective Communication

### *Lesson Di121-5 Why Communicate? Believers' Stories*

Many organizations and movements start strong and accomplish much in their early years. As time passes, a new generation of leaders may forget the movement's original purpose. They start to drift. To correct this tendency, leaders should listen again to the stories of the founders. The same is true with a church. As believers, we need to be reminded of the stories of the Early Church. Then we will not be confused about a believer's purpose. This story from the Book of Acts tells about the first church in Jerusalem.

One day the apostles Peter and John were going to pray at the temple at about three in the afternoon. A man lame from birth was carried daily to sit and beg at the temple gate. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for money. Peter and John looked straight at him, and Peter said, "Look at us!" So the man gave them his full attention, expecting to get something from them.

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." Taking him by the right hand, he helped him up, and instantly the man's feet and ankles became strong. 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 3:1-8).

When Peter saw that crowds of amazed people began to gather, he said to them: "Fellow Israelites, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power we had made this man walk? The God of our fathers has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. You rejected God's Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong.... I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders.... Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out. Then times of refreshing will come to you from the Lord" (Acts 3:12-19). While Peter was still speaking, the priests and captain of the temple guard sized him and John. They put the two in jail.

The church has but one story to tell the world, that is the story of Jesus. Telling it in all situations and to all people is important. Jesus said "When I am lifted up ... I will draw all people to myself" (John 12:32). The key points of the story of Jesus are contained in Peter's message to the crowd. Jews had handed the righteous Son of God over to Pilate to be killed. The Jews had rejected the Messiah, but God had raised him from the dead. This Jesus is actually God's Son, who created all life. Through faith in his name, human beings can be brought back into relationship with God. Then they can experience the life God intended for them. This is the message the church must continue to communicate by telling the story of Jesus.

The other part of believers' story is represented in the healing of the beggar. Since Jesus is now in heaven, he has anointed his followers with power. In this story God's power worked through the disciples. He still works through believers today. "Times of refreshing," or new life,

is what God wants all people to experience. When someone repents and turns to God, their sins are forgiven. They are born again and become part of the body of Christ—the Church.

The day after the lame beggar’s healing, the rulers, elders, and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem with the high priest to question Peter and John. They asked: “By what power or what name did you do this?”

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to explain how this lame man was healed, then know this: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. . . . Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved” (Acts 4:7-12). Peter made clear by what authority this man was healed. He offered them a second chance in two days to believe in Jesus. They rejected the offer again.

When the Jewish leaders saw the courage of Peter and John, they were astonished. They realized that these fishermen were unschooled, ordinary men, who had spent time with Jesus. Since they could see the man who had been healed standing there, they could say nothing. So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then they talked among themselves. “What are we going to do with these men?” they asked. “Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it. But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name.”

Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:13-20).

The leaders were at a loss to know what to do next. All they could do was threaten the two apostles. All the people were praising God for what had happened. The man who was miraculously healed was over 40 years old. The apostles simply asked the Jewish leaders who they should obey, God or man. Their only option was to obey God, because they could not help speaking about what they had seen and heard. When you have an experience with God and his power, you too will not be able to help telling others about him.

This story is **important** because it shows the key parts of the story of Jesus, as proclaimed by the Early Church. It also explains that they felt compelled to tell others the story, even in the face of punishment.

The **main truth** of this lesson is that early believers were eyewitnesses to the story of Jesus and the miracles his followers did in the power of the Holy Spirit. They could not help telling people what they had seen and heard.

Let’s **review** this lesson—

1. What did Peter answer when asked by what power or name they had healed the lame beggar?  
[Pause]  
A. If you answered that Peter said, “It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,” you are correct.
  
2. What did Peter say about the name of Jesus and salvation? [Pause]  
A. If you said, “There is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved,” you answered correctly.
  
3. What was the response of the disciples when they were told by the chief priest not to speak about Jesus anymore? [Pause]  
A. If you answered, “They said they had to obey God, not man, because they could not help speaking about what they had seen and heard,” you are right.

Your **assignment** for this lesson is to memorize the story of the healing of the lame man and the disciples’ response to the religious leaders. After telling this story to someone, ask them this question, “Why did the disciples continue to invite the religious leaders to believe in Jesus?” Answer: They did what they saw Jesus do. He constantly held out the message of new life to everyone. They believed in a God of miracles, who not only healed bodies, but also changed lives.