

Acts 3:1-11

Aim of lesson

To show that the apostles had been given the power to heal, and that the lame man gave the praise to God.

Background study

Isaiah 35:5-6. Investigate details of the temple.

Suggested outline of lesson

Appreciating the problem of disability in the 1st century

Let the children imagine what it would be like to be unable to walk; having to be carried everywhere, and never able to join in running and jumping games with other children. Compare the welfare benefits and aids for the disabled available today, with the circumstances of the lame man in the narrative. Mention the custom of alms and the begging bowl. Being unable to work meant having no money for food. Beggars would be unpopular because it was incumbent on passers by to give food or money to the less fortunate, if able to do so. The temple gate was a profitable place for those who had to beg for their daily food, since many people passed through on their way to worship.

The lame man explains his daily hopes

After this discussion the story could be told effectively in the first person. The lame man might tell of his childhood, hampered by lack of mobility and his life as a young man, ashamed and worried at having to resort to begging in order to live. Perhaps he had no family to look after him or maybe he had to beg to support a mother as well as himself. In words a beggar might use, describe the incident on that momentous day, e.g. "I was sitting in my place at the temple gate. As the hour of prayer approached, in the middle of the afternoon, there was the usual stream of worshippers going through the gate, among them two men walking together. I asked them for money, and I was hopeful of receiving something, when one of them said: 'Look at us'. They weren't richly dressed. In fact, they were rugged-looking and I later learned that they had been fishermen at one time..."

Relevance to the children's lives

The account of this miracle performed by Peter and John shows how they were given power to heal people just as Jesus had done. Most of us are very fortunate today. If we are born lame we can often be helped by doctors, and do not have to sit and beg for our food. The lame man praised God when he was healed. Do we remember to thank God when we are made better, perhaps after an illness or an accident?

The lame man's hopes were realised beyond all his expectation

Build up the man's changing emotions as the story continues - his hope for money and the disappointment when told there was none, his curiosity about their intentions and his astonishment at being told to walk. Emphasize that it was in the name of Jesus Christ that the miracle was performed and the man was given the strength to stand and walk, a gift more precious than any amount of money. Portray his feelings as he went into the temple, praising God, enjoying the sensation of walking and jumping for the first time in his life. The amazement of the bystanders, who recognized the man, provides a spectacular scene, as the man stood with Peter and John, while the people crowded around them. With delight he would have described the sudden strength which had come to his limbs, so that he had no need to learn how to walk.

The miracle gave substance to the preaching

Peter would remember Jesus saying to the disciples at the last supper (John 16:23-24), that if they asked anything in his name he would give it to them. Peter claimed no power of his own but gave the glory to Jesus Christ. Above all, this incident, which caused such a stir, brought glory and praise to God, and the good news of Jesus was preached.

Worksheets

The lame man could not: run, jump, leap
walk, skip, kneel, kick

Prayer

Dear Lord God, please help us to remember to thank you for all the good things in our lives, and especially for the way you care for us. Thank you for the doctors and nurses who help us. Please send Jesus back to the earth soon, so that there will be no more lame people. Amen.

Memory verse

"then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy" (Isaiah 35:6).