

**Intro.** Every true sport consists of 2 major elements—offense & defense (that’s why golf isn’t a true sport!). You must work at both to have a successful team. Teams which pump most of their \$ into a good offense pay the price when a key offensive player gets hurt (like Peyton Manning of the Indianapolis Colts). The same is true of pouring all your \$ into defense, if you can’t score any points. Just like a strong offense & defense are key to success in sports, so it is for the church, for we are called to take the gospel to unbelievers (evangelism—offense) & defend the faith against critics (apologetics—defense). In our series from Acts, “Missions 101—Reaching Out at Home,” we turn to Acts 3-4 on the subject of “Evangelism & Apologetics.”

Theme: Local Missions & Evangelism

Background: The early church, established by the coming of the Spirit & people’s receptivity to the message about Jesus as both Messiah & Lord, met regularly for worship, discipleship, evangelism, fellowship, ministry, prayer & stewardship. Acts 3 is an example of the signs done by the Apostles (as proof they were extensions of Jesus’ ministry) & their focus on spreading the good news of Jesus.

**Overview of the Narrative:**

- The apostles were known for attending the temple for prayer at 3 pm (& public witness) & they encountered a lame beggar outside the temple (stationed there to meet more people for help). Peter didn’t have \$ to give him, but he gave the lame man so much more than money, because he healed him in the powerful name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth (the Messiah who had lived locally), so that he wouldn’t have to depend on others any longer for his needs, but he began walking & leaping (he wasn’t a Baptist) in praise to God & everyone who saw him recognized him as the beggar.
- The man then clung to Peter & John (out of gratitude, no doubt) & people began gathering to see the results of the miracle at Solomon’s portico—possibly the area of the temple where the apostles were known to gather to preach (as seen in 5:12). Peter used the opportunity of having the crowd assembled to preach Jesus to them.
- The rest of chapter 3 is an evangelistic message about God’s work in the life of Jesus—crucified-yet-risen-and-ascended—and how the Scriptures predicted His coming & people must repent to have their sins forgiven & believe in Jesus, from Whom all the families of the earth will be blessed
- The preaching of Peter & John angered the priests, temple captain, & Sadducees (who were in charge of the priesthood & temple), because they didn’t believe in the resurrection—the very thing the apostles were preaching—so they held them in custody over night. Even their arrest didn’t stop hundreds & thousands from believing, as the # of believers came to some 5K men + women
- Most of the religious leaders gathered the next day & questioned the apostles how they made the lame man well. Peter, filled with the Spirit, declared that the lame man was healed by the name of Jesus—Whom they had crucified but God had raised from the dead—the only name that saves & the cornerstone by which lives must be built to last
- The religious leaders realized the apostles were uneducated, common men & that they had been with Jesus (close followers) & they couldn’t say anything in opposition, because the man who had been healed was standing next to them
- The religious leaders took council. They knew that a miracle had occurred but they didn’t want news of Jesus to spread so they commanded them not to speak the name of Jesus. The apostles

replied whether it was better to listen to them or to God, but they would listen to God & keep declaring what they had seen & heard. The religious leaders warned them again, but didn't do anything because the people were praising God for healing the man, who had been more than 40 years old

Illus: Though we aren't in the miracle-working business like the apostles (though God still works miracles today, He typically doesn't do it through a select few like He did in the early church), we are in the ministry-related business of helping people with physical and spiritual needs (like the lame beggar). In addition to the 10.25% of all undesignated offerings going to support SBC mission causes locally, nationally, & globally, we give about 8% of our budget to other missionaries & ministries, with much of it going to support locally ministries. We have supported numerous local ministries at different levels in recent years, and we've adjusted our support based on those ministries which have a wider financial base and those which have demonstrated efficiency in meeting needs & sharing the gospel of hope. Area ministries we support or have supported include Loaves & Fishes, Christian HELP, the Sharing Center, Apopka Pregnancy Center, True Life Choice, Z88.3, Impact Ministries, & more. That doesn't include our own ANGELS ministry where we've given as much as 1-2% of our budget to assist families in need, both within our church & throughout our community.

➤ When you have someone's attention (3:3-5, 11; 4:5-7, 18-22), be ready to

## **I. Declare Your Faith in Jesus (3:4-6, 11-26)—Evangelism**

### **A. By using Scripture**

- Peter & the apostles constantly used Scripture in declaring Jesus' identity—much of Isaiah refers to the Holy One of Israel (3:14), Psalm 22 & Isaiah 53 speak of Christ's suffering (3:18), a prophet greater than Moses as foretold in Deut 18:15ff (3:22) & the fulfillment of Abraham's seed as a blessing for all the earth (3:25)

### **B. By underscoring sin**

- The NT example of evangelism never takes sin lightly but always shows people's failures (3:13-15, 17, 19, 26)

### **C. By urging salvation**

- It isn't enough to share the good news of Jesus without also providing the remedy for the problem of sin—repentance & faith (3:16, 19-20, 26)

## **II. Defend Your Faith in Jesus (4:7-20)—Apologetics**

### **A. By sharing Scripture**

- If Jesus is the Only Begotten Son of God, then why would God sacrifice His Only Son if there are other ways to heaven? Defending the faith uses Scripture (like Acts 4:12, fulfilling Isaiah 28:16) & reason to argue the truth claims of Christianity

Illus: To help you defend your faith, our next Come. Drink. *Live!* Conference on January 13-15, 2012 will focus on Apologetics and you will hear great music & challenging messages from Drs. Max Anders, Jimmy Scroggins, David Uth, yours truly & Josh McDowell—everyone who missed our last conference ended up regretting what they missed, once they heard from their friends, so mark your calendars to be sharpened in your faith

### **B. By standing strong**

- It takes courage to defend the faith in certain arenas, especially in the face of political leaders, but it's more important to obey God rather than men (4:19-20)

**Conc.** Play "Are You a Good Person?" (5:03 from livingwaters.com). While most of you need to declare your faith in Jesus & defend your faith in Jesus, some of you need to place your faith in Jesus by turning from your sins & trusting in Him.