



THE POWER AND THE WISDOM OF GOD  
UNIT 32 • SESSION 1

# CHANGED BY THE GOSPEL

## MAIN POINT

**Peter preached the gospel so others might come to know Jesus.**

### ACTS 9:31 • THE LORD PROVIDES PEACE TO HIS CHURCH

**31** So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.

### ACTS 9:32-35 • THE LORD BRINGS HEALING THROUGH HIS CHURCH

**32** Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda. **33** There he found a man named Aeneas, bedridden for eight years, who was paralyzed. **34** And Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus Christ heals you; rise and make your bed.” And immediately he rose. **35** And all the residents of Lydda and Sharon saw him, and they turned to the Lord.

### ACTS 9:36-43 • THE LORD RESTORES LIFE WITHIN HIS CHURCH

**36** Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. **37** In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. **38** Since Lydda was near Joppa, the disciples, hearing that Peter was there, sent two men to him, urging him, “Please come to us without delay.” **39** So Peter rose and went with them. And when he arrived, they took him to the upper room. All the widows stood beside him weeping and showing tunics and other garments that Dorcas made while she was with them. **40** But Peter put them all outside, and knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, “Tabitha, arise.” And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. **41** And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then, calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. **42** And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord. **43** And he stayed in Joppa for many days with one Simon, a tanner.

## INTRO OPTION 1

# IMPACT

### SUPPLIES LIST

NONE

Allow students to work with a partner. Instruct them to brainstorm people who have made a greater impact or become more well-known after their death. If possible, allow them to use their phones and research examples to share with the group.

There are many examples of people making a greater impact, or becoming more well-known, after their death. Sometimes it can lead others to realize how much they need the Lord, or it can lead people to continue their legacies. In today's lesson, we read about Dorcas, a female disciple who made a great impact in her death. Jesus brought her back to life, making an even greater impact in the community.

## INTRO OPTION 2

# HEALING

### SUPPLIES LIST

NONE

Ask the following questions, allowing students time to share their answers and discuss.

**HAVE YOU EVER KNOWN SOMEONE HEALED FROM SICKNESS OR SOME OTHER STRUGGLE?**

**HOW DID IT IMPACT YOU TO SEE THIS HEALING?**

**WHY DO YOU THINK GOD HEALS SOME PEOPLE AND NOT OTHERS?**

Healing is impactful. Whether it is physical healing, like from cancer or COVID or a sports injury, or it's a mental healing from anxiety, our faith increases when we witness healing. In the early church, healings helped declare the name and power of Christ, leading many to saving belief in Him.



## SCRIPTURE READING

### MAIN POINT

**Peter preached the gospel  
so others might come to  
know Jesus.**

#### 1. THE LORD PROVIDES PEACE TO HIS CHURCH

### READ ACTS 9:31

The early church had experienced a wave of intense persecution, especially at the hands of Saul. We'll come back to Saul's conversion, but once he became a believer, the church received temporary relief from persecution. God blessed them with a period of peace as they spread the gospel to areas outside of Jerusalem.

#### WHEN HAS GOD GIVEN YOU A PERIOD OF PEACE AFTER A REALLY DIFFICULT SEASON?

Most of us have walked through suffering of some kind: grief, sickness, stress, anxiety, or loneliness. But these are seasons, which means they don't last. God is gracious to give us relief and peace from these difficulties. While some pain seems to last here on earth, all pain will dissipate the moment we reach eternity.

#### HOW DO THESE TIMES OF PEACE HELP US ENDURE FUTURE DIFFICULTIES?

The church enjoyed a time of peace, but it didn't last. The church would face persecution again—we even experience it today. Periods of peace are like breaths of fresh air: They give us a moment to recenter and allow God to rejuvenate us. We can draw on these seasons of peace when we walk through struggles later, but we can also know God's presence is with us during peace and persecution. We can have hope in the truth that we have everlasting peace with Christ in heaven.

#### 2. THE LORD BRINGS HEALING THROUGH HIS CHURCH

### READ ACTS 9:32-35

The gospel changed Peter. Once a hot-headed fisherman—and a man who denied knowing Jesus on the night of His arrest—Peter now walked in the power of the Holy Spirit. He faithfully followed the Spirit's leading and acted as an agent to bring healing to people in the church. What a change! And Peter's change overflowed into the lives of others who witnessed the Spirit's power through him.

#### WHEN ARE YOU TEMPTED TO TAKE CREDIT FOR THE GOOD WORKS YOU DO?

It can be tempting to steal credit from God. We help lead worship, or we give to the poor. We lead someone to Christ, or we pray beautiful prayers. We reach out to outcasts, or we create faith-based art. All of these acts are God-honoring, but



## ACTS 9:31

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**9:31.** “The ‘peace’ of the church is described in terms of the encouragement of the Spirit, the growth of the church, and its reverence and worship (‘the fear of the Lord’), terms reminiscent of the earlier summaries in Acts (2:43–47). It is a familiar pattern. The Lord brings his people through a time of crisis. Through his deliverance the church finds peace and continues to flourish (5:42). In this case the respite would last until a fresh outbreak of persecution occurred under Herod in chapter 12.”<sup>1</sup>

## ACTS 9:32-35

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**9:32.** “Geography is very important to Luke and very important in the study of Acts. We have already seen the gospel travel by chariot to Ethiopia and by persecutor to Damascus, so two other ‘foreign countries’ are already involved. Furthermore, all three provinces of Palestine have congregations (v. 31), so the great commission began to move well beyond the boundaries of Jerusalem and its suburbs.”<sup>2</sup>

**9:34-35.** “The healing mirrors Jesus’s healing of the paralytic in Luke 5:17–26. There Jesus demonstrates he has authority not only to heal the paralyzed but also to forgive his sins. But Spencer is right to note Peter does not heal so much in imitation of Jesus, but Jesus himself continues to heal through Peter. The order is important because though Jesus is absent in body, he is still ‘a force to be reckoned with on the mission field.’ Jesus, though he has ascended, is still active. Jesus’s resurrection life is capacious.”<sup>3</sup>



## BIG QUESTION

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### HOW CAN I CONTINUE TO GROW EVEN WHEN LIFE IS GOOD OR EASY?

When we go through difficult seasons, we are sometimes more aware of how much we need the Lord. But the truth is that we need Him just as much when life is good. We need Him for every breath we take. When we struggle, we usually pray more. We get into the Word more to search for guidance and truth. We seek godly community to help encourage us. But these are all disciplines we must continue doing in every season. We can continue to grow in times of peace just as much as in times of struggle. In fact, what we invest in during these seasons will help us endure times of difficulty. If we invest in God’s Word and in knowing Him during easier times, then we will have a stronger relationship with Christ to sustain us during times of pain.





## SCRIPTURE READING

### MAIN POINT

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sometimes we forget that all of these things are gifts. If you speak eloquently, it's only because God enables you to do so. If you create amazing art, it's God's hand moving yours. All good things come from Him—every good word, every good act.

### WHO RECEIVED THE CREDIT FOR HEALING AENEAS? WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

In verse 34, Peter made it clear who truly healed Aeneas—Jesus Christ working through him. He diverted any attention he may have received onto the Lord. This is critical because, as the church continued to grow, people could become entranced by the miracles. They could become more focused on people than on the God who worked through them. It's the same with us. When we direct all glory to God, we point people to Him rather than to ourselves.

### 3. THE LORD RESTORES LIFE WITHIN HIS CHURCH

## READ ACTS 9:36-43

Dorcas was a force of servanthood and grace in Joppa, and her death affected the community greatly. But her restoration would affect it even more. When Peter went into the upstairs room, he prayed. We don't get to read the words, but we can assume He asked Jesus to work. In restoring life to Dorcas, Jesus displayed His ability to restore all of us to life, both now and in death.

### WHAT EFFECT DID DORCAS'S RESTORATION HAVE ON THE COMMUNITY?

We'll never know the full impact of Dorcas's testimony, but one thing is clear: the location of this miracle was instrumental in Peter carrying the gospel to the Gentiles. Joppa is an extreme boundary of Judea, and his next stop would carry him to share the gospel with the first Gentile, Cornelius. Dorcas's revival led to the revival of many, both near and far.

### HOW HAS JESUS RESTORED YOU? IS IT HAVING AN IMPACT ON OTHERS? EXPLAIN.

Verse 42 says Dorcas's healing had a massive impact, leading many to Christ. While you may not have experienced literally being raised from the dead, you've been brought from spiritual death to life in Christ. You've already experienced a form of resurrection! Imagine being physically brought back to life—everyone around you would know it. But truly, everyone should also know when we've experienced being made new creations in Jesus through faith in Him (2 Cor. 5:17). It's just as much of a miracle.



## ACTS 9:36-43

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**9:40.** “Raising people from the dead was hardly a common feature of any ministry, including that of Jesus. In three and a half years Jesus had only raised three people from the dead, but Peter had seen all three. Perhaps here he remembered the incident with Jarius’s daughter (Mark 5:21–24, 35–43). There Jesus had sent mourners out of the room and prayed. There Jesus had spoken a phrase which varied in only one letter from the Aramaic command Peter uttered here to Dorcas.”<sup>4</sup>

**9:43.** “Peter stays for some time in Joppa (a distant boundary of Judea) with Simon, a leather tanner. The story prepares readers for the next episode. Tanners were considered unclean by more scrupulous Jews because of their work with dead animals (Lev. 11:39–40). They also regularly had places by the sea because of the tools and smell of their trade. Peter, therefore, goes to the symbolic edge of Judaism in divine foreshadowing of his ministry to Gentiles.”<sup>5</sup>



## ESSENTIAL DOCTRINE

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### DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity, possessing the fullness of deity like the Father and Son. His deity can be seen in the fact that He is eternal (Heb. 9:14), omnipresent (Ps. 139:7–8), the Creator and Giver of life (Gen. 1:2; Ps. 104:30; John 3:5–7), and directly identified with the Triune God (Matt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).



## CHRIST CONNECTION

The miracles Peter performed were done by the power of the Holy Spirit and resulted in people turning to the Lord for salvation, echoing Jesus's earthly ministry. During His time on earth, Jesus performed many miracles to reveal that He is the Son of God, culminating in the miracle of the resurrection, which confirmed that salvation had come.



HEAD



HEART



HANDS

### **WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO UNDERSTAND GOD IS THE POWER BEHIND ANY HEALING OR RESTORATION?**

Understanding where our healing and restoration come from is crucial. If we misunderstand this, then we will likely give credit to ourselves and to our own good works. Healing and restoration only come from Christ's power within us. We can't take credit because nothing we do on our own will produce lasting results. We can't work hard enough to be restored and made new. All credit goes to the Lord.

### **WHEN HAVE YOU STRUGGLED TO BELIEVE GOD CAN RESTORE YOU?**

Maybe you've read stories in Scripture of how people are healed and thought it just wasn't possible for you. Maybe you struggle with something physical, or maybe your struggle is mental or emotional. Just know this: God cares deeply. And if Jesus can raise people from physical death—if He can raise from the grave—then He has power over anything we encounter. And even when healing doesn't come immediately or here on earth, God walks with us and enables us to endure all things. Our faith in these times can even lead others to spiritual restoration.

### **WHAT WOULD IT REALLY LOOK LIKE FOR YOU TO LIVE AS IF YOU'VE BEEN SPIRITUALLY RESTORED AND HEALED THROUGH CHRIST?**

Scripture is clear that coming to Christ in faith makes us new, but what does this mean practically? It means all of your old ways—selfishness, pride, anger, laziness—are redeemed in Him. It means you have the power of the Holy Spirit residing within you, and He empowers you to walk away from who you were before knowing Jesus. Isn't this amazing? We aren't defined by our sinful natures any longer! And this means we'll talk differently; we'll act differently; and we'll treat others differently. Encountering God alters us because it must—His love is too radical to leave us the same.