



Day 3: Looking Intently at Others

Peter and John went to the Temple one afternoon to take part in the three o'clock prayer service. As they approached the Temple, a man lame from birth was being carried in. Each day he was put beside the Temple gate, the one called the Beautiful Gate, so he could beg from the people going into the Temple. When he saw Peter and John about to enter, he asked them for some money. Peter and John looked at him intently, and Peter said, "Look at us!" The lame man looked at them eagerly, expecting some money. But Peter said, "I don't have any silver or gold for you. But I'll give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!" Then Peter took the lame man by the right hand and helped him up. And as he did, the man's feet and ankles were instantly healed and strengthened. He jumped up, stood on his feet, and began to walk! Then, walking, leaping, and praising God, he went into the Temple with them. All the people saw him walking and heard him praising God. When they realized he was the lame beggar they had seen so often at the Beautiful Gate, they were absolutely astounded!

Acts 3:1-10

Needs. Not one of us is far from someone who is poor. Perhaps you stopped at a traffic light only to see a man with a hand-printed cardboard sign: "Need Help." Though you had reservations, you cracked the window and thrust a few dollars in his welcoming hand. The light changes. You drive on. The questions linger. You go to work with your conscience eased.

See. On entering the temple, Peter and John passed by a lame man placed at the entrance by his friends to beg for money. Many people averted their gaze, passing by. Others guiltily gave a few coins as commended by Jewish law. But Peter and John did something different. Peter "directed his gaze at him," or, as another translation says, "looked intently at him." The sense of the language suggests that the apostles, by looking intently, understood the man's deeper need for healing and recognized his dignity as a person. When Peter commanded him to "rise up and walk," the man jumped up to a new life of both spiritual and physical wholeness.

Go Deep. When you are confronted by the spoken or apparent need of someone who is poor, stop and look. Seek to understand the person's context and story, recognizing not just the apparent needs, but also the person's potential and dignity as someone who bears the image of God. Pray. Consider how you—or local churches and ministries—might be able to develop a long-term relationship with this person, pointing him or her to Christ's reconciling work and creating a context where lasting change can happen.

PRAYER:

Father, when I encounter people who are poor, give me patience and understanding as to how I can affirm their dignity and support real change in their lives. Forgive me when I have either ignored the needs around me or acted merely to ease my conscience. Give me wisdom to discern the most helpful response.