

# DISABILITY IN THE GOSPELS AND ACTS

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## Study 3: Acts 3:1 – 10 (3:11 – 4:31)

### Purpose of the study

This Bible study about the healing of a paralysed beggar by Peter and John corresponds with the theme on miraculous healings of disabled persons in the Synoptic Gospels and Acts. Here the disciples are in action, while the examples from Mark and Matthew refer to Jesus' ministry. We are trying to determine how the miraculous healings can assist us in developing a Biblical outlook on disability. The idea is to develop understanding and insight regarding the reality of disability in our modern society, and to establish an attitude towards life that would embrace disability as an integral part of our human condition.

#### 1 Challenges for people with disabilities today

##### 1.1 At times one wonders about the causes of human disabilities.

- The beggar in Acts 3 started life being paralysed. Have you given a thought as to what could possibly have caused it?
- Perhaps you yourself have a disability or you are acquainted with a disabled person. Share with your group how you are related and what the cause of his / her disability is.

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- Identify the emotions and thoughts that disability awakens in you. Share this with someone

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##### 1.2 According to Acts 3 people had to carry the paralysed man daily to the temple.

- Think about the fact that disabled people often need other people to help them and care for them.

- Tell us what this form of dependency does to one's human dignity, his / her ego and spiritual convictions.  
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- Let us help each other to understand the daily routine of a disabled person. Share your thoughts and your own experiences with one another.  
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- The man in acts 3 was a person with paralysis. Try and picture what kind of stumbling blocks this man had to overcome on a daily basis.  
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## 2 Disability - Lessons from the Bible

### 2.1 The paralysed man and time

#### 2.1.1 Read verses 1 and 2 and reflect about:

- The importance of the time of day (verse 1).
- The relationship between the time of day and the paralysed man's way of living (verses 1 – 5).

### 2.2 People with disabilities and the other persons in the story

#### 2.2.1 Read verses 1-3 and reflect on the following statements:

- "People do just the necessary for people with disabilities".
- "Disabled are always dependent for everything on other folk".
- "People would rather help persons with disabilities than the people without disabilities who are in need".
- "People with disabilities must select strategically important places to ensure that they will be assisted".

### 2.3 People with disabilities and faith

#### 2.3.1 Read verses 7-9 and meditate on the following:

- People with disabilities experience religion and faith very intense and personal.
- The paralysed man had to have faith in order to experience the miracle  
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- Describe your reaction to the following statement: Many of people with disabilities are believers, but are still disabled in one or other way!

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2.4 The person with disability and the miracle

2.4.1 Read verses 2-9 and reflect on the following:

- Your impressions of the paralysed man’s emotional state and his character traits before his healing.
- The changes in the man’s emotional condition after his healing. Describe your thoughts about these changes, according to verses 7-9.

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2.5 The further life experience of the disabled person

2.5.1 Read verses 2 and 8

- The story begins with the paralysed man being carried to the doorway of the temple to solicit donations. After his healing, he enters the temple with Peter and John.
- Did this happen because his disability had ended? Share your thoughts with the group.

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- Consider the accessibility of church buildings with which you are familiar. Would disabled people have easy access?

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2.6 The miraculous healing of the paralysed man and the follow-up

2.6.1 Read verses 9-11 and discuss the following statements:

- At the start the paralysed man is ‘outside’ the temple and looks to Peter and John, because he ‘wanted something from them’. After his healing he goes ‘enters’ the temple with Peter and John.

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- Are persons with disabilities seen as equals by the non-disabled? How do you experience this?

### 3 Notes on Acts for further reflection

Luke reports in Acts how the Jesus message spread, how the Church was established and how the Risen Lord inspired faith through the power of the Holy Spirit. The miraculous healing of the paralysed man followed shortly after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the establishment of the Church.

Acts 3:1 - 4:31 is regarded as another description of the establishment of the Church, also because this part ends with the filling with the Holy Spirit. The performance of miracles is seen by various scholars as necessary for that particular time period. It was necessary as a guarantee of the truth and the power of the Gospel message. They also explain why miracles so readily formed part of peoples' lives at that time. It was the time when the apostles lived in an intimate relationship with Jesus and there existed a faith-filled expectancy. The miracle was performed in Jesus' Name referring to His authority and power. Miracles do still happen today.

#### **Final thoughts.**

- The paralysed man is pictured as a helpless person. But he receives healing as soon as Jesus' Name is pronounced.
- The miraculous healing takes place as Peter and John look at him, grab his hand and orders him to walk in the name of Jesus.
- To what extent are today's Christian communities (congregations) prepared and ready to welcome and accommodate persons with disability? Give your opinion on this.