

A Change of Focus

During Jesus' ministry, the disciples were simply His followers. They committed to serving Christ – they gave Him their word, and they wouldn't leave Him on the basis of loyalty and dependence. However, after the resurrection of the living Savior, faith was in the driver's seat. The same Holy Spirit that resided in Jesus during His ministry was now inside of the disciples and the priorities of the apostles now became the same as that of Jesus. The beggar who was once passed by all the travelers day in and day out now became a priority for the disciples, an opportunity to show the love and grace found only through the free gift of Jesus. The Messiah who heard what others didn't hear and saw what others didn't see, the Jesus who was so incredibly focused and on mission was now in them!

1. Have your priorities changed since you became a follower of Jesus? How so? What were your priorities before you met Christ? Do you still have those priorities too?
2. How do your priorities compare to those of Jesus?
3. What are you on mission for? Where do you want to see God move in the world around you?
4. Do you feel like you "see the world" differently? How has your approach and interaction with people changed? Do your relationships seem more significant?
5. Do you ever feel a sense of urgency for spreading the Gospel that you just can't seem to explain to those around you?
6. Jesus was countercultural and we're called to be image bearers of Jesus. How are your priorities different than those around you who may not know Christ?

Tools that Equip

When the beggar asked for gold and silver, Peter answered, "Gold and silver I do not have, but what I have I give you." This phrase can be translated, "But what I've been given, I'll give to you!" What had Peter and John been given? In the previous chapter we saw the Holy Spirit enter the hearts of all the apostles. In doing so, the Holy Spirit filled these two men with the tools necessary to touch and transform the crippled beggar! That's what the gifts of the Spirit are – ministry tools for changing lives! The gifts of the Spirit are not trophies to display in front of others to say, "Look at my spiritual level!" They're not toys to be used for our personal or private pleasure. They're also not traits that make us "intellectual" or "social butterflies". The gifts of the Holy Spirit are tools, tools for everyday and everywhere, essential tools for life-changing ministry! That's why we're to earnestly desire spiritual gifts, because without them we're on our own, and we don't have what it takes to change a life!

1. Do you pray for the Holy Spirit to enter your heart? How often is this a consideration in your prayer life? Do you specifically ask for spiritual gifts?
2. Do you believe you've been blessed with gifts of the Spirit? What do you believe God has equipped you with to aid in the advancement of His Kingdom as He works through you?
3. If you feel you've been blessed with spiritual gifts, how do you use them? Do you tend to "keep them to yourself" or do you use them to bless others?
4. Have your spiritual tools "collected dust"? Do you actively use them in all aspects of your lives?
5. Are you currently utilizing these gifts in the local church? How could Hope Church be better equipped for its ministry if you were involved? If you're not serving, what's holding you back?

No Excuses. Get in the Game

When the beggar saw Peter and John at the temple, he asked them for money. The two apostles could have easily said, "Sorry man, we don't have any money...but I promise if I had some, I'd give it to you!" But they didn't. Instead, they answered, "Gold and silver I do not have, but I'll give you what I do have." We simply cannot be bogged down by what we think we need or what the world around says we'll need. God has equipped us with everything we need for the mission and purpose that He has given us. When we start thinking this way, we begin taking "chances" and "risks" for the glory of God and the advancement of His Kingdom. We step out in faith, becoming active and impacting players instead of consumers sitting on the sidelines. Earlier we said the disciples were once just "followers" of Jesus.

But after realizing their spiritual gifts and tools, they became active players for the advancement of the Gospel! We must look for how God can be present or how the gifts He's given us can be used in every situation around us. Imagine the disciples, "Gold and silver! Ha, we'll do you better! In the name of Jesus Christ, get up! The world around you may say you need money to survive, faith in Jesus is the only way to true life!" This demonstrates relevance of God and His Word – He's always relevant, no matter what the need or situation!

1. When's the last time you've stepped out and taken a chance for the advancement of the Gospel? When's the last time you had a conversation about Jesus with a co-worker, neighbor, or friend? When's the last time you went out of your way to better equip or help a complete stranger? When was the last time you sacrificed a weekend, vacation days, or a football game to help the community around you?
2. Do you ever feel like you don't have to do these things, even though this was the life of the early church described in the Bible? Why do we tend to think like this?
3. Would you consider yourself an active player in God's plan, or a consumer who simply wishes to be fed and served?
4. What excuses do you typically give for not answering a calling God has given you for your life, or a movement of the Spirit in a given specific situation? Typical answers include being "tired", not being "bible-smart", "deserving" a day off, it "wasn't the right time", or simply "someone else will do it".
5. Do you ever neglect a calling of God because you don't believe "you're ready" or "equipped"? What can we learn from this passage regarding this uncertainty?

Prayer Focus

- That our hearts would be transformed to have the same priorities as those of Jesus – seeing the lost loved and redeemed by the free gift of the risen Messiah
- That we would continuously ask the Spirit to enter our hearts and equip us with the tools to perform life-changing ministry for the glory of Jesus
- That we would become active players in the advancement of God's Kingdom, trusting the influence and movement of the Perfect Trinity that has and forever will work through us