



**Key Passage:** Acts 3:1-11

[Leader Note: We did this part of the activity as students were walking into service. As we were doing announcements and games at the beginning of service, leaders hung this up where students could see it and interact with it as they were leaving at the end of service.]

**Pre-Lesson Activity:**

Lay out butcher paper on a long table and have the students draw their prayers on it. Have signs out asking them to not use any words, only pictures of their prayers.]

Things that are beautiful stop us in our tracks. You may notice:

- A dramatic sunset
- A moving piece of artwork
- A stunning person
- A sacrificial gesture

[Leader Note: Share about a time when something beautiful caught you off guard.]

Sometimes, I go to the movies just because I want to see a movie. At other times, I go because everyone is talking about a specific movie. A couple of years back, I went to the movies because everyone around me could not stop talking about *La La Land*. It got fourteen Oscar nominations and all my friends were buzzing about it — I fell prey to the peer pressure and checked it out.

If you saw it, you might not have liked it, but It absolutely mesmerized me.

The first thing I said when the movie ended was, “That was beautiful.”

As the credits were rolling, I actually just sat there for a minute to process what I had just seen.

Like I said before — things that are beautiful stop us in our tracks.

When we look at the early church in the Book of Acts, the early days of the Christian movement made people stop and stare. Was it beautiful? Was it crazy? I guess that's a matter of opinion, but people were definitely talking about it.

The Bible tells us:

*A deep sense of awe came over them all, and the apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders.*

—Acts 2:43 (NLT)

The Holy Spirit was moving through the disciples in such a way at this time, that no matter what you thought about it, the early church had your attention.

The followers of Jesus, in this day and age, were mainly Jewish. Jews had a practice of going to the temple for prayer and sacrifice. [Leader Note: you may have to insert a brief explanation of OT sacrifice here.] They would go early in the morning and again around 3pm. Since they were raised with this practice, some of the disciples continued to pray at these set times at the temple even after they became followers of Jesus.

Let's jump into this story in our Bibles:

*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.*

—Acts 3:1-3 (NLT)

What do we know about this man from what we just read? [Give time for responses.]

- He was lame from birth; he had been in a physically disabled state his entire life.
- He begged people for money.

- He was sitting outside the gate called ‘Beautiful.’

[Leader Note: Share a story about a time that you had to wait for something pretty insignificant.]

I am trying daily to grow the level of patience in my own life. I am not naturally gifted at waiting. I told you all that I went to the movies to see *La La Land*. What I didn't tell you was how traumatic it was to wait in line for that movie.

We ran to the doors of the movie theater because it was freezing cold and the wind made it feel like your face was being cut. When we got to the doors, the line was half inside/half outside. So, we were in the doorway, but not warm. A few teenagers walked up behind us and magically cut to be with their friends (I love you all and your people, so I didn't say anything). The movie was ten minutes from starting and we were at least fifty people back with only two people working at the counter. Let me really set the scene: I needed to go to the bathroom, my friend wanted to grab us a few snacks, so I was stressing out because we all know that the previews are a vitally important part of the movie going experience. This was crunch time!

We waited. And waited. You know that type of waiting where you catch yourself looking at the time on your phone more than once a minute? I was there.

I did what any patient person would do... I bought our tickets on the fandango app and jumped under the ropes to get to the ticket-taker. The guy at this station was dripping with empathy for me as I proudly flashed him my phone's confirmation number. "Ma'am, my scanner is broken. You have to get in line and have them print you real tickets."

Noooooooooooooo! I looked at my friend with that 'do something' glare. But there was nothing for either of us to do. As we headed back to the back of the line, the employee yelled, "Here, you can get in the VIP line." One minute later, we were through the gates.

I just told you the story of the most traumatic ten minutes of a random week in my life. I can still remember it because waiting is so difficult for me.

Now, think back to the Scripture we just read. The physically disabled man was laying at the Beautiful Gate. This gate named Beautiful was probably in the Court of Women. Why would a disabled man choose to beg there? [\[Wait for answers.\]](#)

There may have been a few reasons:

- People heading into the temple for prayer and sacrifice might be feeling generous. It was considered to be a righteous act to give to the poor (called the giving of alms).
- People might give because others would see them in this setting. Sometimes people step up their game when other people are watching.

[\[Leader Note: While you are describing the gate and talking about the courts, a visual of Herod's Temple might be useful on the screen. This will help students understand the story better.\]](#)

## **1. There is Beauty in Waiting.**

This disabled man had been waiting his whole life:

- Waiting for someone to take care of his physical needs
- Waiting on people to give him money while he begged
- Waiting on a miracle (that he wasn't sure was ever going to come)

This guy had waiting down to a science.

[\[Leader Note: share an anecdote about instant gratification.\]](#)

Have you all ever spent time with a preschooler? When a little friend says they want something, they want it right now!

My nieces are eight and eleven. They have never known a world where they had to wait to see a picture. When you take a picture or video of them, they insist that you hand the device over so that they can immediately laugh at themselves.

I have the patience of an eight-year-old apparently, because I feel the same way about waiting. When I pray... well, here's what I wish happened when I pray:

[Leader Note: Show <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2nj9VDXAJB8> ]

I hate to ruin prayer for you, but God is not a magical genie just waiting in heaven for you to ask Him to make your wildest dreams come true.

[Leader Note: Optional Video Clip  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BEJFWoAVJz4> ]

When Peter and John walked up to this man outside the temple gate, he expected them to give him some money. He had been waiting his entire life for... well everything. He just needed a few coins to get him through today.

Let's look again at Acts 3:

*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!"*

— Acts 3:4-6 (NLT)

The man asked for one thing and received something so much greater instead. Sometimes, we pray to God with only our immediate needs in mind and He answers with the big picture perspective. Yes, this disabled man needed a few coins to survive that day, but isn't a complete healing a much better answer to that prayer?

Keep praying. Your answer is coming. It may not be the answer you expected, but God will answer.

## **2. There is Beauty in Opportunity**

Let's look back to Acts 3:

*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*