

ANCIENT LESSONS FOR REAL LIFE

*Learning the Cadence of the First Christians*

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Lesson 3—From Ritual to Reality

Acts 3:1-10

When it comes to our religious or spiritual lives, why do we do what we do? Too often we find ourselves simply going through the motions. That might work if we're merely playing religious games, with no connection to real life. But if what we want is to grapple with our Monday mornings by authentically facing the realities of living in a fallen world (the tragic terrorist bombings on September 11 were a brutal reminder of that), we must move away from hollow ritual and toward truly engaging in the greatness and grace of Jesus Christ.

Today we continue our look in the book of Acts at some snapshots of our ancestors in the faith—the first Christians as they were becoming the church. In Acts 2, we see how Christ's promised gift, the Holy Spirit, gave birth to the New Testament Church. How Peter and the other disciples courageously proclaimed the gospel. How thousands responded to the message and trusted Christ for their salvation. How those new converts became a community of believers in a world that was often hostile toward their message. How they became a home away from home for one another and started living life in community.

Now, in Acts 3, we see some of the implications of the authenticity borne in chapter 2. As was their normal religious custom, Peter and John went up to the temple for worship and prayer. But things were different now. Their walk with God had taken on new dimensions.

As we read about their amazing encounter with a lame man, we get a wonderful overview of what some of the differences really were.

Powerful things happen when people begin to move away from merely playing church and toward the realm of doing life deeply together. Vibrancy and authenticity begin to characterize our lives and ministry. Our walk with God moves from hollow ritual—being cloistered in a religious bubble—to real life.

[over]

*When authenticity begins to take root in our relationship with Jesus Christ, our walk with God experiences a number of shifts:*

1. From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

2. From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

3. From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

4. From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_