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UNLOCKING POTENTIAL: THE LIFE OF PETER - DEPLOY Michael B. Beough  
Acts 3:1-10 February 10, 2008  
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Today we conclude our series on the Life of Peter. As a disciple of Jesus, Peter went from being a fisherman to being a fisher of people through whom God changed the world. Jesus unlocked his potential. I believe all of us have far more potential for making a difference and living a life that counts eternally. And what I see is that God unlocks our potential as we grow in our discipleship.

Let me show you one more time my diagram of the five elements of growing disciples. **[Slide]** Discipleship begins with deciding to follow Jesus. It always leads to deploying in practical ways to reach out to the hurting and lost with God's love. This is consistent with James 2:14, 17: *14 What good is it, my brothers and sisters, if you say you have faith but do not have works? Can faith save you? 17 So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead.*

More than that, discipleship ultimately leads to a lifestyle in which we see everything we do as an opportunity to reach others with God's love. Deployment becomes the DNA of our souls. It becomes who we are.

That is what happened to Peter. We learn in the gospels that Jesus had a specific job in mind for Peter. For three years, Jesus prepared him to become the leader of the Christian community for building the church. After Pentecost in Acts 2, Peter stepped forward to become the leader and founder of the church.

**But what we see in this wonderful story in Acts 3 is that deployment as a disciple of Jesus becomes the new DNA of his soul.** He is not just a preacher on Sunday. He is a disciple on Monday.

In Acts 3, as Peter and John are hurrying into the temple for afternoon prayer, a lame beggar asks for alms. It is the same lame beggar who has sat by the Gate Beautiful every day for most of his life begging for help. Peter and John have undoubtedly seen him before.

Now we wouldn't blame them if they had simply brushed by the man. Most of us have probably done that. We might even admire them if they had simply thrown a coin in the man's cup and gone on. But that was their old DNA, back when the most important issue for them was who among them was going to be the greatest in the Kingdom of God - back when they worried more about saving their own necks than about God's purpose for their lives.

But something has changed in them. They stop and look at the man intently. I think this means they see him, for the first time, not as a lame

beggar, but as a man, a human being in need of healing, physically and spiritually. Here is a man Jesus died for.

Then they do what must have shocked the beggar and anyone else who might have been watching. They command him to “look at us”. Eyeball to eyeball. Mano a mano. Face to face. They want to look into the windows of his soul. And they want to pour into the windows of his soul the humanizing light of Christ’s love. They want to unlock the potential that no one else has ever seen in this man.

They respond to the beggar as Jesus would. The man doesn’t need more pity or even more handouts. He needs a whole new renovation of his life. A handout wouldn’t change much. More money in itself is not the solution. Even the ability to walk in itself is not enough. To walk but without purpose or praise in your life is still spiritual death. They give him what Christ wants for him. They lift him to his feet, and suddenly his ankles and legs find strength. He walks, and he leaps, and he praises God. He is now a man on fire for God.

**But that is not the end of the story.** The new DNA is at work.

Peter sees the astonishment in the faces of the onlookers, and takes the opportunity to tell them about Jesus. Has that ever happened to you? Someone notices a kind of peace in your life. Maybe someone has seen a change in an attitude. Someone sees how you deal with crisis, and they want to know why you are so calm, or why you aren’t ranting and raving. What’s different? And you take the opportunity to tell them it is because you know Jesus, or because Jesus lives in your heart. No brag, just fact.

Peter tells the onlookers that the man walks because of Jesus. About that time, the authorities show up and take them off to jail. Too late. It says in Acts 4 that about 5000 people believe in Jesus.

The next day the authorities make Peter and John stand before them. The authorities ask a question. “By what power or by what name did you do this?” Peter must have thought he was dreaming. It is the question every disciple hopes for. Peter answers, “This man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ.”

The authorities then command them to speak no more of Jesus, but it is too much in their DNA. Peter says quite honestly, “We cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

We don’t all have to become like Peter as leaders of the church. That is not the point. Some leaders turn out to be real stinkers. It is about a change of heart that unlocks a way of life through which Jesus reaches hurting and lost people.

I think too often we look at our lives as departments or compartments. We have a compartment for each thing we do or have interest in, and one of those might be religion. We have a religion department. And then in the day to day living of our lives, we parcel out the time we believe we can give to each department. We are telling the truth when we explain why we can't do more for the church or for Christ. We really don't have the time. We really mean it when we explain that we really don't have much to give to all that, to religious things or to helping others. We are not being dishonest when we explain that we really are limited in what we can do for God or for others. We really believe that.

**Discipleship reverses all that.** Growing disciples never see the glass half-empty. Neither do they see it half-full. It is always overflowing. They never speak of what little they can do. They always marvel at how much God has given them. If God calls them to action, it is always in the faith that God will provide the way and means. Instead of compartmentalizing their lives, they begin to see that every compartment belongs to God. Some need to be scrubbed. Others need to grow. But the bottom line is that they begin to live a life of integrity and purpose that go far beyond just making a living or providing for my family. Every trip to the office becomes filled with possibilities. Every business deal. Every class attended. Every trip to the store. Every person met. Opportunity, opportunity, after opportunity. Growing disciples live with the sense that God wants to do something through them so that others might come to experience in Jesus what we cannot live without.

Growing disciples live with their radar turned on for the lame beggars God places in their path.

As a congregation we are trying to see what and who God is placing on our radar screen. I keep coming back to the tragic death of Jennifer Medina. We baptized her in 2004. She became a Sunday School teacher here. On January 13, her husband killed her and then killed himself. Her parents cooperated with a reporter with the Fort Worth Star-Telegram who published a lengthy article on February 8. The parents hope the article will help others who are living in abusive situations. The reporter refers to abuse as a silent killer.

I know that some of you are beginning to feel a passion for people who are suffering in this way. Not all abuse leads to murder, but all abuse leads to the death of the human spirit and the tragic loss of hope and potential. In Jesus Christ, we experience the peace, purpose, and promise of God. How do we get that message out? How do we connect with those who are suffering silently? Is there a Signature Ministry here for us where we commit ourselves to the saving of lives in the name of Jesus Christ?

**More than anything else, I want us to be a discipling church.** As we grow in discipleship, God will release our potential. The time for sitting on

the sidelines is past. God is looking for life-breathing agents of His Kingdom on earth who are ready to give their lives to make a difference for Jesus Christ.

If you have never started this journey, why not today? Decide to follow Jesus whose will for you is to be a part of his Kingdom plans. If there is an area of your life, a compartment, you have not yielded to Jesus, decide today to let him have it. If you have been on the journey, but you have grown stale and stagnant, and you would like your life to count more for Jesus, you would like our church to make a bigger difference, decide where you need to grow – discover, discern, develop, deploy – and get busy.

Peter was a fisherman who changed the world. What does God want to do with your life?