

WHEN WE WAIT UPON THE LORD

27 SEPTEMBER 2026

SUMMARY

Drawing from the account of the healing of the crippled man at the Beautiful Gate in Acts 3, Bruce Downes challenges believers to shift their focus from what they lack to what God alone can provide. Using personal stories of financial risk, ministry expansion, and unexpected provision, the sermon emphasizes that genuine faith requires action in the face of uncertainty. The speaker underscores that neither human power nor religious piety produces the miraculous, only God does. Central to the message is the call to live as Missionaries of God's Presence, bringing Him into the ordinary rhythms of daily life and trusting that His word spoken is sufficient, even before the fruit of that word is visible.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- 1. Faith requires action before evidence.** Bruce Downes described making major decisions about staffing, travel, and ministry expansion without having the resources in hand. He connected this to the pattern seen throughout Scripture, where God calls people to move before the provision becomes visible.
- 2. God redirects our expectations toward what we truly need.** The crippled man expected money. Peter and John gave him something far greater. In the same way, our prayers and hopes are sometimes focused on surface-level needs when God is preparing to address something much deeper.
- 3. It is not our power or piety that produces the miraculous.** Peter explicitly refuses credit for the healing. Religious activity and spiritual discipline are expressions of an inward reality, but they are not the source of God's power moving in our lives. That credit belongs entirely to God.
- 4. Attention is the starting point.** Before anything else happened in the passage, Peter said, "Look at us." God consistently calls us to give Him our full attention before He moves. Distraction and divided focus are obstacles to experiencing His presence.
- 5. Living in His presence transforms the ordinary.** The red cup illustration was not incidental. The speaker pointed to the practice of bringing God into something as simple and daily as drinking coffee as a picture of what it means to be a missionary of His presence. God is not only encountered in grand moments but in the fabric of everyday life.

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

- Acts 3, verses 1 through 12, in which Peter and John encounter a man crippled from birth at the Beautiful Gate of the temple, heal him in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, and redirect the astonished crowd's wonder away from themselves and toward God

STORIES:

- Bruce Downes recounts how he and his wife Rosemary have made significant personal and ministry decisions involving financial risk, and how unexpected offers of financial support, ministry invitations, and connections arrived in quick succession, which he presents as evidence of God's provision
- A memory is shared of a bishop named Bob Healy who struggled to connect with young people at a youth convention, paralleling the speaker's own current experience of being unfamiliar with youth culture and language
- Bruce Downes reflects on his own struggles with English at school and how people who knew him then are astonished at what he now does, connecting this personal testimony to the crowd's astonishment at recognizing the healed man at the Beautiful Gate
- A reflection on the Virgin Mary is offered, imagining what it would have looked like for her to return home and explain to her family that an angel had announced she would conceive as a virgin, used to illustrate how God's word often appears nonsensical before it is fulfilled
- Bruce Downes describes waking early and receiving multiple messages of support and opportunity in a single morning, then going to stand near his sleeping wife until she woke, as a moment of quiet joy in God's provision
- A humorous closing reflection is offered on the AFL match between the Dockers and the Brisbane Lions, framed around the biblical principles of running the race to the end and what was meant for harm being turned to good

FORMED THROUGH ONE ANOTHER

SMALL GROUP GUIDE

This guide is designed to help your small group dive deeper into the message.

OPENING PRAYER

Invite the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and open hearts to God's transforming work. Pray the **IMPACTERS** Community Prayer .

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Opening

Take a moment to check in with one another. What has your week been like honestly, not just on the surface?

Going Deeper

1. Bruce Downes described making significant decisions that go well beyond available resources, describing this as a pattern consistent with how God works throughout Scripture. How do you personally respond to that kind of risk? What makes it difficult, and what makes it possible?
2. In Acts 3:4, Peter says, "Look at us," before anything else happens. What does it look like practically for you to give God your full attention in a season where life is busy or uncertain?
3. The crippled man had surrendered to his condition. His friends and community had also accepted it as permanent. Are there areas of your life, or the life of your community, where a condition has been accepted as permanent that God may want to speak into differently?
4. Peter states clearly in verse 12 that it was not their power or piety that healed the man. The speaker made the point that religious practice is an expression of an inward reality, but not the source of miraculous movement. How do you hold those two things together in your own spiritual life?
5. Bruce Downes mentioned that when he has spoken with successful leaders in ministry and business, many of them privately described a deep spiritual search happening inside them. What does that tell us about what the world is actually hungry for, and how does that shape the way we engage with people around us?
6. Bruce Downes encouraged the group to write down what they currently see, how many people, how many leaders, how many resources, so they would remember what God does from this point forward. What would you write down today about where your own life or community currently stands?

Reflection Question Where in your life right now are you waiting for visible evidence before you are willing to act on what God has spoken? What would it look like to take one step this week that reflects trust in His word rather than waiting for confirmation?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice before your next gathering:

This Week

- Set aside time each day to sit quietly in God's presence, even if only for a few minutes. Bring something ordinary with you, a cup of coffee, a familiar chair, a regular time of day, and let that become a consistent point of encounter with God rather than a special or formal occasion.
- Write down the current state of one area of your life where you are believing God for something. Be specific about what you see right now, what resources are available, what the situation looks like on the surface. Keep it somewhere you will find it again.
- Identify one person in your life who may be searching spiritually without having the language for it. Pray for them this week and ask God to show you how to carry His presence into your relationship with them.

CLOSING PRAYER

Bring before God the places where your group is waiting, trusting, or stepping out. Ask Him to shift your attention from what is lacking to what He has already spoken. Thank Him that it is not your power or piety that carries the work forward, but His presence moving through ordinary people who are willing to say yes.