

Matthew Eldridge has appeared in numerous high-profile movies, but you'll never see his face or hear his voice. That's because Eldridge serves as a "body double." Recently, for instance, his hands, feet, and body were used as stand-ins for the actor Jason Bateman in the film Identity Thief. But Eldridge doesn't mind that Bateman gets most of the attention and fame. Here's how Eldridge explained how he sees his role:

Bateman has become a household name, growing up a child star and moving on to lead roles in Arrested Development, Juno, Horrible Bosses, and others, but you've certainly never heard of me, Matthew Eldridge, though you may have seen my hands on screen. How many of us know the names of anyone behind the scenes in Hollywood? The directors or the directors of photography? Camera men? Great films rely not just on acting talent, but a team of talented individuals who work in lighting, gaffing, sound, special effects, painting, props, and so on. And that's just production.

While close to 100 crew members tirelessly work 15 hours a day so Jason Bateman can shine, they have an understanding that their work will be underappreciated and likely go unnoticed by those watching the show. But they do it anyway. Why? Because they love being a part of the creation process. There's something magical about creating something collectively larger than ourselves.

That's how it is in ministry. Ministries are built with the hands of capable individuals who may never receive recognition for the work they do They do what they do for the glory of God. Their satisfaction comes from knowing they help to build something beautiful for God's kingdom They are being the hands of Christ.

Our passage of Scripture today provides us with encouragement and insight about our calling to be the hands and feet of Christ. We have been studying through the Book of Acts together here on Sunday mornings. Our narrative today takes us to the time just after Christ has ascended back into heaven... and His Holy Spirit has descended into the lives of all His

believers. ... Now... with Christ's physical presence gone... we see how Christ's ministry continues... by His followers being His hands and feet.

As we think through this passage together... we will concentrate on several principles... that have motivated ordinary people... who have been followers of Christ... down through the ages. I am praying that our own lives will desire more intensely to be part of building something MUCH GREATER (and exceedingly more *significant*) than a Hollywood movie. ... And that we would do it with *an understanding that our work will be underappreciated and likely go unnoticed by the majority of others - But we do it anyway.*

To be the hands and feet of Christ... means that we minister to others in His name... that we have a spirit-filled ministry. ... We are going to focus our attention on what *that* looks like. Then we are going to try to understand a few things about the Kingdom of God that you and I have been commissioned to help build. If we were to gain a better understanding of what *is* ... and *will be* happening - (what it is that we get to participate in) - it will increase our desire to participate – as Christ's hands and feet. ... There are two things we want to take from our passage today: “**what** should Spirit-filled ministry look like?” and “**why** should I be the hands and feet of Christ?”

Perhaps you have been a believer for quite some time... but you have never had the proper motivation to use the Spiritual Gifting that God has given you to minister to others. ... Or maybe you are a new believer and the temptation is strong to just sit back and let others do ministry... because you don't see that you are qualified yet. Let God speak to you through His Word today. ... Or maybe you are doing some sort of ministry... because

you want the spotlight of attention (more along the lines of what Justin Bateman receives from participating in a massive Hollywood project.) God's Word will have something to say to that... as well.

Last time we were in Acts together... in Acts chapter 2... the Holy Spirit had fallen on the believers who had been waiting in Jerusalem for it to happen. Now He had burst upon their lives. ... It must have been tempting for some in the early church to try to preserve the apostolic fellowship... to linger in their Acts 2 experience... to cultivate an esoteric club-like atmosphere and... perhaps unknowingly... smother the Spirit's fire with exclusiveness. ... But they did not do this. ... What they experienced under the Spirit's reign was so explosive and expansive... they just had to get going! ... So in Acts 3 we see the church moving out into the world with healing power — Exhibit A of what being the hands and feet of the Ascended Christ looks like... (a Spirit-filled ministry.)

Acts 3:1-11

Jesus is now working through His disciples. This is one thing that Luke (the author of Acts) wants you and I to know. ... Christ's presence and His power are still at work... still available to men. ... His great love and concern for the world is still being manifested through the lives of His disciples.

Verse one gives us two principles of what Spirit-filled ministry should look like. The first is seen in the companionship of Peter and John...

Acts 3:1

These two disciples... who were great spiritual leaders of the early church... were very close companions. ... Peter and John are often found together in Scripture. They were partners in the fishing business (Luke 5:10)... They prepared the last Passover for Jesus (Luke 22:8)... During that meal... Peter sent a hand signal to John to ask Jesus who the betrayer was (John 13:23-25)... John and Peter together followed the Lord when He was arrested... and John obtained permission for Peter to enter the courtyard of the high priest (John 18:16). They both ran together to the grave the resurrection morning (John 20:3,4). ... Therefore... it is not surprising that both would be going together to the Temple to pray. ... When we come to chapter 8 in Acts... we will see they ministered to the Samaritans who believed on Jesus Christ (Acts 8:14). ... (LISTEN) ... Now that they were filled with the Holy Spirit... the Apostles were no longer competing for greatness... but were at last working faithfully together to build the Kingdom of God.

You may remember from the final chapter of John's Gospel... Peter still had a competitive nature. Jesus had resurrected... but He had not yet returned to heaven and the Holy Spirit had not yet come. Jesus and Peter are walking along the shore of Galilee... and Jesus reveals to Peter that he would suffer persecution and his own crucifixion. Peter looks behind them and sees John (following them). Then Peter asked Jesus... "*What about him?*" ... Peter seemed obsessed with comparing himself with John... We know this because of Jesus' reply to Peter...

John 21:22

Jesus said to him, "If it is my will that he remain until I come, what is that to you? You follow me!"

Jesus had to rebuke Peter's competitive comparing himself to John. ... But now they have been filled with the Holy Spirit... and now they are a team!

What Spirit-filled ministry looks like... is that it is most often a TEAM EFFORT. ... When Jesus sent out his twelve apostles and the seventy disciples... they were sent out two by two. (We see this in Mark 6:7; Luke 10:1)... When Peter rose to speak on the day of Pentecost... he "stood up with the Eleven" (Acts 2:14). ... When he talked of his witness, he said, "We are witnesses of this" (3:15; cf. 2:32; 5:32). ... Peter was not a lone voice... he had a ministry team backing him when he spoke. ... And as I mentioned a moment ago... Peter and John ministered as a team (as we will see in chapter 8).... Then... in Acts chapter 10... when Peter went to the home of Cornelius... a Gentile... on his historic visit... he took six brothers with him.

Only in exceptional cases... such as Philip the evangelist... do we see ministry performed alone in the New Testament. ... Even in Philip's case we cannot be sure he went to Samaria alone... for other disciples may have gone there with him when they were scattered. (It seems clear, however, that he was alone when he met the Ethiopian eunuch.) Jesus, of course, always had His disciples with Him, unless He wanted to be alone in prayer. In other words... we can safely say that in the Bible... working in teams is the normal style of ministry.

If you ever feel that you are all alone in a ministry... that everything is up to you... you need to know that is not the normal style of ministry... and perhaps you should seek a greater team effort. Lone-wolf ministry is not Spirit-filled ministry.

Another observation from verse one... of what Spirit-filled ministry should look like concerns itself with what Peter and John were in the process of doing. ... They were going to the Temple for the afternoon prayer service.

The Jews observed three times of prayer – morning (9:00), afternoon (3:00 pm), and evening (sunset). At these times devout Jews and Gentiles who believed in God often would go to the temple to pray.

So... here we see that – even as Christian believers – Temple worship offered them an inspired manner of prayer! They consistently worshipped God – the best way they knew how... even though it was led by the very leaders who killed Jesus.

This is pretty phenomenal to us who live in an age when “Organized Religion” is viewed by so many as suspect. ... We all know people who will have nothing at all to do with an organized religion of any kind ... because they assume it is all corrupt. ... But here are these two disciples who KNOW the organizers of the Temple worship are indeed Messiah murderers. You cannot get any more corrupt than that ! ... They must have looked beyond the leaders... with their eye on who the object of their worship was – YHWH!

Spirit-filled ministry needs to be surrounded by consistent worship ... especially devoted times of prayer. These two disciples would have had a very understandable excuse. “Let’s not go to the Temple prayer service – the very ones who killed our Savior are there... It’s full of hypocrites...” Who would blame them for not going...? Apparently prayer was far more important to them... than it is for many who do ministry today.

I am very glad for one of the stated values we have as a church. Prayer shall be the work... and ministry its overflow. We do not consider prayer to be part of the ministry that we do. It is the other way around... Ministry is part of our prayer...it is the overflow from our praying. ... Even though we sense great need for discussion at our elder meetings... to plan things out... we spend the vast majority of our time centered on prayer. ... We have seen God accomplish incredible ministry through several extended periods of prayer... when we take an afternoon or a morning for special prayer. ... And thank you congregation... for responding so well to our request for you to come join us when we pray for our missionaries.

Spirit-filled ministry is a team effort. Spirit-filled ministry is surrounded by regular worship – especially prayer. A third observation from our passage is found in verse 5.

At the temple... Peter and John direct their attention on a man who was lame from birth... He was begging for money at the gate.

Acts 3:4-5

The man had his mind on money and that's all he expected. ... That is the world's view of helping people. Government's answer to any problem seems to be – throw more money at it. ... Perhaps this will help solve many of the problems that plague our nation. But Spirit-filled ministry offers a lot more than that.

Instead of money, this man got something far better. ... He got a cure for his condition... a cure he would not trade for any hand-out... and a cure

Which would end his alms-seeking practice. Spirit-filled ministry always has something better than money to offer the needy.

It is so easy to see in this man an illustration of what you and I offer through a Spirit-filled ministry – salvation to a needy world. ... He was born lame... just as all to whom we offer salvation have been born unable to walk so as to please God. ... (Our father Adam had a fall and passed his lameness on to all of his descendants.) ... The man was also poor... and those to whom we seek to minister... are bankrupt before God... Just as we once were... they are unable to pay the tremendous debt that we owe God. ... T

his lame man was “outside the temple.” Because of his infirmity... he was not allowed inside... so he had never seen anything but it’s outer walls and gates. ... All sinners are separated from God... no matter how near to the door they might be. ... The man was healed wholly by the grace of God... and the healing was immediate. ... He gave evidence of what God had done by “walking, and leaping, and praising God” and by publicly identifying himself with the Apostles...immediately in the temple... and then as we will see in chapter 4... when Peter and John get arrested for doing this miracle.

Spirit-filled ministry offers something better than the world’s best solution.

The lame man asked for money... but Peter gave him something much better – the use of his legs. ...We often ask God to solve a small problem... but He wants to give us a whole new life... and help for all our problems. ... He may say. “I’ve got something even better for you.” ... You may ask God for what you want... but don’t be surprised when He gives you what you really need.

With verse 8... our passage begins to transition to God's Kingdom program. We begin to get a glimpse of what it is we are participating in – when we have a Spirit-filled ministry. We participate in something so much BIGGER than any Hollywood production that goes back thousands of years. ... What we should notice has to do with the man's actions... once he was healed.

Acts 3:8

Notice how the word “leaping” is used twice in this verse. ... I think that what our author (Luke) wants to make sure we understand... is that the Kingdom is being offered once more to Israel... who rejected it when they rejected Jesus. This will be their final opportunity – until the culmination of the 7-year Tribulation... which I believe is very imminent to us right now.

Let me show you how this man's leaping was one last opportunity for them to accept God's Kingdom. ... Their own sacred Scriptures declare that an identifying mark of the Kingdom would be (guess what...) “The lame shall leap.”

Isaiah 35:6 (ESV)

then shall the lame man leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute sing for joy. For waters break forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert;

Every instructed Israelite going up to the temple that day marveled at this lame man leaping. They knew this could actually be the beginning of the Kingdom. ... Great things had happened in Jerusalem during the past few weeks. They had witnessed the crucifixion of Jesus, His resurrection, His ascension, and the Day of Pentacost... and now the lame man leaping like

A deer. Each of these things had been prophesied as markers for the Messianic Kingdom.

The proof of the miracle was abundant. ... When God does a work... the evidence will be great. ... The people knew beyond question that the crippled beggar had been healed. They had known him to be a cripple for over forty years; he had never walked.

I will pick back up on this point a little later... but a Spirit-filled ministry participates in God's sovereign and enormous program. Peter knew that he was participating in God's sovereign program from ages past... and he capitalized on the opportunity of a gathered crowd... to proclaim what that program is.

In the next several verses Peter presents God's program by telling (1) who Jesus was... (2) how the Jews had rejected him... (3) why their rejection was fatal... and (4) what they needed to do to change the situation.

Peter tells the crowd that they still have a choice... God was still offering them the opportunity to believe and receive Jesus as their Messiah. The healing of this lame man... created a teachable moment. That is another mark of a Spirit-filled ministry – it recognizes teachable moments... and uses them.

Acts 3:12-26

There are a few more observations here... of what a Spirit-filled ministry looks like. A clear evidence is seen in verse 12.

In his first sermon... at Pentecost... Peter had to refute the accusation that the believers were drunk. ... In this sermon... he had to refute the notion that he and John had healed the man by their own power. ... (Paul and Barnabas will face a similar situation after healing a lame man... in Acts 14...) ...Here... Peter immediately identified the source of the miracle – Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

Peter (and later on... in Acts – Paul)... both try to deflect glory from themselves. This is another refreshing change from when the disciples were disputing among themselves as to which one was the greatest... before the Holy Spirit came. They have finally heeded Jesus' warning that "everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

When we realize that none of us deserves the ministry we have been given and that we have our ministry only because of God's mercy (2 Cor. 4:1), it becomes difficult to take any glory for ourselves. We should be so thrilled that God has given us this call that we should focus on giving Him all the glory. And when we realize how He lifts us up... we should be so filled with joy and gratitude that we give ourselves to lifting up others.

Should we be any less willing to deflect glory than any stage hand on a Hollywood set...? They are so willing to allow someone else have greater glory... just to be part of something as insignificant as a movie.

Spirit-filled ministry deflects glory onto Christ. The next mark of a Spirit-filled ministry that I want to show you from our passage is... that a Spirit-filled ministry is done in the name of Christ.

Acts 3:16

If I were to tell you to go to Salem... walk into the governor's mansion... sit yourself at the dining table and wait for dinner – and use my name if anyone asks you – You would be in a lot of trouble. ... Why? Because my name does not carry enough weight for you. My name does not have the authority and power.

“In the name of Jesus” means by His power and authority. Spirit-filled ministry is done in Christ's name. That name has all the authority of the universe! Ministry that is done in Christ's name can be fearless with God's truth. That is the next observation. Spirit-filled ministry is fearless with God's truth.

God was using Peter to offer Israel one final chance for national repentance. But we cannot avoid noticing the boldness that He gave to Peter. ... **You** handed the Messiah over to be killed... **You** disowned Him before Pilate (v.13)... **You** disowned the Holy and righteous One and asked for a murderer to be released (v.14)... **You** killed the author of life (v.15)...

When Peter said, “You killed,” he meant it literally. Jesus' trial and death had occurred right there in Jerusalem only weeks earlier. It wasn't an event of the distant past – most of these people had heard about it, and some may very well have taken part in condemning Jesus. ... Calvary may have been man's last word... but the empty tomb was God's last word. ... He glorified His Son by raising Him from the dead and taking Him back to heaven. ... The enthroned Christ had sent His Holy Spirit and was working through His church. The healed beggar was proof that Jesus was alive. If ever a people were guilty... it was the people Peter addressed in the temple. They were guilty of killing their own Messiah!

This is probably not the kind of message we would give at an evangelistic meeting today... because it was designed especially for Peter's Jewish audience... calling them to national... and individual... repentance.

After centuries of waiting for the Messiah... He had at last arrived among them... in their time and their place. They were the uniquely privileged generation... from the dawn of time to the present moment, Into their hands the Holy and Righteous One had been given. ... but they had failed to recognize Him when He came – worse... they had disowned Him – worse still... they had handed Him over to the Gentile Roman overlords. Yet worse again... they had chosen to liberate Barabbas... a murderer... rather than God's Messiah. But worst of all... almost unthinkably... they had **killed** Him! They had murdered the Messiah, disowned the divine one, slain the Son of God, killed the King of Glory!

What mercy we see here of God... who leads Peter and John to do a miracle that offers them another chance... and then to have Peter boldly and unmistakably proclaim God's offer.

There must be conviction before a sinner can experience conversion. Unless a patient is convinced that he is sick... he will never accept the diagnosis or take the treatment. Peter turned the temple into a courtroom and laid all the evidence out for everybody to see.

God's enormous and sovereign plan involves incredible mercy. After all the evidence that He has provided the people of Israel... they continued to Asaid that Another would come... Who would have the same authority to initiate something new... just as Moses had done. Evidence after evidence after evidence. All of it went ignored.

Is God ever to show them mercy again...?

Prophecy says yes! Peter hints of it in verses 19-21...

Acts 3:19-21

I don't have time to go into all the detail... but it is very exciting and motivating (for us)... to see what God's continued plan of mercy is.

Peter asks them to repent so that the Lord will return and times of refreshing would begin. ... Prophecy declares that Jesus will return – and His return will occur AFTER Israel's national leaders repent and recognize Who He really is!

As Jesus entered Jerusalem before He was crucified... He got to the top of Mt. Olivet which overlooked the City... He stopped... and He painfully cried...

Matthew 23:37-38

“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate.

Now... the next thing Jesus says is REMARKABLE !!!

Matthew 23:39 (ESV)

For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.’”

You will only see Me again... (I will not return...) until you recognize I am the Blessed One Who comes in the name of the Lord... When you finally confess about Me – the truth you have continually rejected... then I will return.

The event known as the rapture... when Christians will be snatched away into Heaven... will happen at ANY moment. ... But when Christ comes back to earth... and Christians return with Him... This will only occur when there is national repentance of Israel. ... What will make that happen...? The 7 Year Tribulation.

According to Rev.12:6, 14... During the Tribulation the remnant of Israel will flee to a special place God prepares for them to be protected from the AntiChrist. But as a series of battles known as Armageddon takes place... the Antichrist in a rage will go after these protected Jews. He and his evil forces will surround the city of Borzah where they are. (Micah 2:12 names the place!) then... finally... because of two special witnesses who had previously been proclaiming the truth to them... the national leaders of Israel will lead the people to repent – and Christ will come and defeat the AntiChrist – saving them and bringing the times of refreshing – the Millenium.

Listen God has a plan... an enormous plan! You and I can be part of it through a Spirit-filled ministry – right now! ... All the glory of Hollywood is NOTHING – compared to the glory we can have by participating.