

Acts 4:1-31

Preach It!

Learning Objective(s)

- Intimacy with Christ/the Holy Spirit gives us boldness to use our stories to speak the Gospel message.
- Christ empowers us to share the truth despite our immediate circumstances.

Pray for your time together as a group!

? Have you ever felt compelled to share something with a person (e.g. good/bad news, they have toilet paper on their shoe)? What happened? How did they respond?

Optional Transition: Tonight we're going to read about Peter and John, two of Jesus' disciples, who were compelled to share the Gospel. Our story with them in Acts 3 left off with the healing of a lame, beggar man and the disciples calling onlookers to repentance.

Part One: Boldness And Preparation

Read Out Loud: Acts 4:1-14 (NIV)

¹ The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. ² They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. ³ They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. ⁴ But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.

⁵ The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. ⁶ Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. ⁷ They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹ If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed,¹⁰ then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹ Jesus is

“the stone you builders rejected,
which has become the cornerstone.’

¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

¹³ When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. ¹⁴ But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say.

? What was it about Peter and John’s message that both landed them in jail and led 5,000 people to believe?

Possible Answers: Crazy bold message about who Jesus is and how He died which separated the people into those who believed or those who were offended; they called out the Jews for killing Jesus, etc.

? Why might Peter continue to accuse and highlight the leaders' and elders' fault in the crucifixion of Jesus?

Possible Answers: Highlights their sickness. Tries to combat the fact that they still think they have it right. Highlights Jesus' ability and His alone to save.

? The members of the Sanhedrin were astonished by Peter and John’s courage (vs.13). Where does their boldness and confidence come from?

Leaders’ Note: Your group members may be tempted to give a Sunday School answer here (i.e. Jesus). Try to encourage them in the direction of the Possible Answers.

Possible Answers: They’re bold and unashamed because they are simply proclaiming biblical truth in conjunction with what they’ve seen and heard. They are confident in their message; they believe the truth of their message fully.

? How were Peter and John prepared for this moment (e.g. Luke 21:14, Acts 4:13)?

Possible Answers: Cultivation of Jesus’ presence in their lives. They knew Jesus and their stories were directly shaped by Him; they had been with Him. Prayer. Jesus prepared them for this. The fruit of Luke 21:14 is shown in Acts 4:13. Holy Spirit empowers them.

? In what ways can we be prepared to be used by God?

Possible Answers: Pray for courage and equipping, know the truth of Scripture, speak of what we have seen and heard--our own testimony.

? In vs. 13 we read that Peter and John are “unschooled, ordinary men.” How can their example inspire us to forget our shortcomings and rely on God completely?

Possible Answers: They were regular men. We too can be freed from our shortcomings to speak with power about what we have seen and heard (our own testimony) and the truth of the Gospel of Jesus and its transformational power in our lives. We can see how the Lord was faithful to equip them and will be faithful to us in the same way.

Part Two: Boldness and Our Circumstances

Read Out Loud: Acts 4:15-31 (NIV)

¹⁵ So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. ¹⁶ “What are we going to do with these men?” they asked. “Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷ But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name.”

¹⁸ Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus.

¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, “Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges!

²⁰ As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.”

²¹ After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. ²² For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

²³ On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. ²⁴ When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. “Sovereign Lord,” they said, “you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. ²⁵ You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David:

““Why do the nations rage

and the peoples plot in vain?

²⁶ The kings of the earth rise up

and the rulers band together

against the Lord

and against his anointed one.’

²⁷ Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. ²⁸ They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. ²⁹ Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

³¹ After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

? The disciples continuously faced opposition in sharing the Gospel message (vv. 18-19). Can you list some examples? How do we see them respond?

Possible Answers: Acts 5:17ff, Acts 9:19-25, etc. See them withdraw when it's wise to do so, but continue in boldness when they are led to do so.

? The disciples don't seem fazed by their circumstances, no matter how difficult they are. How do we respond during difficult circumstances? Why can it be difficult for us to believe in God's authority in those moments?

Possible Answers: Run away or isolate ourselves. Turn to the Bible/prayer for encouragement and truth. Ask our Gospel friends for support. It can be difficult to believe in God's authority because our current circumstances can flood our hearts and minds. They can seem impossible to overcome. We're often not sure what it means for God to have authority over those moments.

? Peter and John's intimacy with Jesus gave them the boldness to use their stories as a way to share the Gospel (vs. 1-2, 10-12, 20). How can we use our stories to share the Gospel with those around us?

Possible Answers: While it can be easy at times to focus on the "biggest" parts of our faith stories as the only tool to sharing the Gospel, God gives us lots of opportunities in our everyday lives and interactions with others that can point people to the Gospel (e.g. responding to difficult coworkers, being a good friend).

? What does boldness in the proclamation of the Gospel look like in today's church?

Possible Answers: Being faithful and obedient in sharing our story and the Gospel when we are prompted by the Holy Spirit; like Peter and John--listen and trusting God before the opinions of those around us; rejoicing with others in the truth of the Gospel and celebrating when transformation of lives happen because of the Gospel.

? Peter and John pray for boldness to speak the truth despite their circumstances. How have you seen God honor your request for boldness when you've asked Him?

Possible Answers: Relationships restored, people came to know Christ, learned new truths about who Christ is and His character.

For Accountability And Discussion

? In what ways do you need to walk in boldness?

? Peter and John's words and actions reflect that they've been with Jesus. Does your life and story reflect to others your relationship with Christ and the Gospel message? How so?