



# ACTS: THE STORY CONTINUES



## WARM-UP

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?

*Pray for your time together as a group.*

*Read out loud as a group*

### **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.



## Why might the religious leaders be disturbed or annoyed (vs 2)?

*Possible Answers: because they were likely INSIDE the temple strictly following OT law while this miraculous healing happened OUTSIDE the temple to people likely not strictly adhering to OT law, because Jesus was crucified and yet he still possess a threat, because they couldn't DISPROVE the resurrection, because it goes against everything they thought was true, because it's confusing, because righteousness is about law to them, possibly because they were uneducated/common men teaching contrary to their teachings, and because Grace offends those who think highly of themselves.*



## Look at Peter and John's defense. How do they respond to the religious leaders?

*Possible answers: they make it clear that Jesus is the hero. The healing is made secondary yet again. They link to OT prophecy and really spell it out. They remind them that it was a miracle and wonderful act of kindness that then is linked to a bigger miracle and greater kindness of Jesus Christ.*



## The members of the Sanhedrin were astonished by Peter and John's courage (vs.13). Where does their boldness and confidence come from? How does this speak of grace?

*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: Simply BEING with Christ. That's the gospel right there! And also possibly 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. They're hope was in the promises of Jesus not this life and therefore they were unafraid of what the religious leaders could do to them. Speaks of grace because its not about us! Law would be: "When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were well-educated, distinguished men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus". Instead the awe is not directed at them but Jesus.*

*Read out loud as a group*

### **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."

Read out loud as a group

## ACTS 4:15-31 (NIV) CONTINUED

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 don't seem fazed by their circumstances, no matter how difficult they are. Instead they pray for MORE boldness. How do we respond during difficult circumstances? What strikes you about the disciples' response and how might we put similar practices into place in our own lives?

*Possible Answers: Answers may vary. Run away, escapism, busyness or isolate ourselves. Turn to the Bible/prayer/community for encouragement and truth. The disciples immediately went to their community, prayed and worshiped together, they prayed for more boldness which would insinuate more difficult circumstances in which to be bold in, declared Jesus' name in power, offered themselves as servants to God, experienced another physical shaking as evidence that the Holy Spirit was in their midst. Answers may vary on what sticks out to people.*



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

*Possible Answers: Answers may vary. 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; Making sure Jesus is the hero of our story; rejoicing with others in the truth of the Gospel and celebrating when transformation of lives happen because of the Gospel.*

### Optional Activity

Read the following Mark passage and compare/contrast to Acts 4:18-22

*Read out loud as a group*

#### MARK 15:1-15

1 Very early in the morning, the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, made their plans. So they bound Jesus, led him away and handed him over to Pilate.

2 "Are you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate.

"You have said so," Jesus replied.

3 The chief priests accused him of many things. 4 So again Pilate asked him, "Aren't you going to answer? See how many things they are accusing you of."

5 But Jesus still made no reply, and Pilate was amazed.

6 Now it was the custom at the festival to release a prisoner whom the people requested. 7 A man called Barabbas was in prison with the insurrectionists who had committed murder in the uprising. 8 The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did.

9 "Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews?" asked Pilate, 10 knowing it was out of self-interest that the chief priests had handed Jesus over to him. 11 But the chief priests stirred up the crowd to have Pilate release Barabbas instead.

12 "What shall I do, then, with the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them.

13 "Crucify him!" they shouted.

14 "Why? What crime has he committed?" asked Pilate.

But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!"

15 Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them. He had Jesus flogged, and handed him over to be crucified.



In comparing and contrasting the Mark and Acts passage, how does it reveal the gospel?

*Possible answers: compare: both trials, both persecution by religious leaders, pressure by the people Contrast: people pressure crucifixion and people pressure release, Jesus vs his followers.. Gospel: Jesus was persecuted for you. He was killed and we were let go! He was perfect and we are not.*

# DISCUSSION FOR ACCOUNTABILITY



- Are you still struck by the astonishment that you are saved? If not, in what areas have self-sufficiency or complacency crept into your heart?
- In what areas of your life could the boldness of Christ be more prevalent?