



## Acts Chapter 4

### Theme of Acts: The Holy Spirit and the Birth of the Church

#### Personal Reflection

Complete this section in one sitting or little by little during the week. Begin with prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit into your time. Spending time in the Bible, studying the original intent, meaning and cultural context helps you to understand how it applies to you now. Click on any Bible verse to read it or use your own Bible.

#### Further Study: with your small group or on your own

Complete with your small group if you are in one; or complete on your own, spending time with God.

Song for the week: Praise You Anywhere - Brandon Lake

Song links: <https://youtu.be/V39qPqyyB2A?si=sInhu8TfEwuK039v>

### **Read Acts 4**

#### **Personal reflection:**

There were over 500 witnesses who saw Jesus after His resurrection, that means there were over 500 testimonies! By Acts 4:4 the number of men, not including women and children, who believed in Jesus had grown to 5,000! *Optional, read these verses: Acts 1:2-3, Acts 4:4, 1 Corinthians 15:5-7*

“The apostles are filled with the Spirit, but the religious leaders are filled with fear of losing power over the Jewish people. They thought the business with Jesus of Nazareth ended the day they put Him to death, and yet already thousands of people in Jerusalem are believing and teaching in His name (thebiblesays.com).”

The persecution of Jesus shifted to the persecution of the Church. Just as Jesus had been arrested, Peter and John were arrested. The religious leaders who were trying to silence Peter and John were the same ones who had a part in putting Jesus to death. They are seeking the same answers. *Optional read these verses: John 18:2-14, Acts 4:3, Acts 5:17, Acts 5:40*

Read John 18:12-13 and Acts 4:5-6. Who are some of the same men asking the questions?

Read Matthew 21:23 and Acts 4:7. What are the questions being asked in each?

Has there ever been someone you told about Jesus who kept asking the same questions?  
What questions did they ask?

The religious leaders were disturbed that Peter and John were teaching the people about Jesus yet the question they asked was about healing the lame man.

Sometimes the question being asked isn't what the person really wants answered, just as the religious leaders had underlying reasons for their questions. “Whenever someone seems unable to hear an answer, there's a deeper, emotionally-vulnerable question underneath. If you pause and listen

with curiosity, you can usually hear what that question is. And then you can respond to what's *actually* being asked instead of what's *apparently* being asked (gracejudson.com).”

Considering the possible emotional questions underneath the question asked, what are some curious questions you can tenderly ask to help someone open up to what is blocking them from knowing Jesus?

Peter and John were obeying Jesus, being his witness in Jerusalem. They were saying words that the Holy Spirit gave them. *Optional, read these verses: Acts 1:8, Acts 4:8*

Read Matthew 10:16-20 and Luke 12:11-12 . Jesus knew what was to come. What were some things He told the disciples?

What do these verses in Matthew and Luke say to you personally? What wisdom or courage do they build in you?

God can use whomever or whatever He chooses to use for His purposes. God used Caiaphas to speak truth when he said it was better for one man to die than for all of them to die. Caiaphas thought that killing Jesus (one man) would protect the power of Roman rule. The irony was that God used Caiaphas to prophecy the truth: Jesus (one man) would die to literally offer salvation to all, eliminating separation from God. *Optional, read these verses: Proverbs 21:1, Luke 19:40, John 11:49-52*

Read Acts 4:8-12. What does Peter say that might have had Caiaphas remembering what he had said about Jesus' death?

Peter and John were not from a privileged class nor a religious class; they had no training in persuasive speaking nor Jewish theology, which may be why Luke chose the words “unschooled and ordinary” to describe them. Their rabbi, Jesus, also had no formal education. Yet Peter had confidence and was teaching from the Old Testament. *Optional, read these verses: Mark 1:16-24, John 7:15*

While Peter and John did not have training in theology, they learned from Jesus for 3 years. As students, they watched Him and listened to what He said. You have the same opportunity to spend time with Him each day. As you spend time reading the Bible, how is it strengthening your relationship with God and your faith?

In Isaiah it was written that the one who relies on the cornerstone will not have panic. In Psalms it says that the rejected stone became the cornerstone. It is possible that the religious leaders felt the sting of the implication in Peter's message that they had a part in killing Jesus who Peter said was the Messiah. *Optional, read these verses: Isaiah 28:16, Psalm 118:22*

The Church is built first on Jesus, then the apostles and prophets. You are also part of the Church, and are to offer “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God” *Optional, read these verses: Ephesians 4:20, 1 Peter 2:4-6*

Read the following verses. What spiritual sacrifice is mentioned in each? Psalm 141:2, Hebrews 13:15, Romans 12:1-2

Which of the spiritual sacrifices mentioned would you like to increase in your life? How will you do that?

Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15. It says believers should build with care. There are two kinds of works listed. Which ones build on the cornerstone and last?

Based on this, do you need to make any changes to the ways you are loving and serving Jesus and others?

The believers were praying together, not for protection but for boldness. They told God who He is, reflected back to Him what He had done. They prayed parts of Psalm 2 and told God what they were experiencing. Finally, they asked something of God.

Read Acts 4:29-30. What did they ask God for and for what purpose? How would the answer bring God glory?

### **Putting it into practice:**

Read Ephesians 3:14-21. Paul prayed “for power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.” The power in Paul’s prayer and in the peoples’ prayer Acts 4:24-30 was to help people understand God’s great love for them and to increase belief, their own and in those they spoke with.

Using the prayers in Acts 4 and Ephesians 3 as a guide, on another sheet of paper, write out a prayer to God asking for power to understand His great love for you and for you to be able to have boldness in sharing Him and His love with others.

You have your own testimony of experiencing God in your life. Is there a person you can share your testimony with this week? Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in sharing your personal story and that He prepare the listener’s heart for your message.

## **Further Study - with your small group or on your own**

Peter and John did three things that we can also do (from [virtualbiblestudy.com](http://virtualbiblestudy.com)). Read the following verses and discuss how they encourage, challenge or grow you.

1. They confessed Jesus as Lord and Savior (Read Acts 4:8-10, Romans 10:9-10)
2. They remained steadfast (Read Acts 4:19-20, 1 Corinthians 15:58, James 1:12)
3. They exercised faith (Read Acts 4:29-31, Hebrews 11:6, Romans 1:17)

Jesus knew that believers would have trouble in this world and He offered peace in Him. "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world (John 16:33)."

While we are not going through the same persecution as Peter and John did, we may still experience persecution for our beliefs in our families, where we live and where we work. What have you learned from the believers in Acts and from Jesus' words that you can apply to situations you may be in?

What Jesus said to the early believers about His peace and His overcoming the world is also true for believers today. How do you experience His peace?

The phrase "of one heart and of one soul (or mind)" was a Hebrew form of expression for complete accord (Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges). It was used when Israel was of one mind to make David king. It was used by God for when He will bring Israel back together again and they will be united and call Him their God. *Optional, read these verses: 1 Chronicles 12:38, Jeremiah 32:36-40*

The believers in Acts 4 had this same complete accord; there was no contrast between the apostles and the other believers. This was just what Jesus had said, believers would be known by their love for one another. *Optional, read these verses: Acts 4:32, John 13:35*

Believers should still be known for their love for one another. How can you practically show your love to other believers - and unbelievers - as a testimony to being a follower of Jesus?

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8)."

"With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all (Acts 4:33)."

"The word 'power' here denotes 'efficacy,' and means that they had 'ability' given them to bear witness of the resurrection of the Saviour. It refers, therefore, rather to their preaching than to their miracles (Barnes' Notes on the Bible)." Efficacy is the ability to produce a desired or intended result.

The Holy Spirit still gives power to believers to share the gospel of God's great love. He will guide your words, giving you boldness AND be at work on the one who hears your message to produce the desired result (salvation).

Consider spending time as a small group praying for the Holy Spirit's power to speak God's Word with great boldness, for those to hear to be receptive and for strength for believers who are being persecuted for their beliefs.

Is there anything from this week's personal reflection time which you would like to discuss more with your small group?