

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

# Small Group Bible Study

1 July

**You Will Be My Witnesses**

Acts 1:1-14

8 July

**You Will Go For Me**

Acts 1:15-31

15 July

**You Will Be Devoted To Me**

Acts 2:1-42

22 July

**You Will Be United**

Acts 2:43-47

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**You Will Face Opposition With Boldness**

Acts 4:1-31

# OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF ACTS

## The purpose of Acts

The book of Acts is written as a sequel to the Gospel of Luke (Acts 1:1 “in my former book”). It is written so that Theophilus, a believer of the Lord Jesus, can know with certainty how God is continuing to accomplish His saving purposes through the death, resurrection and the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, and how by believing in the Lord, the church is now the people of God, the rightful heirs of God’s promises, enabled and empowered by God’s Holy Spirit to carry God’s purposes in the midst of oppositions, and to do so with great boldness.

Luke writes in the language and style of the Septuagint, the Greek Old Testament (OT) of his days. He knew he was writing the theological history of God’s people, pointing his readers to the God who controls all things, bringing to pass His covenantal promises to His people in the Old Testament.

## The Kingdom theme in Acts

The main theme is the kingdom of God, as seen in how this kingdom theme frames the beginning and end of Acts in 1:3,6 and 28:23, 31. The kingdom of God is about God’s total and universal sovereignty over both the Jews and the Gentiles through the reign of Christ.

The outworking of this kingdom theme in Acts is introduced right at the start of chapter 1 and 2. It is about the risen and exalted Christ in the ascension and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, assembling and commissioning His church for the spread of the gospel. Its focus is at the same time Christological, Missiological, and Ecclesiastical (about the church). It’s about how the risen and ascended Lord and Christ brings about the unstoppable march and conquest of the Word and the strengthening of His churches. Luke goes at length to show that these are the necessary continuation of God’s story and the outworking of God’s promises in the OT. The word ‘dei’ in Greek meaning ‘it is necessary’ appeared 40 times over in Luke-Acts. It is about the sovereign fulfilment of Scripture. (See Luke 1:1 “the things that have been fulfilled among us”, Luke 24:44 “everything written about me . . . must be fulfilled.”)

In fact, Luke’s writing is instructive for the way we interpret scriptures. See the twin lectures of Christ in Luke 24: 25-27; 44-47. Acts further shows us that Scriptures has to be interpreted not just Christologically, but also Missiologically and Ecclesiastically in the light of who God is, God’s story (see Acts 7 & 13), and hence what it means to be God’s people.

## The Kingdom theme outlined in Acts 1:8

Acts 1:8 is not just an outline of the geographical spread of the gospel in the book of Acts. It is, in fact, Christ’s reply to the disciples’ question “When will you restore the kingdom of Israel?” In other words, Acts is an answer to the OT hope of Israel, the pressing question on the lips of the disciples right to the moment of Christ ascension. The restoration of Israel involves the reunification of the southern kingdom of Judea and the northern kingdom of Israel, represented by its ancient capital of Samaria (fulfilling Ezekiel 37). When Israel is restored to its glory, even the outcast, represented by the eunuch highlighted in Acts 8 (fulfilling Isaiah 56) and the Gentiles from the ends of the earth (Isaiah 49:6) will come to worship God and be saved.

This hope of Israel is also the hope of the final resurrection of the dead, the message of the Apostles for which they were persecuted (Acts 4: 2). For this “hope of Israel”, the apostle Paul was in chains (Acts 20:28, see also Acts 26:6,7).

Thus, Luke uses patterns, repetitions, keywords, speeches, the narration of key events, frames/inclusio and summary statements to highlight these themes.

The theme of being God’s witness in Acts 1:8, is itself a continuity from the OT in Isaiah 49:6. Luke declared through the words of Simeon, that Jesus is the fulfilment of this Isaianic Servant “a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel (Luke 2:32).” But this role, Jesus has transferred it to His followers at His ascension in Acts 1:8. Acts 13:47 is an example of Paul and Barnabas being commissioned to become this light to the Gentiles.

This witness comprises at the heart, a witness to the life, death, resurrection and finally, the ascension of the Lord Jesus. It is the major theme of Peter’s first and longest sermon in Acts.

## **The Response to this kingdom message**

How does the kingdom of God look like now that the King has come, and the kingdom has been inaugurated? How does Jesus continue to reign during this in-between period of His departure and His imminent return (Luke 19:11-27), what theologians refer to as the period of “the already and not yet”? One characteristic of this age is the continuous opposition to the church, a theme in Psalm 2. God has already installed His King in Zion, yet the kings of this age would come together to oppose His anointed but, to no avail. Their end will be like King Herod in Acts 12.

This age of the kingdom will be marked by a new community of God’s people led by a new leadership, empowered by the Holy Spirit to preach His word. This new people of God are the true people of God in the tradition of the Old Testament. They stand in continuity to God’s people in the old covenant, yet apart from it, thus legitimising and distinguishing them from unbelieving Israel. Acts 3-7 in particular, climaxing in the speech and death of Stephen, shows the temple and its leadership have passed into oblivion, replaced by the new apostolic team and its leadership with their God-given authority over God’s true people, the church of Jesus Christ. For all that the temple pointed to are now fulfilled in Jesus, and in His Name by which all who call upon it exclusively shall be saved. Jesus is the one whom we must now turn and pray to.

The rejection of this message brings an indictment. Acts ends with the words of Isaiah 6 in Acts 28:25-27, except that in Isaiah 6, judgment is followed by the news of salvation, but here the final word is judgment, because there is no more offer of salvation outside the name of Christ. The good news of salvation in Christ rejected leads to an incurable condition for judgment. The same judgment also befalls on pseudo believers like Ananias, Sapphira (Acts 5) and Simon (Acts 8). Their unbelief is representative of all who did not respond appropriately to God’s good news in the death and resurrection of His Son Jesus Christ. They will face the same indictment. They will be bypassed as the Kingdom of God marches on.

## **OVERVIEW FOR JULY BFA**

In the light of what Acts’ message is about, it is appropriate as we begin this new series to examine our studies in July with these questions in mind:

How is Acts connected to the gospel of Luke? What is the purpose of Luke’s writing? How does Luke use the theme of fulfilment of OT scripture in the book of Acts and Christ’s ascension to bring about for Theophilus the certainty of Christ’s reign? Why must Judas be replaced? How does the replacement of Judas show the sovereignty of God, the centrality of Christ resurrection, and the roles of the 12 apostles? What is the significance of the coming of the Holy Spirit in terms of fulfilment of Scripture, the restoration of Israel, the inclusion of all people into the church, and in the history of redemption—such as the reversal of the tower of Babel, the sign of the new covenant, and the beginning of the last days?

Finally, we must ask, what are the characteristics of this new community of God’s people? And what implication do they have for the way I view church, my family, my life, my work, my community, my mission, and my greatest hope in life?

May the study of Acts bring certainty to your belief in Christ and your devotion to God to empower your God-given mission in life.

## You Will Be My Witnesses

Acts 1:1-14

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### Introduction

What is the mission of the church? How will the church be empowered? May we be convicted and empowered to live out Christ's mission for the church so that His last command will be our first concern.

### For Study and Discussion

1. You will be my witness (Acts 1:8b) After His resurrection, the disciples were commanded to be Jesus' witnesses. A command that applies to us today as well. Not all of us are called to be evangelists, teachers, preachers, etc (1 Cor 12:1-11) but we are ALL commanded to be witnesses of Jesus.

a. What does it mean to be a witness and what makes a good witness?

b. As Jesus' witnesses, what should our message be? (Luke 24: 44-48; Acts 1: 3 - early creeds can be found in the New Testament: 1 Cor 15: 3-11; Phil 2: 6-11; 1 Tim 3: 16)

c. How should we be doing our witnessing (or how should we not be doing it)? (Mt 5: 13-16; Prov 6: 19; 1 Tim 2: 1-6; 1 Peter 3: 8-17) How have you fared - good, bad or so-so?

2. Make disciples...baptising them... and teaching them (Mt 28: 19-20). The result of our witnessing (both individually and as a church) could be to make new Christians, but that is not the end. The church is also commanded to produce

a. Baptised disciples. What does it mean to be a baptised disciple of Jesus Christ?

b. What are these baptised disciples taught? (Mt 28: 20)

c. Are we - as a church - doing this? How well are we doing it? What is our part in this?

*For reflection:* It is much easier to witness and convert someone than to make them disciples. We witness but we often do not make disciples

3. To where should we be witnesses? (Acts 1: 8c) What does Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth mean for us today? How can we be witnesses in these areas?

4. By whose power? (Acts 1: 5, 8a; Mt. 28:18&20)

Are we to witness by our own power? No! That is why the disciples were told to wait in Jerusalem until they receive the power to do so.

a. Whose power are we to witness by? (Acts 1: 5) Is this power sufficient? (Mt 28: 18)

b. What does the Holy Spirit provide for us? During his last sermon before his death, Jesus told his disciples that the Holy Spirit will provide:

i. John 14:16-17

ii. John 15:26-27

iii. John 16: 12- 15

c. The Holy Spirit is to represent Jesus and to empower His Church to do the work that Jesus gives it. Acts is the second of a 2 volume book series by Luke - The Gospel of Luke being the first. Luke begins Acts by mentioning his first book

i. What does Luke tell us in Acts 1: 1-2 about the scope of his first book? So from what Luke said, what is the scope of his second book (Acts)? Looking at the content of Acts - What does this tell us about who ultimately is behind the actions of the apostles?

ii. This is still true today. How and through whom does Jesus work today? (Acts 1: 2; Col 1: 17; Eph 5: 23-34; 1 Cor 12:27) How does this knowledge motivate us in our daily lives?

## Discipleship Pointers

The book of Acts was written as a continuation of the Gospel of Luke so that Theophilus may have certainty about Christ's continuous work among the believers after His death and resurrection, and be part of this the work which "Jesus began to do and teach until the day he was taken up to heaven."

The point is, Christ who is now ascended, is still at work. He calls us to this same work. He empowers us by the same Holy Spirit who empowered Him when He was on earth so that the strength by which our Master completed His work is the same strength by which we are to complete ours. We are to continue His life work here on earth, so that His Kingdom come, and the Father's will be done.

Acts emphasizes the Apostles as eyewitnesses of these things. While we are not the direct eyewitnesses, we have these same witness accounts and the same testimony of the Holy Spirit. These make all Christians the privileged witnesses of the Lord Jesus. All churches are! Some of us are good witnesses. However, some are terrible witnesses. Most of us are somewhere between these 2 extremes. Where are we on this spectrum? A few questions for us to consider as we evaluate ourselves as witnesses

- Do our family, neighbours, friends and co-workers know that we are Christians?
- Do they see any difference in our lives compare to theirs? Are the differences positive or negative?
- Are we willing (or have we already in the past) pay the cost for doing what is right in God's sight?
- Is Jesus the Lord of our Lives?

While we may not be perfect witnesses, as we will never be in this life, by His grace, the Lord takes our feeble work and make it His, clothing it with His own righteousness, empowering it through the Holy Spirit, making it glorious and acceptable to the Father, using our witnesses for His glory and the extension of His kingdom.

## Family/Group Moments

We are to be Jesus' witnesses to those around us. In what practical way can we do this to those we meet each day? Will we do so with a great sense of privilege and anticipations, knowing that Jesus is the risen and reigning Lord, that all that is done in Christ and for Christ will never be in vain?

## You Will Go For Me

Acts 1:15-26

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### Introduction

The theme of this passage focuses on the command of the Lord to His disciples: to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth (Acts 1:8). Like the Great Commission in Matthew 28:19-20, this is a command that applies to every follower of Jesus Christ. What, then, ought to be the central concern of our witness? Study and discuss this passage with the aim of understanding that we too are called to be witnesses to the resurrection of Christ as we live consciously under Christ's active reign over His church, with full confidence in God's sovereignty over our lives and all of history.

### For Study and Discussion

#### 1) A Firm Foundation (Acts 1:15-20)

a) For the background and context, read Luke 24:36-53 & Acts 1:1-14.

Describe the situation the disciples were in and the circumstances under which the new community was formed. What were the primary focus of the 120-strong nascent church?

b) What caused Peter to stand up and assert the necessity for Judas to be replaced, considering that later on James was not (Acts 12:2)? On what grounds did Peter make his conclusion and confidently initiated the search process?

c) How does the replacement of Judas show the sovereignty of God over the affairs of man in the world?

#### 2) A Concrete Criteria (Acts 1:21-22)

a) What was the criteria laid down for the selection of candidates? Why was that necessary and important?

b) How does this reveal to us the centrality of Christ's resurrection and the critical roles the 12 apostles played in the history of the Church? (See also Acts 2:42,43; 4:2,33; 5:29,41; 1 Cor 4:1,9; 2 Cor 12:12; Eph 2:20-21; Rev 21:14)



## Discipleship Pointers

- Peter's use of scripture is apparently what guides him to the conclusion that it is necessary to replace Judas. On the surface, the use of Psalm 69:25 and 109:8 seems reasonably questionable as the context of those passages was speaking not of Judas but of king David seeking vindication against his enemies. Yet it is perfectly reasonable that we see Peter employing a pattern of interpretation of the "great David's greater Son" that he saw Jesus himself using in the gospels (Psalm 41:9; John 13:18). Moreover, during the post-resurrection 40 days Jesus had spoken often with his disciples (Acts 1:3) and beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the scriptures concerning himself (Luke 24:27).
- If Jesus is the new Davidic king, then the 12 apostles represent the heads of the new restored Israel (Luke 22:28-29). They point forward to the restoration of the fallen tents of David (Acts 15:16), the restoration of the spiritual Israel that is to happen on the day of Pentecost in fulfillment of Ezekiel 37, considering that one of Luke's purposes is to show the continuity of the church with the old covenant in terms of its fulfillment, thus revealing the sovereignty of God over all the events that were happening, including the falling away of Judas Ischariot.
- The criteria used for the replacement of the 12th apostle necessitates not only a witness of the resurrected Jesus but someone who had been with the disciples the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among them. Luke's emphasis throughout Acts is on the eyewitness account of the life and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, thus establishing the importance of the historicity of these events to the Christian faith, so that Theophilus, and all believers can have certainty on what they have believed. [Note that this also therefore negates the possibility that Paul is the rightful 12th; Paul himself said his apostleship is an irregular one (1 Cor 15:8-9)].
- The drawing of lots to determine God's will is not so much a prescription for church governance procedures as it is a climax of an Old Testament practice with God himself selecting and authorising the 12 men of the apostolic band. It's the last time this is practised in Scripture as a means of guidance, as the coming of the Holy Spirit marks the passing away of this old order.

(Reference: DA Carson, Commentary on the New Testament use of the Old Testament)

## Family/Group Moments

How does the active reign of God in the history of His people

- o remind you of His hand in your life journey?
- o encourage you to live as a witness to His greatness?

How does the reality of Christ physical resurrection from the dead empower your witness for Him, i.e., in the way you speak about Him?

In what ways can the family be the home-ground for nurturing the faith community that God intends every child of his to belong to - where the love of God is experienced in reality as each member is continually reformed and renewed by the transforming power of the gospel and where each has a clear understanding of their mission to be witnesses for Christ to an unbelieving world?

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## You Will Be Devoted To Me

Acts 2:1-42

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### Introduction

Many of us know that Pentecost was the day when the Holy Spirit came upon the early believers and established the church. However, the timing and manner of the Holy Spirit's coming has much to teach us about God's plan to redeem all mankind and how we are to live as subjects of God's kingdom. In this study, we will learn how the coming of the Holy Spirit (v1-13) testifies that Jesus is the Messiah, the exalted Lord who reigns over the kingdom of God (v14-36), and empowers all believers to live in devotion to our risen King (v37-47).

### Background

Pentecost (Greek: *Pentekoste*) literally means "fiftieth day". Christians did not invent the term "fiftieth day" but borrowed it from Greek-speaking Jews who used it to refer to a Jewish holiday. This Jewish holiday occurred 50 days after Passover (Leviticus 23:15-16) and was also known as the Festival of Weeks (Hebrew: *Shavuot*) (Deuteronomy 16:9-10) or the Festival of Harvest (Exodus 23:16) when they were to present the firstfruits of their crops as an offering to God. It was necessary for all Jewish males to come to Jerusalem for this festival (Deuteronomy 16:16). It was therefore no coincidence that Jews from "every nation under heaven" were present in Jerusalem to witness the coming of the Holy Spirit as promised by Jesus 10 days earlier, before He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:4-5).

### For Study and Discussion

1) Read Acts 2:1-13.

a) What did the disciples experience in common on the day of Pentecost and what did they declare in unity?

b) Who were the other people who crowded around the place in Jerusalem when they heard the noise? Why were they bewildered and amazed at what they witnessed? How did some in the crowd try to explain this strange sight?

c) Read Genesis 11:1-9.

i. What are the similarities and differences that you observe between the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and the confusion of languages at the Tower of Babel?

ii. What was God's purpose in each of these instances where He intervened to bestow different tongues of languages upon the people involved? Consider God's purpose for mankind (Genesis 9:1) and what the power of the Holy Spirit was meant to help the disciples do (Acts 1:8).

iii. How did the different languages work to fulfil God's purposes in each case?

2) Read Acts 2:14-36.

Peter assures the crowd that the disciples are not drunk and confirms that this is the end-time outpouring of the Holy Spirit that the prophet Joel had predicted, marking the inauguration of the New Covenant and the exaltation of Christ.

a) According to the prophecy, who will God pour out His spirit upon in the last days? Note the different groups of people mentioned specifically in the prophecy.

b) According to Peter, who will be saved? Later in the sermon, Peter clarifies that the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is the direct result of Jesus' resurrection and exaltation (v32-33). Jesus is thus the Messiah promised in Scripture and the Lord whose name must be called upon for salvation (v21). Read I Corinthians 12:3 and Romans 10:13-15. How does the work of the Holy Spirit lead people to salvation?

c) In Exodus 19, God revealed Himself to His people and made a covenant with them by giving them His written instructions on how to live (The Law). Similarly, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit is a sign of the New Covenant (Hebrews 10:15-17, Jeremiah 31:31-34, Ezekiel 36:26-27). How does the Holy Spirit empower us to live in obedience to Jesus? ( See vv. 33-36).

3) Read Acts 2:37-42.

a) Fire is often a metaphor for God's glory in the Bible (Exodus 19:18, 24:17). On Pentecost, the divided tongues of fire rested on each individual disciple present. What does this tell us about the presence of the Holy Spirit in each believer? (I Corinthians 3:16) According to Peter, how can a person receive the gift of the Holy Spirit? Who is this gift promised to?

b) How does the presence of the Holy Spirit in each believer enable us to deal with the sins in our lives in order to be devoted to God in our hearts, minds, and our living? (Consider John 14:26, Romans 8:5-8)

c) What happened to those who accepted Peter's message that day? How did they live after they each received the Holy Spirit?

## Discipleship Pointers

- The outpouring of the Holy Spirit was meant to empower the church for witness and world evangelisation (Acts 1:8), so that all the nations would glorify God through the Gospel. Pentecost for the Jews was a Festival of Harvest but Pentecost described in Acts 2 brought forth a great harvest in the field of the world. Where God used different languages at the Tower of Babel to cause mis-communication and division, the Holy Spirit gave the disciples different languages for communication and unity.
- Note that Peter's sermon was directed to all Israel, explaining to them how Jesus fulfilled God's promises to David. This event at Pentecost is thus also a fulfilment of God's promises to restore Israel under the new Davidic King, the Lord Jesus, the King He has installed in Zion.
- The outpouring of the Holy Spirit is therefore the result of the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit glorifies Christ by showing us the things of Christ (John 16:14-15). The Spirit fulfils what Scriptures say about Jesus and testifies that Jesus is the promised Messiah, the exalted Lord who reigns. It is the work of the Holy Spirit that believers repent of their sins and call upon the name of Jesus for salvation.
- The Holy Spirit was poured out at Pentecost, and continues to be poured out upon all believers through faith. The work of the Spirit does not stop at conversion but continues to guide believers in our daily living, reminding us of God's Word, and enabling us to live in obedience to God's commands. True devotion to God is not achieved by human effort but is the mighty work of the Spirit in our lives. The Holy Spirit brings life and peace from God into our hearts (Romans 8:6) by exalting Christ in us. He is the one who shapes our thoughts, attitudes, words, and actions as we follow His leading.

## Family/Group Moments

- How is Jesus exalted as Lord over the different areas of your life?
- Is it your passion that the nations would glorify God through the Gospel? Pray for each other that God will make His mission for the church your passion.
- Reflect on how the Holy Spirit has been working in your life. When have you experienced the working of the Holy Spirit most strongly in your life? (These are the times Christ is exalted and honoured as Lord in your life).

## **You Will Be United**

Acts 2:43-47

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### **Introduction**

The early church saw a transformation visible by others through their acts of faith and community, these were signs of repentance and devotion to Christ. The church is the new temple of the Holy Spirit and the dwelling place of God on earth, while waiting for the return of her Lord. Their repentance wasn't just inward and invisible, it was outward as well and visible with their changed lives and sharing of their wealth. The church demonstrated the outcome of the outpouring of grace, that they are visibly united to one another and to Christ. This unity expressed through the means of grace provided by God (v. 42) becomes a testimony of His working in our midst to the outside world.

### **For Study and Discussion**

- 1) How did everyone respond to the wonders and signs that the Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to perform? v43. Do we experience this sense of awe when we witness God's power? When are the times when we experience this most strongly? What is the most visible sign of God's power in our lives?
  
- 2) How can we see that the early believers were a united group? How did they help anyone who was in need? What teachings of Jesus were they following when they did this? How did their actions show that they were a people who were redeemed by God? vv44-45.
  
- 3) What differentiated the early believers from other Jews who continued to meet in the temple court? v46. What is a key heart attitude of this community of believers which is present in everything they did? Do we have the same heart attitude in our worship of God and in our fellowship with other believers? Why is it sometimes difficult to feel this way when we outwardly worship and have fellowship?
  
- 4) How is the presence of God manifested in their midst? What is the visible result? V47a.

5) What happened when the church united under Christ's reign? v47b. Do non-believers in the world today see a united church or a disunited church? How can we contribute to the unity of the church today?

7) Which areas of church life do we need to grow in and how may we do so, that others may see God in our midst?

## Discipleship Pointers

- Verse 43-47 seems to be a commentary on this verse: Acts 2:42 "And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers."
- Apostles' Teaching – the early church members were united in the hearing and learning of the apostles.
- Fellowship – they were united through meeting regularly, daily even.
- Breaking of bread – they came together to remember Christ through the breaking of bread.
- Prayers – they came together to pray.
- The key to the unity of the community is the strong sense of God's presence in their midst. Stated in v 42 are the means of grace by which they practised this presence of God. What follows in verse 43-47 are the visible fruits of God's presence among them.
- Today these are the same means of grace God has given to unite the church through the consciousness practise of His presence in the assembly of His people.
- These means of grace have no meaning apart from the gospel they lead to our repentance. They go hand in hand to exalt Christ as the reigning Lord in our midst.
- Note the outcomes, how the believers gave (v45), the joy that fills their hearts (v46), the favours they received from people (v46). We need to find the same fervour of giving, the joy in our heart and same standing and favours from people around us through the faithful practising of God's presence in our midst.

## Family/Group Moments

- How do we gain or regain the spontaneity the early Christians had in giving?
- How do we find that sense of "gladness and generous heart"?
- How do we live in such a way that God adds "to our number day by day"?
- Are we in danger of treating the means of grace as routines, or do we consciously practise God's presence in our midst using these means of grace in the context of the gospel? What evidences are there that shows Christ's reign in our midst?

## You Will Face Opposition With Boldness

Acts 4:1-31

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### Introduction

Peter and John had healed a lame man at the temple gate and then Peter preached to the crowd that gathered in the temple court. Peter and John were arrested and commanded not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. In this study we see the reaction of the disciples and the early church in the hour of danger. We see courage derived from the power, authority and uniqueness of Christ.

### For Study and Discussion

#### 1) Crisis in the Early Church

a) Why were the priests and Sadducees “greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people”? (v1-2)

b) What crisis was the early church facing? (v3; v18-21)

c) Who were Peter and John up against? (v1; v5-6)

#### 2) Response to Crisis

a) Peter’s response to the questioning and intimidation by the powerful was a response empowered by the Holy Spirit, just as Jesus had promised (Luke 12:12). List the main points of Peter’s answer to the question “By what power or what name did you do this?” (v8-12).

b) Peter & John were given a command by a gathering of the wealthiest, the most intellectual and the most powerful in Jewish society at that time. (v18-20)

i. What reasons did the disciples give for not obeying that command?

ii. What was the source of their boldness in that situation?

c) On their release, Peter and John reported to the church all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. What did the church do? Discuss the significance of each of the things the church did. (v24-31)

### 3) Crisis in Today's Church

- a) Discuss whether the church today is facing the same kind of crisis, or a different form of the same crisis, as the early church.
  
- b) What lessons can we learn from Acts 4 about the attitude we should have when we are persecuted or opposed for doing God's work?
  
- c) In what way can we strengthen our sense of courage about being Christians in our school, place of work, neighbourhood and society? What practical steps can we take to prepare for opposition and persecution?
  
- d) Have you witnessed an occasion when the Holy Spirit opened a door for the gospel to be preached in response to the prayers of the group or an individual? Share what happened. If not proceed to the Family/Group Moments section of this study.

### Discipleship Pointers

- Disciples will face opposition when we preach the gospel, whether with our words or our lives.
- In the face of intimidation and opposition, we may be overcome by fear but we can look to Christ's power and authority for boldness; because He is the crucified Christ whom God raised from the dead and salvation is found in no one else but Him.
- Peter and John were arrested for preaching the gospel. Upon being released, they returned to other believers and reported all that happened. Then they spent time praising God and praying together that He would allow them to continue to speak boldly about what Jesus Christ had done - Preach, Report, Praise, Pray, Preach: a Virtuous Circle of Bold Discipleship.

### Family/Group Moments

- Which part of the Preach, Report, Praise, Pray, Preach cycle do we need to grow and strengthen?
- Pray that the church will be led under the faithful preaching of God's word.
- Pray that we will obey God rather than be controlled by the fear of men.
- Pray for the dependency and sensitivity to the leading of the Holy Spirit.
- Pray for open doors for the gospel to be preached.
- Pray that every member of the church will be able to proclaim the gospel boldly and wisely in where God has placed them.
- Identify and pray for a persecuted church community.

# Daily Prayer Guide

## Sunday: The Church

Church members & families  
Visitors  
Pastor & church leaders  
Sunday School teachers  
Worship leaders  
Small group leaders  
Other churches  
Outreach efforts

## Monday: The Workplace

Supervisor  
Co-workers  
Subordinates  
Customers & suppliers  
Difficult situations  
Work attitude  
Work performance

## Tuesday: Acquaintances

Mentors & mentorees  
Accountability partners  
Friends  
Neighbours  
Merchants  
Public servants  
Teachers & other school Workers  
Children's friends & their families

## Wednesday: My Country

Public officials - executive, legislative,  
& judicial  
Armed forces  
Public morality  
The media  
The economy

## Thursday: The World

International peace & understanding  
Missions and missionaries  
Persecuted churches  
Hunger, sickness, & disaster relief

## Friday: My Spiritual Growth

Maturity  
Understanding  
Faith  
Love toward God  
Love toward others  
Servanthood

## Saturday: My Family

Spouse  
Children  
Grandchildren  
Parents  
Brothers & sisters  
Extended family  
Unsaved loved ones

*"Call to me and I will answer you and  
tell you great and unsearchable things  
you do not know."-Jeremiah 33:3*

# Little Steps To Great Learning!

## Preparation:

- Attempt all questions in the relevant Bible study before your group meeting.
- Expect spiritual growth by thoughtfully working on the Bible study questions (and the suggested reading, if any) throughout the week.
- Seek the Holy Spirit's insight and guidance by praying daily in reflection of what you have learned through the Bible study.

## Group Time:

- On the following Sunday, take notes during sermon to assist in focusing your thoughts.
- Be punctual for your group meeting.
- Share the insight gained through the sermon with your group.
- Be frank in sharing your response to the questions in the discipleship pointers.
- Encourage others by attesting to God's goodness and reality by sharing to the group (and others) how the Word has changed your thinking and action in response to your study in the past week.
- Using the front sheet, summarise how the lessons have helped you to understand God's revelation in the Bible through Jesus Christ, and your response to the revelation.

**THE BIBLE is to be...**

*Read through...*

*Reflected in...*

*Lived out...*

*Given away...*