

The purpose of this leader's guide is to be a tool for ABF and Life Group leaders to follow the sermon series with their group. Our hope is that this guide will give you a head start for your study and will allow your group to respond to what they've heard and apply it for life.

Acts 4:13-37 - Dependence on the Spirit

Context: Persecution should lead us to Spirit empowered prayer and trust that the sovereign God will see his purposes come to pass. Trusting in this power and depending on the power of the Spirit we will boldly proclaim the gospel no matter what we face. After spending a night in detention, Peter and John are found standing before the council (Jewish rulers and elders). The council proceeds to ask them, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" Peter responds with "by the name of Jesus Christ, whom you crucified." He then states that there is salvation in no other name, an implicit invitation for the Sanhedrin to place their faith in Jesus Christ.

Observing the text (Read 4:13-22): These verses give us insight to the observations of the council who noticed the boldness and surprised because they were unlearned and untrained men. I am sure they were surprised because simple men typically would not speak with such authority in front of the council of high priest. The character trait that "astonished" the Sadducees was the "boldness" of Peter and John. Their whole demeanor was one of confidence that gave them the freedom to speak freely in the face of what must have been an intimidating audience.

Questions (vv. 13-22):

- 1) Verse 13 says "...And they recognized that they had been with Jesus." Why was this important?
 - They "had been with Jesus" it's possible that the Sadducees were recalling how difficult it had been to win an argument with Jesus (who by the way didn't have any formal training either) **THERE IS SIMPLY NO SUBSTITUTE FOR AN INTIMATE KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS.** The Sadducees had nothing to say. They were at a complete loss. They couldn't deny that a crippled man had been healed. And they couldn't just shrug it off and say nothing because people were starting to talk about this resurrected Jesus.
- 2) How do Peter and John respond (vv.19-20)? What do they say is their motivation for witness?
 - Peter's answer: paraphrase "You're judges here. Give me your legal judgement on this one. If we're standing here in God's presence, should we obey God or you?" The answer is obvious... "We can't stop talking about Jesus." **THE ONE DEFINING CHARACTERISTIC OF EVERY PERSON IN ACTS WHO IS FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THAT THEY BOLDLY TALK ABOUT JESUS.**

Observing the text (Read 4:23-31): After the elders try to silence the apostles, the disciples pray for boldness to speak God's word. In light of the threats from the established powers, it would be understandable for the believers to pray for relief from persecution. Instead they ask for renewed courage to proclaim the word of God.

Questions (vv. 23-31):

- 1) Describe the prayer in these verses. What did they pray asking God for?
 - The believers did not pray for safety. They prayed for the Lord to grant them more boldness. Their prayer for boldness in witness shows a determination to directly disobey the command of the Sanhedrin. They do not pray against those who persecute them but pray for their own faithfulness in witness.
- 2) Why were they able to respond to persecution in this way?
 - The easy answer is: They were led by the Holy Spirit. It's important to note that their first response to hostility is PRAYER. Peter and John had just come in "from the trenches," and the church met to pray.

Observing the text (Read 4:32-37): The second extensive summary in Acts deals with the practices of the Spirit-filled church. We see here that the Spirit-filled church is a community of people who boldly proclaim Jesus, desperately seek God's power through prayer, and sacrificially meet the needs of each other.

Questions (vv. 32-37):

- 1) In Acts 4:31 we see that the prayer of the believers was answered and they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly. What evidence do you see of this filling of the Spirit in these verses?
 - Unity, sacrificial giving/sharing, testifying to the resurrected Christ, and the needs within the church were taken care of.
- 2) How have you seen the church today live out what you read in these verses? What do you think hinders the church from living this way?

General Reflection (Consider each person reading the chapter first and answering questions 1-3 below):

- 1) What does this passage teach us about God?
- 2) What does this passage teach us about mankind?
- 3) What is a command to obey in this passage? What has God revealed in your life that needs changing?

Personal Reflection/Application

- 4) How do I typically respond to opposition/hostility? Is my first response to pray?
- 5) What has kept you in the past from helping those in need? Who do you know now that needs your help?

*Various observations and questions in this study guide are quoted from various study guides on Acts (John Stott, Tim Keller, and Crossway).