

**Acts of the Holy Spirit - 5**  
**Spirit Boldness – Week of Oct 16, 2016**  
**Bay Park Life Groups – Leader**

By Acts 4 the church is not small or marginal, it's a mega church with well over 5000 adherents. Yet as the church grew, so did the pushback. Case in point, Peter and John were called to answer before the Sanhedrin for healing a crippled man. The Sanhedrin was made up of about 70 men, most of them Sadducees along with some Pharisees. Sadducees were the "liberals" of their day while the Pharisees were the "conservatives". Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection, nor were they anticipating a Messiah. They were all about the here and now, and were more than happy to cooperate with the Romans if it meant personal gain. The Pharisees were rigidly legalistic, believed in life after death, and viewed the Romans as the enemy. Needless to say there wasn't much love loss between the Sadducees and the Pharisees - unless of course the topic of conversation was Jesus.

History has a way of repeating itself. Even today, from liberal to conservative, the topic of Jesus both unites and divides. Our confidence is that your time together in God's Word will grow a common gratitude for all Jesus has done, and a like passion for sharing Jesus with others, even at the risk of being misunderstood or rejected.

Read Acts 4:1-12 together

1. Luke regularly calls the Gospel message of Jesus "the word" (e.g., 4:4, 31). We know from 1 John 1 that Jesus himself is called "the Word". What is the danger or downside of the Evangelical habit of calling the Bible "the Word" or "the Word of God"? What is the upside?

The obvious plus of calling the Bible God's Word is that it underscores the author responsible for the book and it's authority over our lives – it's from God! The downside is the tendency to worship the book more than the author. We can love a verse or translation more than the Word made flesh himself – Jesus Christ. It's important to remember that the Bible is not an end in and of itself. It's a means to pointing us to God, to knowing God and to worshipping God.

2. Commenting on Acts 4:1-12 Timothy Keller noted: *It is quite possible (indeed, it is very normal) for Christians to be persecuted not for their faith, but for their discourtesy, insensitivity, and lack of warmth and respect in their dealings with others. Insensitive, harsh Christians will have persecution but not praise. Cowardly Christians will have praise but not persecution. Most Christians (whose walk with God is weak) actually get neither! But Christians who are closest to Jesus will get both, as he did.*<sup>1</sup> Do you agree or disagree, why or why not?

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Keller, *Evangelism: Studies in the Book of Acts*, (Redeemer, 2005) p 45

Though Peter's words were bold (pointed), they were not rude. He addressed the Sanhedrin as "rulers and elders of the people." Case in point, the rulers and elders don't react as if insulted or antagonized by Peter and John, instead they are surprised by the courage of these "ordinary men" (v 13).

3. Why does Peter stress the "name of Jesus" (vv 10 & 12) and what implications does this have? What other passages of scripture come to mind with respect to Peter's sermon?

Traditionally evangelicals have held that only explicit and expressed faith in Christ saves. There are those today who would challenge that view. Some have argued that all salvation is through Jesus, but may be given to a person who calls out to God for salvation apart from explicit knowledge of Jesus (Clark Pinnock). Likewise there are those who believe that Christians should remain intentionally agnostic about this point (Lesslie Newbigin). How we understand what the bible says about salvation in the name of Jesus influences the content and urgency of our witness.

Read Acts 4:13-22 together

4. How would Luke have known what the Sanhedrin said behind closed doors (16-17)?

Some have used such accounts as Acts 4:16-17 to try and disprove the reliability of the bible. Consider this though. It is possible that the apostle Paul was himself part of the Sanhedrin at that point in time. There's also Gamaliel, Paul's teacher of the law, who was a respected member of the Sanhedrin and who could have easily passed on to Paul what transpired that day. There's also other Pharisees like Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who could have known or simply other members of the council who were later converted.

Together read Acts 4:23-31

5. *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 (vv 24-25).* The word *together* means "with one mind" or "unanimously." How do you picture this unanimous prayer taking place and what does it teach us about corporate prayer?

Most likely people didn't all start praying the same thing at the same time. Rather, one person probably prayed and the others acknowledged their agreement via an audible "yes" or even a good old Baptist "amen". The response of those hearing the prayer was such that it was clear that they all agreed with the prayer. Also note that it doesn't say who prayed or led out in prayer. They all joined together and the result was they were all likewise filled with the Holy Spirit and boldness.

6. What's noteworthy about their prayer and how does it challenge you with respect to your prayer life? To help inspire your thinking, here are some quotes:

*The church needs to learn, in every generation, what it means to pray with confidence like this...The church needs, again and again, that sense of God's powerful presence, shaking us up, blowing away the cobwebs, filling us with the Spirit, and giving us that same boldness.* N. T. Wright<sup>2</sup>

*O, do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men! Do not pray for tasks equal to your powers. Pray for powers equal to your tasks! Then the doing of your work shall be no miracle. But you shall be a miracle. Every day you shall wonder at yourself, at the richness of life which has come to you by the grace of God.* Phillips Brooks<sup>3</sup>

*Our prayers should be rooted in the Word not our whims, centred on God and not our problems, and focused on our desire for God to change us, not others.*  
Sunday's sermon.

7. Who in your life would you most want to share Jesus with and why?

Close by taking time to pray together, allowing Acts 4 to shape your prayers.

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<sup>2</sup> Tom Wright, Acts for Everyone, Part 1: Chapters 1-12 (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2008), 72-73.

<sup>3</sup> [https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Phillips\\_Brooks](https://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Phillips_Brooks)