

Sermon Study Guide

Pastor: pastor Ashwin Ramani

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Sermon:

IN Opportunities to connect and pray as a group (choose one)

1. When was a time or circumstance that you felt awkward? What was the outcome?
2. Tell of an experience you have had in witnessing.
3. Has God ever asked you to do something you felt was beyond your strength? What happened?
4. Give an example when the Spirit gave you boldness in sharing your faith.

UP Time that is devoted to the Word of God

1. Review the story of Peter and John in Acts 3:1-10?
What time did it happen? Where? Who was involved?
To whom were Peter and John speaking in vv 11-23?
Pick out phrases that summarize what Peter was saying to them.
2. Why were the priests, the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees 'greatly disturbed'? (4: 2) What was the issue they had had with Jesus? (Luke 20:27-40; 22:6, 52)
Why did they oppose the disciples' preaching?
Why did they want 'to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people'? (v. 17)
3. Contrast the interactions of Peter at this time with those related in John 18:15-18, 25-27. Why was it necessary for Peter and John to speak 'with courage'? (v.13) What made it possible for them to do so? (vv. 8, 11, 18-20)
4. Peter was 'filled with the Holy Spirit' (v 8) and 'they all were filled with the Holy Spirit' (v. 31) What are the evidences of the Holy Spirit's power in this story? (Luke 9:21-28; 21:12-15)
What is most striking to you?

OUT Seek to be the Community of God's people in your community

1. Pastor Ashwin summarized the following:
Boldness to witness comes from the Holy Spirit
Boldness to witness comes from our confidence in the Gospel
Boldness to witness comes from knowing Jesus personally

On scale of 1-10 (1 is lowest), where do you rate yourself as a bold witness? Why?
What steps can you take to move from 'awkwardness to boldness'?

2. The main thing for me this week is: _____
3. How can the group pray for you?

UP – IN – OUT reflect a balanced life including a focus on our personal relationship with the Father (UP), staying connected to the Body (IN), and reaching our world (OUT).

THE WORD (NIV)

Acts 4:1-31

4 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. ²They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. ³They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. ⁴But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.

⁵The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. ⁶Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. ⁷They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?" ⁸Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹If 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, ¹⁰then 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. ¹¹Jesus is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone." ¹²Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." ¹³When 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. ¹⁴But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say. ¹⁵So 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." ¹⁷But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name." ¹⁸Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges!" ²⁰As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard." ²¹After 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. ²²For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

²³On 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. ²⁴When 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. ²⁵You 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? ²⁶The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one." ²⁷Indeed 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. ²⁸They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. ²⁹Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. ³⁰Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus.

³¹After 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.

Sermon Study Summary

When Pastor Ashwin was a pastor in India, the Christian population in his area was less than 1% and evangelism could easily get people into trouble. Each Christmas season, his congregants got permission from their Sikh and Hindu friends to sing Christmas carols in their home. They then sang and shared a brief message about Christ's coming. On one occasion, the carolers went to a family living in a large apartment complex. But the lead singer suggested they sing outside instead. As the group sang, people came outside, and many stood on their balconies to see what was happening. The Spirit prompted Pastor Ashwin to share the gospel. **"There are many times in my life I have failed to witness for Jesus because of fear,"** he said. **"But that day God took over. I had a sudden surge of boldness and I couldn't help but speak!"** That was a watershed moment for his church and they became bolder in their outreach. God wants each of us to play a role in advancing God's kingdom. But we need **boldness** when God gives us opportunities. **Without boldness we will not be effective in the cause of Christ!**

As a background to our study today in Acts 4:1-22, Peter and John had just healed a lame beggar in the name of Jesus. Peter then spoke to the crowd of the death and resurrection of Jesus. This brought many to faith in Christ (Acts 3). **However, the Jewish religious leaders were angry,** particularly the Sadducees who denied the resurrection. They seized Peter and John and put them in jail overnight. The next day Peter and John stood before the Jewish Sanhedrin – the Jewish supreme court of 70 prominent individuals plus the high priest. Peter and John knew they were talking to the power brokers of the nation. "By what power or what name did you heal this man?" they demanded. How Peter and John responded to the Sanhedrin's question would determine the outcome of this trial. They could get away with a politically correct answer. But their response was exactly what the Sanhedrin didn't want to hear: this man was healed **by the name of Jesus Christ, whom they had crucified but whom God raised from the dead.** Peter and John were on trial, but Peter turned the tables and put the Sanhedrin on trial in God's court. The Sanhedrin members were stunned by the courage of these uneducated, ordinary men. **The Greek word for "ordinary" is idiotai - Idiot.** The religious leaders were saying, "How do these idiots think they can talk to us this way?" But they took note that these men had been with Jesus. **The Spirit specializes in using ordinary men and women for His glory and honour! Does the world today take notice that we have been with Jesus?**

Where did Peter and John get their boldness? Three sources show us how we, too, can become bold witnesses for Jesus.

1. **Boldness comes from the Spirit**

The Holy Spirit filled Peter and gave Him the words to speak! This was not the man we saw when Jesus was arrested. The Peter who once buckled under pressure from a servant girl and denied knowing Jesus now confidently defended Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection in front of these religious elites. A remarkable transformation had taken place. **Peter in his own strength could never have defended himself. But he did the impossible in the Spirit's power!** The Spirit's filling is not a one-time event; **you need to be continually saturated, led and directed by the Spirit.** He also anoints you for special tasks. Pastor Ashwin and friends converse with Muslims about Jesus in a mosque. Before he goes, he prays: **"God, I can't do this in my own power. Grant me a fresh infilling of the Spirit to do what I cannot do."** In every visit, God has given words to share and opened doors beyond imagination! Peter continued his defense: **Jesus is the Cornerstone these builders rejected** (Psalm 118:22)

2. **Boldness comes from our confidence in the Gospel**

Peter continued his defense: **Jesus is the Cornerstone these builders rejected** (Psalm 118:22). In ancient architecture, the Cornerstone was the most important stone to bear the weight of the building. Jesus is the Cornerstone upon which God's Kingdom is built. Peter then **declared that the only way to be saved is through faith in Jesus. And no other teaching has come under greater cynicism and attack.** The apostles defended this truth even at the expense of their lives! Their boldness was birthed out of their belief. This Gospel births in us a confidence and impetus to evangelize! North American culture has embraced political correctness, religious pluralism and postmodern relativism. **The Christian voice has become faint in public. Perhaps our greatest threat when sharing the gospel is awkwardness.** We may be so uncomfortable about revealing our faith because we're afraid others would classify us as "religious freaks" or "fundamentals". We don't want our classmates or colleagues to know that we go to church because it isn't cool. **In contrast, controversial groups stand up for their beliefs. They are outspoken and belligerent. They do rallies. They fight for their rights. It's time for us to break our silence and declare that we are not ashamed to be followers of Jesus!** To be bold for Jesus doesn't equate to doing weird or irrational things. It isn't disrespectful to people of other faiths. It is not rude, insensitive or argumentative. **Such behaviour does great damage to God's Kingdom. In contrast, speaking the gospel means being relaxed and natural, gentle and respectful as we give a reason for the hope we have in Jesus. Spirit-empowered boldness demonstrates grace and kindness from a heart that is brimming with Christ's love and joy! That's what makes witnessing effective!**

3. **Boldness comes from knowing Jesus personally**

Finally the Sanhedrin tried intimidation: no more preaching; don't even mention the name of Jesus! Peter and John, with calm composure, said they **couldn't help speaking of the things they had seen and heard. They were eyewitnesses of Christ. When you have experienced the life-changing power of Christ, it's an overflow of your heart, and such enthusiasm is contagious! You have nothing else to fear.** God wants us all to be courageous ambassadors for Christ. On a scale of 1 to 10, how amazed are people by your spiritual boldness? If you're at the low end, here's the good news - God gives boldness in response to prayer! Make this your prayer.