

TAKEAWAY:

God gives boldness to His people through prayer and confidence in His sovereignty.

INTRODUCTION QUESTIONS:

- What's a time when you felt pressure to stay silent about your faith? How did you respond?
- What's a time when you stood up and defended your faith in Jesus?
- What do you think causes fear in Christians to speak up for their faith?

UNDERSTANDING:

Have a few group members split the reading of Acts 4:1-31

- How did this sermon help you better understand this passage of scripture? Is there anything that was mentioned during the sermon that stuck out to you?
- Acts 4 teaches that Christ alone saves. How does this exclusive claim challenge the cultural narrative that all paths lead to God, and how do you respond when confronted with this tension?
- What did Peter mean by the phrase, “the stone rejected by you builders, which has become the cornerstone” (v. 11)?
- What characteristics did the religious establishment observe in Peter and John (v. 13)? What does this tell us about the importance of spending time with Jesus?
- Why do you think the church addressed God as “Master” in its prayer (v.24-30)?

APPLICATION:

- The early church prayed for boldness rather than the removal of persecution. What would change in your prayer life if you prioritized spiritual courage over personal comfort?
- Share one relationship where you want to be bolder, and have someone follow up with you next week.

GO DEEPER:

The Go Deeper section has two potential functions. It can supplement your small group discussion by providing extra discussion material.

You can also use these sections as short devotionals to carry you through the week until your next group meeting and to deepen your study of our text from this week. Here are two "Going Deeper" discussion prompts that build upon the above provided questions without repeating them:

Praying for Boldness, Divine Opportunities, and Fruit! God quickly answered the kingdom-centric, collective prayer that the nascent Church in Jerusalem offered to their “Sovereign Lord,” with a physical manifestation of power and a fresh filling of the Holy Spirit, demonstrating that God responds affirmatively to prayers that prioritize the advancement of the Gospel over the preservation of personal

comfort (James 4:3-10; cf. 1 John 5:14; Matt 6:9-15). They didn't pray for the destruction of their persecutors nor the removal of threats. Nor did they pray, in terms of our current setting, for the fulfillment of their form of an American dream nor that God would help them win in their effort of the latest hot topic in an ongoing culture war.

- What would it look like for our Life Group (individually and collectively) to practically prioritize our prayers, conversations, and actions toward kingdom advancement rather than personal comfort? The spiritual realm of our lives and that of others rather than the physical realm of it?
- Why is the modern, Western church often prone to prayers that focus almost exclusively on physical safety, healing, and financial comfort and prosperity rather than spiritual growth in their lives and that of others, holy endurance and boldness, and evangelistic opportunity and fruit?
- What does their specific, counter-intuitive request to "continue to speak your word with all boldness" reveal about their priorities and their key purpose while on earth?
- They prayed, "stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus" – properly coupling the miraculous to the glory of God and advancement of God's kingdom. See Mark 16:15-18 (cf. Matt 28:18-20); John 14:11-15. How does coupling gospel preaching or any other great commandment and great commission actions with a desperate dependence on God impact our methodology in these areas? Our prayers?
- Consider reading and discussing with someone J. D. Greear's most recent book, *Everyday Revolutionary: How to Transcend the Culture War and Transform the World*.

The Filling of the Spirit: Read Acts 4:31. The immediate result of the church's unified, Scripture-saturated prayer was a physical shaking of the room and a fresh, empowering filling of the Holy Spirit. Thomas Aquinas, in his *Catena Aurea*, provides theological nuance to the concept of being "filled with the Holy Spirit." Aquinas ensures that the absolute distinction between the nature of Christ and the nature of the apostles is rigorously maintained. While the apostles were indeed "filled" with the Spirit to overflowing, their human vessels were inherently limited in capacity compared to the infinite, boundless measure of the Spirit dwelling in Christ. This theological distinction brilliantly explains why the apostles required subsequent, repeated fillings—such as the event in Acts 4:31 occurring shortly after the initial filling at Pentecost—whereas Christ possessed the Spirit constantly and without measure.

- With this in mind, why do you think a continuous, repeated filling of the Spirit necessary for the Christian, even after the initial event of conversion?
- Since these specific believers were already filled with the Spirit at the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), what does this "fresh filling" in Acts 4:31 teach us about the ongoing, daily need for spiritual renewal and empowerment?
- How does the physical shaking of the meeting place serve as a tangible validation of God's presence, indicating His profound pleasure in their kingdom-centered, selfless prayer?
- What are the identifiable, practical differences in a believer's life and ministry when they are actively walking in the fullness of the Spirit versus attempting to operate in their own fleshly strength and human wisdom? For the believer, this reinforces the reality of human frailty; we are perpetually dependent on fresh, continuous outpourings of grace to sustain our boldness in a hostile world.
- How does the profound unity of the believers ("lifted their voices together with one accord", v. 24) act as a vital prerequisite or catalyst for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit's power? What does this tell you about the importance of gathering together weekly to worship as a local church family?

- What specific, daily spiritual disciplines can you implement to ensure you are constantly seeking, yielding to, and relying upon the fresh filling of the Holy Spirit for the task of evangelism?

Quotes:

- On April 18, 1521, summoned to renounce his writings and teachings, Martin Luther declared, in some form, this often repeated thought: "Unless I am convinced by Scripture and plain reason, my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, for to go against conscience would be neither right nor safe. God help me. Here I stand, I can do no other."
- J. I. Packer on Acts 4 prayed: "Give us boldness that is holy and humble boldness rooted in trust. Not pride boldness shaped by obedience not anger, boldness that seeks your glory not attention".
- Charles Spurgeon states on Acts 4:13, "Any man that can be accounted for will never influence his age.... You never can make out the secret of a Whitefield. You never can make out the secret power of any man who makes a whole world hear him."
- John Stott on Acts 4: "Before the people came to any petition, they filled their minds with thoughts of the divine sovereignty... the God of creation... the God of revelation... the God of history."
- Tim Keller on Acts 4: "We should not decide how to pray based on the experiences and feelings we want. Instead, we should do everything possible to behold our God as he is, and prayer will follow... It is remarkable that in all of his writings Paul's prayers for his friends contain no appeals for changes in their circumstances."

PRAYER:

Pray together for boldness to speak about Christ in your workplace, neighborhood, or family.