

Session 5

BOLDNESS

Acts 4:23-31

Memory Verse

When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God boldly.

– ACT 4:31, CSB




Boldness

THEOLOGICAL THEME: As Christ continued to work through His disciples, opposition and persecution arose. The early believers demonstrated their faith by praising the Lord, praying His will, and asking for boldness to carry out the mission they had received.

Many things in the world are considered “bold.” Some use bold fonts when they type or text so their message can be easily seen and emphasized. There are those who prefer their coffee bold because they like the rich, strong flavor. Certain regions of the country describe their food flavors as bold.

There are also specific situations that call for bold behavior. Jesus has called His followers to boldness for His sake. The early church understood the need for boldness and gave examples of what bold faith looks like. Likewise, we are called to live out a bold faith in our daily lives.

 What is something that you prefer to have in “bold”?

 What are some situations in your life that require boldness?

 What makes it difficult to be bold in our faith?

Session Summary

The early believers carried on the work of the Lord, and it drew opposition and persecution. Just after being restrained and threatened for preaching with boldness, Peter and John praised God even more. They rejoiced over the opportunity they had to share with the religious leaders and prayed to the Lord, acknowledging His power and presence in their lives.

In their prayers, they also asked God to work His will in their lives and for further boldness to live out their faith. Christians today can learn from their example as we face difficulties and opposition to our faith. We can continually praise God as we take advantage of opportunities to share our faith with boldness.

1. Acknowledge the Lord (Acts 4:23-24)

As always happens when God is at work, the enemy stirred up opposition. After being detained and questioned, Peter and John were released and went immediately back to their fellow believers. They reported all that had happened and the way they were able to share about Jesus during their questioning. The entire group praised God and rejoiced when they heard this report.

We might wonder how or why they would rejoice after they were threatened. Peter and John celebrated and rejoiced because they had been accused of being like Jesus. That was and is the goal for every Christian. When we stand up for our faith or speak up about Jesus, it will not always be well received. No matter what happens, when we take advantage of an opportunity to share our faith, it is cause for rejoicing.

The disciples responded to what they heard in prayer. They raised their voices together as one to the Lord. It is important to note that they were vocal in their prayers, praise, and worship—they spoke it out loud. Although you can pray quietly or personally in your heart, there is great power in praying out loud with other people agreeing.

Not only did they pray aloud, but they were also unified in their prayers. There was no breaking off in groups lobbying for their own desires. They gathered and agreed in prayer. This is a good lesson for the church today. Instead of focusing on each person's agenda, when the church prays in unity, there is power.

? When was a time you recognized the power in praying together with other believers?

Notice how they addressed the Lord in their prayers. They prayed to the Lord of creation and the God of all power. This was not because they needed to remind God of who He is but because they wanted to remind themselves of who they called on. In calling on the God of all creation and power they acknowledged His supremacy prior to bringing their requests.

? Why does it matter if you recognize who you are talking to when you pray?

Instead of asking for help from a human with very limited power and capabilities, in prayer we worship and petition the Most High God, who is beyond comparison. Too many Christians pray weak, limited prayers because we forget who we are talking to.

? Application: How are you prompted to change the way you pray after seeing the example of the early church?

2. Powerful Prayer (Acts 4:25-28)

Our prayers are powerful not because of the way we pray but because of the One to whom we pray. One practice for praying in power is praying Scripture back to God. Because all Scripture is God breathed and given by the Lord (see 2 Timothy 3:16), when we quote what God has already spoken, we can be sure we are praying according to His will and power. The early church was a shining example of this. They not only prayed in unity, but they also regularly referenced Old Testament Scriptures in their prayers.

How does praying Scripture back to God give us confidence in the things we pray?

Notice the reference to the Holy Spirit giving words to David who wrote many of the Psalms. This is a clear indication that they believed the Scriptures were inspired by God and given to man. This showed their respect for the Lord and belief in what He has said and done. There are those who claim to believe in God but question and doubt the validity of Scripture. Others claim to firmly believe parts of the Bible but ignore or disagree with parts of Scripture they don't like. The Bible is God's Holy Word and needs to be received and believed in its entirety. We should have a high view of Scripture just as these disciples expressed.

In light of the persecution and troubles they experienced, the disciples looked to Scripture for encouragement. Psalm 2, which the early disciples quoted, reminds us that being persecuted for your faith is to be expected. It is also a Psalm that expresses complete confidence in God to achieve His victory in the end.

Referencing Scripture in relation to their situation teaches us another important practice as believers. We should always view our circumstances in light of the Word of God. God's Word sheds light on our hearts to reveal if there is a sin problem. It also reminds us who the real enemy is in a situation, so we know how to pray more effectively. We also pray the promises of God back to Him to receive what we need for the moment at hand.

How can Scripture help you see a current situation in your life more clearly?

When we are in the habit of looking at our circumstances through the lens of Scripture, we will gain a godly perspective. We are also reminded that God is always working. There is never a time when God is off the clock or forgets about His people. Scripture is a confidence builder that empowers us to trust the Lord with every detail of whatever we are facing just as the disciples did in Acts 4. It also helps us focus on God's will over our own desires so that we pray according to what He wants, trusting that His will is always best.

? Application: What do you need to change about the way you have been praying lately? Have your prayers been more self-focused or God-focused?

3. Request and Results (Acts 4:29-31)

Acknowledging the Lord and His power in line with the Scriptures leads to bolder requests, not more limited ones. The disciples' requests were all about God and His glory. They didn't pray for less persecution or easier days. They asked for boldness that would likely lead to more contention from their opposition. We tend to ask for things to be easier and simpler. What if we prayed more like the disciples and asked for the boldness to live our faith and push the gospel forward with more confidence and strength?


? How might our faith be strengthened and/or our lives be more difficult if we prayed like the disciples did? Why is it worth it?

As the disciples asked for more miracles to be performed, they were careful to give all the glory to God. They recognized that any miraculous happenings were all for His glory. This kind of humility invites the Spirit of God to work further in our lives. If we aren't careful, we will mistakenly accept credit or glory for God's work. Although the Lord does often work through people, these things are always done to draw people back to Him. The disciples were conscious of this in the way they lived and the way they prayed.

? Why is it so important to acknowledge that only God has the power to do the miraculous?

The results of this prayer were remarkable and powerful. First, the place they were praying was shaken. Second, we are told they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Finally, as a result, the people spoke the Word of God with boldness.

The people received what they asked for and more. They all spoke with boldness just as they had requested. This type of boldness was not something they could stir up themselves but was given to them by God through the presence of His Spirit. This is the same boldness that believers today need to reach the lost world with the gospel. Christ followers would do well to emulate the example shown by these early Christians as they prayed for boldness to stand against opposition and speak the truth to the world.


 **Application: Where do you currently need boldness from the Lord? How will you seek Him in that?**


Conclusion


The early church gave some excellent examples to help us grow in our faith and live with a bold faith daily. They didn't complain about the persecution and opposition they faced but they praised God. Instead of continually asking for things to be easier and smoother, we can do what these disciples did and praise God for the difficult things we face, seeking to take advantage of every opportunity to share the truth about Jesus.

We can also follow the example of their prayers: They prayed together and in unity. When believers pray in unity it speaks volumes to the watching world and it is more effective than pushing for our own agendas. When we are unified in our prayers, we are more likely to pray God's will and seek to bring Him glory instead of promoting ourselves.

Praying Scripture back to God fuels our prayers to be more powerful and effective. These believers didn't just stop at praise, they also demonstrated how and what to ask. They asked for boldness to fulfill the call of God in their lives. God responded to the prayers of the people with impressive results when the place they were gathered trembled from the presence of the Holy Spirit. Each person was filled with the Spirit, and they all spoke with boldness. The world is bold and aggressive. It's time for the people of God to speak the truth with boldness that brings about real change!

 How do you need to change the way you pray based on today's study?

 What did you learn about praising God in difficult times that you can apply to your life?

 What opportunity do you need to take advantage of to share about Jesus with another person? How will this require Spirit-led boldness?

Here's How to Become a Christ-Follower:

Read the following verses and ask after each one: "What does this say to me?"

- **All have sinned:** Romans 3:23 & 1 John 1:8
- **The wages of sin:** Romans 6:23 & John 3:18
- **But while we were sinners, salvation was provided:** Romans 5:8
- **Become a Christ-follower:** Romans 10:9-10 Confess and Believe

Accepting Christ is Just the Beginning:

Next Steps:

- Publicly profess your faith by being baptized (Matthew 10:32-33; Luke 3:21; Romans 6:4).
- Join a church which follows the Bible, where you can grow in your faith through prayer, Bible study and fellowship with other Christians.
- Get involved in groups for encouragement and accountability.
- Begin a daily personal worship experience with God where you study the Bible and pray.
- Share with others what Jesus has done for you. Tell your story (Romans 10:14; Matthew 28:19-20).
- Begin to live for God (Romans 12:1-2, 9-18; James 1:19-27).



FOR NEXT WEEK

Gathering + Groups

Main Passages

- Acts 4:32-37

Session Outline

1. A Church Unified (Acts 4:32-33)
2. A Church that Serves (Acts 4:34-37)
3. A Church that Supports (1 Thessalonians 5:12-18)

Memorize

When they had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak the word of God boldly.

- Acts 4:31, CSB