



1. In Acts 4:2, why were the priests and Sadducees greatly annoyed with Peter and John? Why were they a threat to them? Tell about a time where someone was annoyed with you for speaking the truth about Jesus.
2. In verse 7 it says the leaders “set them in the midst”. What is the Holy Spirit revealing by this? Later in the verse the leaders ask, “By ... what name did you do this?” Do you think they knew the answer before they asked the question? If so, why did they ask the question?
3. In verse 10 Peter responds to the leaders’ question. Put yourself at the scene and imagine Peter’s tone, emotion, intensity, gaze, posture, volume, gestures, etc. Contrast this response to the one he gave in Luke 22:55-57. What had changed in the last eight weeks? (Verse 8 provides *some* of the answer).
4. Peter went beyond the question asked and mentioned the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. He also added additional thoughts. Read Isaiah 28:14-16 and compare that with verse 11.
5. In verse 12 Peter finishes his short defense with a claim that would have been considered absolute blasphemy by the leaders. What was that claim?
6. The leaders had a “shut my mouth” experience in verses 13-14. What do you think they “recognized” in Peter and John from their being with Jesus? Imagine you were one of the leaders who realized the truth of what Peter said. What would you do? Have you ever been in a group situation where you disagreed with the group, but you felt powerless to deviate from the group’s position? What will you do in the future?
7. In verse 17 the leaders decide on a plan. What do they see as the solution to keeping the news from spreading? Why this focus on a mere name? Read Acts 16:16-18; what did this name accomplish in that situation?
8. In verse 23 what did Peter and John immediately do? Why did they do this? What was the response in verse 24? Do you think this response was spontaneous or planned? Is there room for both in a Christian’s life? Explain.
9. Verses 27-28 reveal God has foreknowledge that His plans will require suffering on the part of those He loves. What is the right attitude and response to threats and suffering in light of verses 29-30?
10. How would you describe the four parts of the young church’s prayer (in verses 24, 25-26, 27-28, 29-30)? How did the Lord respond to this prayer (verse 31)? How could you improve your prayers to be more like this one?



## Leader Notes for Acts 4:1-31

Fifty-seven verses between Acts 3:1 and 4:31 are devoted to a “chance” encounter between Peter and a lame man that led to 5,000\* people being added to the church. Contained in these verses are two fearless defenses of the gospel – one before the people, and another before the Jewish leaders. Finally, there is a demonstration of power by the Holy Spirit that affirmed the prayers of the young church and emboldened the saints to continue to speak the word of God and ignore the threats of powerful leaders.

The lame man at the Beautiful Gate was known personally by only a handful of people, but he was seen and recognized by thousands of people as they passed by him before entering the temple. Boldly, Peter commanded the man to stand whose useless legs had never taken a step in 40 years. He then walked, leapt, and praised God. The healing was conspicuous, wonderful, and astonishing. The lame man’s joyful display drew attention to Peter and John. Peter responded marvelously to the opportunity by giving all the glory to God and specifically declaring the lame man was healed by faith *in Jesus’ name*.

While many of those who heard the word believed, others were greatly annoyed - so annoyed that they arrested Peter and John and held them over for an interrogation the next day. What were they annoyed about? They did not want Peter and John teaching the people, and they especially did not want them proclaiming Jesus’ resurrection from the dead. The resurrection still annoys many people, because it forces a decision with moral consequences upon them; you must either believe it or not believe it. There is no neutral or in-between place. For some, admitting to the resurrection would be contrary to pridefully-held and stridently-defended beliefs. To believe it would require admitting you were wrong.

Peter and John were “set in their midst” to intimidate them, then were asked, “By what power or in *what name* did you do this?” *Filled with the Holy Spirit*, Peter seized the moment and proclaimed, “Let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel that *by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead - by Him this man is standing before you well.” Unapologetic, Peter added, “...there is *no other name under heaven* given among men by which we must be saved.” Two months prior Peter denied knowing Jesus for fear of a servant-girl’s questions.

Astonished that common and uneducated men could speak to them with such boldness, the inquisitors recognized that Peter and John had been with Jesus. This experience with these two men was eerily familiar to the inquisitors. They had seen this calm fearlessness before in Jesus. They saw the imprint of this Man upon Peter and John, and the inquisitors were astonished and perplexed. They also saw the formerly lame man standing beside Peter and John attesting to the miracle they could not deny, even though they wanted to. How is Jesus’ undeniable imprint on you confronting unbelievers with the truth?

Released with final threats from the leaders, Peter and John return to their friends. Communally, they worshipped God, saw how God foretold and executed His plan, and recognized the fulfillment of prophesy in current events. Finally, they prayed for boldness in the face of the threats rather than asking for relief from the threats. To answer and affirm these godly-aligned prayers, the building shook and they all were filled with the Holy Spirit. And they continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Men and women *choose* to be available to the Holy Spirit. Peter and John had no idea what was ahead for them when they departed for the temple. The Spirit led them so that 5,000\* souls were added to the church. How willing are we to let God accomplish great things through our “chance” encounters?

\* Commentators disagree if 5,000 were added or 2,000 new were added bringing the total up to 5,000.

