


A Five-Day Devotional Journey
February 10 - 16, 2008
Acts 4:1-31

Boldness

What I tell you now in the darkness, shout abroad when daybreak comes. What I whisper in your ear, shout from the housetops for all to hear!

Matthew 10:27 NLT

1 In whose name have you done this?

Read. Acts 4:1-7 NLT

While Peter and John were speaking to the people, they were confronted by the priests, the captain of the Temple guard, and some of the Sadducees. These leaders were very disturbed that Peter and John were teaching the people that through Jesus there is a resurrection of the dead. They arrested them and, since it was already evening, put them in jail until morning. But many of the people who heard their message believed it, so the number of believers now totaled about 5,000 men, not counting women and children. The next day the council of all the rulers and elders and teachers of religious law met in Jerusalem. Annas the high priest was there, along with Caiaphas, John, Alexander, and other relatives of the high priest. They brought in the two disciples and demanded, "By what power, or in whose name, have you done this?"

Think.

- Why were the priestly leaders so disturbed by Peter and John's preaching in the Temple?
- How do you think Peter and John felt when they were put in jail overnight — particularly since this was the same bunch of leaders who had "railroaded" Jesus?
- What's the worst opposition you've ever encountered when sharing Jesus with others? What happened? What did you do? How did you respond?
- What would have been your thoughts/feelings when you stood before the council in the morning?

Pray.

Lord Jesus, fill me with uninhibited boldness to share your life, your message with those around me.

Live.

Invite a neighbor to your church or home group.

"Who are those guys?" Normally people made way for them. At the sound of their coming the crowds would part, heads would turn, ears would be attentive. The mere scowl of their displeasure would intimidate most troublemakers into silence. But now the crowds barely noticed they were even there. The faces were fixed forward with barely a backward glance as the religious leaders had pushed through the crowd. And at the center of it all — these two Galilean peasant fisherman and a fully healed lame man.

They studied the rude faces of these itinerant wannabe preachers. Unlettered. Unlearned. Raw. And unnervingly *bold*. They hadn't even blinked at the stamping of the priestly crowd's displeasure. They were uninhibited and free, like a child in a crowd who says what he thinks, oblivious to the proprieties of social convention. And then they made the connection, they saw it clear: these two had been with *Jesus*.

There is a childlike boldness that comes when we walk with *Jesus*. A freedom of being and doing without calculation or consultation with current opinions and polls. A boldness forged not in naïveté, but in full awareness of the evil and manipulations, the power-plays of earthly principalities — and of our own tendencies to serve as willing accomplices in thwarting divine plans. A boldness not only to confront human schemes, but to shout from the rooftops the mighty acts of God. A boldness to show and tell a world groaning under the weight of its own hopelessness that through one man's resurrection our God and Creator will love and redeem and restore us to full fellowship with himself and with one another.

A boldness not only to share good news, but to be, to become, to embody the good news of *Jesus*.

2) No other name under heaven

Read. Acts 4:8-12 NLT

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, “Rulers and elders of our people, are we being questioned today because we’ve done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed? Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead. For Jesus is the one referred to in the Scriptures, where it says,

*‘The stone that you builders rejected
has now become the cornerstone.’*

There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.”

Think.

- How was Peter able to be so bold before the council? How did he turn the tables on them?
- To what extent do you rely upon and experience the Holy Spirit’s empowering when faced with encounters like this? To what extent do you end up relying on your own wits and abilities?
- How firmly do you believe the truth “there is salvation in no one else”? How does this belief impact you?

Pray.

Holy Spirit, free me from all my inhibitions to speak up and share the hope that is in Jesus alone!

Live.

Look for an opportunity to bring Jesus into conversation with others in a natural way — and do it.

4) We can’t stop telling others

Read. Acts 4:19-23 NLT

But Peter and John replied, “Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him? We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard.” The council then threatened them further, but they finally let them go because they didn’t know how to punish them without starting a riot. For everyone was praising God for this miraculous sign—the healing of a man who had been lame for more than forty years. As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said.

Think:

- How do Peter and John respond to the council’s demand that they be quiet about Jesus? How would you have reacted as a council member?
- What are the greatest obstacles you face in sharing your faith with others? Are they internal or external obstacles? How can you overcome these hindrances?
- “We can’t stop telling about what we have seen and heard.” To what extent have you felt this same compulsion — and acted upon it?
- How do you handle peer pressure not to do the right thing — or not to identify yourself as a believer? When is it right to disobey an authority?

Pray.

Lord, give me courage when facing opposition not to cave, but to continue standing with you.

Live:

Do what’s right today, even when under pressure not to.

3) Men who had been with Jesus

Read. Acts 4:13-18 NLT

The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus. But since they could see the man who had been healed standing right there among them, there was nothing the council could say. So they ordered Peter and John out of the council chamber and conferred among themselves. “What should we do with these men?” they asked each other. “We can’t deny that they have performed a miraculous sign, and everybody in Jerusalem knows about it. But to keep them from spreading their propaganda any further, we must warn them not to speak to anyone in Jesus’ name again.” So they called the apostles back in and commanded them never again to speak or teach in the name of Jesus.

Think.

- How did the leaders respond to Peter’s speech? Why did they feel powerless to act? What did they decide to do?
- What did the leaders see in Peter and John? What do you think made the connection in their minds with Jesus?
- How has being with Jesus shaped your character?
- How often do people see Jesus in you?

Pray.

Lord Jesus, shape my heart and life that others would see your beauty and grace and boldness in me.

Live.

WWJD — consciously live this out through the day.

5) Give us great boldness!

Read. Acts 4:24-31 NLT

When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God: “O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—you spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant, saying,

*‘Why were the nations so angry?
Why did they waste their time with futile plans?
The kings of the earth prepared for battle;
the rulers gathered together against the LORD
and against his Messiah.’*

In fact, this has happened here in this very city! For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed. But everything they did was determined beforehand according to your will. And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word. Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.” After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.

Think.

- What’s the first thing these believers did after being threatened? What lesson do you see here as you face your own struggles?
- What do you find most striking about this prayer? Their faith? Their passion? The results? Or what?
- When’s the last time you experienced prayer like this by yourself or in a group?

Pray.

Holy Spirit, shake my world so that only what is of You will remain. Fill me, move me, work through me.

Live.

Join with other believers in prayer for *boldness*.