



ACTS

OUT OF JOY / THE CHURCH MULTIPLIES

GROUP STUDY QUESTIONS

WEEK 3

MINISTRY IN JERUSALEM (ACTS 3-4)

VERSE FOR MEDITATION

And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness. ACTS 4:29

OPENING THOUGHT

Certainly the early church, as it ventured into new territory, saw itself in the Hebrew stories of old—tales told from well-worn scrolls. They knew these stories well, like the one containing God’s encouragement to Joshua: “Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go” (Josh. 1:9). God’s presence gave confidence to the Israelites crossing the Jordan, and His presence comforted the Church as they crossed Jerusalem’s religious leaders. Pushing forward, the people of God took fortitude as their persecutors pushed back.

The Church remained bold. In *Screwtape Letters*, C.S. Lewis writes, “Courage is not simply one of the virtues but the form of every virtue at the testing point.” The first Christians were tested and proven virtuous not because they were exceptional—but because God was near. God’s presence removes all the bravado from the courageous. A proud beating of the chest in the face of danger is often just cowardice amplified. True courage is confidence in God’s faithful presence. It means trusting His strength—not ours.

God's presence is the power to move the Church ahead in its mission to multiply disciples. To feel His presence, we must continue to "seek the things that are above, where Christ is" as we "set [our] minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth" (Col. 3:1-2). When our gaze falls down to earth, God appears far, and without His presence, we experience the opposite of courage: fear.

Fear slows movements. It causes us to duck our heads, slump our shoulders and shuffle our feet. We are forced to attend to the most immediate concerns—those right in front of us—losing sight of the big picture. Our view is narrowed, and our communities, our churches and our very lives are dulled.

The early church, however, kept a kingdom perspective. They stayed wide-eyed and took long strides. Because they prayed for boldness, the ground shook (Acts 4:31). God's presence, like an earthquake, motivated ministry that caused ripples throughout Jerusalem. The aftershocks have yet to cease, and it is boldness that will, like then, move us forward.

QUESTIONS

Read Acts 3:1-10 and answer the following questions.

1. The lame beggar asked for money, but Peter and John gave him so much more. Why do you think they gave him physical healing instead of charity?
2. Why is salvation often connected to physical healing in the ministry of Jesus and His Apostles (Luke 5:12-26; 6:6-11; 8:42-48; 17:11-19; 18:35-43)?

Read Acts 3:11-26 and answer the following questions.

3. Whose power and authority healed the lame beggar (v. 16)?

4. How are you operating in your own strength regarding intimacy with Christ? How has guilt and shame left you weak? Are you emboldened by the Spirit to enter the presence of God (Heb. 10:19-22)?

Read Acts 4:1-22 and answer the following questions.

5. Do you give God credit for your good deeds (v. 8-10)? Share both positive and negative examples.

6. The Jewish rulers and elders were astonished by the boldness of the otherwise unimpressive men, making the connection that they'd been with Jesus (v. 13). Do others attribute our boldness with our connection to Christ? What does our lack of courage say about our faith?

Reads Acts 4:23-37 and answer the following questions.

7. Is it our tendency, after witnessing mighty works of God, to pray immediately for more? Do we have appropriate expectations for God's continued work?

8. How can we, as groups and individuals, have more courage and boldness in being used by God?

ACTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Practice God's presence in a new way: solitude, fasting, observing Sabbath, acts of service, etc.
- Locate the things on earth that have taken your eyes off things above and put them away, limit their use or redeem their function.
- Boldly consider entering into discipleship relationships with a mind toward multiplication.
- Pray for boldness as a group and as an individual.