

## MAIN POINT

Last week, we reflected on the truth that a missional life is a life lived together, in fellowship with other believers. Today we'll discuss a second quality of those who live a life sent to speak and serve in this world: confidence in God's mission. Often we do not speak courageously because we feel unqualified. But in Acts 4:8-20, we see Peter and John speak as ordinary, unschooled men who knew Jesus. No degrees, just a relationship, courage, and the help of the Holy Spirit. As their lives demonstrate, a missional life is one lived by ordinary people, by you and me.

## INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to help get the conversation going.

**What's the most out of the ordinary thing about yourself, or the most out of the ordinary thing that has happened to you, that we may not know about?**

**Do you ever feel like you don't have anything special to offer to God? Why is it so easy for us to feel this way? What does this say about what we think God's expectations for us are? What is the affect of that belief on our motivation to live on mission for God?**

While we all have days when we feel "ordinary," the truth is that doesn't matter. God has created us in His image, and through His work in our lives we are able to do extraordinary things for the sake of His glory, just like Peter and John did in Acts 4.

## UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

**> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 4:1-7.**

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**What were the reasons for the opposition of the Sadducees to Peter's healing and sermon from Acts 3?**

**Take a look back at Acts 3:1-10. When is the last time you were approached by someone soliciting for money? How did you respond to the person?**

**What does Peter's response to the beggar reveal about his belief in God? About God's ability to work through us?**

Peter understood that God wants to use us to bless others. He expects us to do only what we can, to give only what we have. Then we are to trust Him to work through our efforts to minister to others in the name of Jesus.

**Peter and John landed in jail because of their testimony about Jesus following that healing. Why does sharing the gospel of Jesus provoke people to oppose the message and the messengers?**

**How did those in the temple listening to Peter and John react to their message? What various responses have you received from people when you've shared about your relationship with Jesus?**

**What was the significance of the question the council asked Peter and John in verse 7? Have you ever felt like you didn't have the authority to share the gospel because of a lack of education or position?**

The Sadducees judged the apostles and treated them with scorn because they were not well educated (4:13). They had not received training at the feet of the rabbis and had no official standing in Judaism. To the Sanhedrin these disciples were nobodies, ordinary men who had assumed religious authority to which they were not entitled. So, they locked Peter and John in prison.

**> HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 4:8-12.**

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**What motivated Peter to again share the gospel of Jesus with the religious leaders? What is the main point of his testimony in these verses?**

**If you were arrested, brought before a judge, and accused of testifying and witnessing about Jesus Christ, how do you think you would respond?**

Verse 8 notes that Peter was "filled with the Holy Spirit," which gave him the courage to speak honestly before his interrogators. To be filled with the Spirit means to submit to His control and power. No matter how "ordinary" we feel, the Holy Spirit works through us in extraordinary ways.

**What is the meaning of verse 12? Why would this be considered a bold statement today? When have you experienced or witnessed push back to this truth?**

**> HAVE ANOTHER VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 4:13-20.**

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**What do you think was the source of Peter and John's courage? What did the crowd notice about Peter and John?**

**Do you notice a difference in your courage and enthusiasm for the gospel when you spend quality time with God? Explain some specific ways it might be evident to others that you have been with Jesus.**

What does the fact that the men seemed so “ordinary” communicate about the work of God? In what ways can this encourage us in our relationship with God?

Read verses 18-20 again. How did the religious leaders’ response affect Peter and John? What implication does their example have on our witness?

## NEXT STEPS

Leave your group with these parting thoughts, designed to put action to the truths learned and re-emphasize the principles from your meeting time.

**How would you spend your time differently if you truly believed God wants to work through you in extraordinary ways? What would you change about your priorities? What is the very next thing you would do?**

**Read Matthew 10:32-33. Why is it important that we live out the gospel through what we do and what we say? How might Jacksonville be different if everyone at Chets Creek committed wholeheartedly to this calling?**

## PRAY

Set aside time at the end of your group meeting for people to voice prayer concerns and needs. Pray for the concerns mentioned, for opportunities to show kindness to the people we meet each day, and for confidence to speak the gospel and point people to Jesus every chance we get.

## FOLLOW UP

Midway through this week, send a follow-up e-mail to your group with some or all of the following information:

- ☐ Questions to consider as they continue to reflect on what they learned this week:
  - **Are there ways that I am putting limits on God’s working in my life?**
  - **Which of the following am I willing to risk to share the gospel: job security, family affection, friendships or other relationships, reputation, life? Pray specifically for the courage to be willing to risk all of the above for the spread of the gospel.**
- ☐ The challenge to memorize Acts 4:19-20.
- ☐ A note of encouragement, following up on any specific prayer requests mentioned during your group gathering.

## CHETS CREEK CHURCH

## LIVING SENT

ORDINARY (ACTS 4:1-20)

## BACKGROUND (ACTS 3)

Acts 3 introduces the miraculous healing of a crippled man (3:1-10). By reaching out in loving concern to the man, Peter and John created an opportunity to witness about Christ. Peter explained to the amazed crowd that the healing had come through Jesus' powerful name. He then called for the people to repent and experience God's forgiveness (3:11-26).

## PETER AND JOHN ARRESTED (ACTS 4:1-22)

**4:1-3** The religious authorities confronted and ultimately arrested Peter and John for unauthorized teaching about the resurrection from the dead by using Jesus as the example. The Sadducees in particular were provoked by this, for they did not believe in resurrection because they did not think it was taught in the Pentateuch, the only portion of the Hebrew Bible they acknowledged as authoritative (Mt 22:23). The apostles were held in custody overnight because Sanhedrin trials were not conducted at night. Rome had granted the Sanhedrin legal authority over the temple area since disputes arising there were religious in nature rather than civic.

**4:4** Repeated attempts to suppress the Christian message only caused it to spread more quickly. On Pentecost morning the believers in Jerusalem only numbered 120 (1:15). In response to Peter's sermon that day, another 3,000 were added (2:41). Now, with the healing of the lame man, Peter's sermon, and the arrest of the apostles, the church grew to about 5,000.

**4:5-7** The parties listed in verses 5-6 represent all the most powerful players in the Jewish religious establishment. They made Peter and John stand before them, two men against all the powers of Israel. Ironical, therefore, that they asked the apostles by what power they had performed the miracle and preached the gospel. It was clear that the apostles, who shirked the traditional powers, considered themselves answerable to and empowered by a different authority.

**4:8** Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit, a necessary prelude to his successful confrontation with the Jewish religious establishment.

**4:9-10** Peter again emphasizes to a Jewish audience that Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom the nation had crucified, was raised from the dead by God. This same Jesus is the power by which the lame man was made healthy.

**4:11** Peter again identifies Jesus with OT testimony by citing Ps 118:22. Though Jesus was a stone rejected by the Jewish leaders, God made Him the cornerstone (foundation) of the church. God's people, portrayed as a building, are both built on the foundation of Christ and are completed by Him. The word translated **rejected** carries the idea of rejecting with contempt, possibly referring to the crucifixion.

**4:12** Peter concluded by making clear the uncompromising claim of Christianity: There is salvation in no one else besides Jesus. This message rings throughout the NT. Jesus Himself said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me" (Jn 14:6).

**4:16-18** Remarkably, the Sanhedrin admitted that an obvious sign had been done through them (the apostles), and yet rather than repent and believe they focused on damage control among the people. They sought to halt the spread of Christianity at all costs, so they ordered the apostles not to preach or teach any more about Jesus. It seems they wished to guard their status as religious authorities even at the expense of obvious truth.

**4:19-20** Peter and John's reference to what they had seen and heard included their experiences with Jesus plus what they had witnessed since the founding of the church at Pentecost. All told, they had been eyewitnesses to many of God's revelatory acts.