

## Acts 4.5-37

### Study Questions

1. Luke frequently links together the Holy Spirit with a character's proclamation about God's truth in Jesus. For examples, look up a few of the following verses: **Luke** 1:15 (John the Baptist), 1:41 (Elizabeth), 1:67 (Zechariah); 12:12 (Jesus' promise to believers); **Acts** 2:4 (Pentecost); 4:31 (disciples); 7:55-56 (Stephen); 13:9-10 (Paul).
  - a. Could thinking about the Spirit's involvement give you **confidence** to share about Jesus?
  - b. Have you ever experienced a time when you found words you didn't think you'd have to share about God's truth?
2. Compare Acts 4:9 in a variety of Bible translations. How do various versions translate the word "healed"? The word is the word for "saved" – the same word as in Acts 4:12. But being "saved" can also carry the sense of "being made whole" and can include physical and social healing (e.g., Matt 9:21-22; Mark 5:23; John 11:12).
  - a. Does broadening your understanding of salvation change how you might view Christ's work of salvation in your own life?
  - b. Does it change how you might share the Gospel, or how you might view the ministry of the church?
3. Read Acts 4:12 and John 14:6. Do you find it difficult to hold to the "exclusivist" claims of Jesus as you live in pluralistic Canada? How do you find yourself responding? Do you tend toward an embarrassed silence about sharing your beliefs, to a sense of superiority over others, or to a denial that such exclusivity can be true? (Or to something else altogether?)
4. In Acts 4:17-18, the disciples were instructed to stop proclaiming Jesus. They responded reasonably and respectfully that they were obligated to follow God's commands over human ones.
  - a. Have you ever experienced a perceived threat to exercising your faith? How do you find you react?
  - b. Do you think living in a democracy (unlike the disciples) create different options for Canadians than the disciples had? Would those options remove following the disciples' model of responding with reason and respect?
5. After being threatened, Peter and John immediately rejoined "their own" (Acts 4:23). Throughout the New Testament, the community of believers was of first importance for believers to form their Christian identity and process their life of faith. What role does the church play in forming your Christian identity?
  - a. Do you find that you naturally tend toward a more "individualized" Christianity (it's my business and I'll do it on my own) or a more communal one?
  - b. What are some ways the church (this church or any in your past) has made a difference in shaping your life in Christ?
  - c. What are some ways you might help the church be a healthier place for shaping lives in Christ?
6. After being threatened, the believers responded by collectively reaffirming God's sovereignty (Acts 4:24) and by acknowledging that they live in a world hostile to the Gospel (Acts 4:25-28). In response, they prayed *not* to be removed from threats but for "boldness" to speak Jesus into them (Acts 4:29-30). Luke uses this word "boldness" as part of Peter's first sermon (Acts 2:29)

and to conclude the entire book of Acts, with Paul in prison “teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness” (Acts 28:31). As a conclusion to this study, you might want to take a few minutes to follow the disciples’ lead and to pray.

- a. Pray to reaffirm God’s sovereignty (his rightful rule, mastery) over your lives, individually and collectively as a church community.
- b. Pray for boldness to speak Jesus into your world and those in your world, no matter how hostile to the Gospel.
- c. Pray for eyes to see and a prompting of the Spirit to care for some in your community who might need help in a practical way.