



Quick Backdrop

Just a few weeks after Jesus' resurrection, the Holy Spirit rocked the world of the new believers in Acts 2. In Acts 3, the apostles began performing some of the same miracles that Jesus had done. This included healing a lame man in the "name of Jesus"---a name that disturbed the Jewish leaders, since they thought they'd dealt with the *Jesus problem* at the crucifixion. This led to a confrontation in Acts 4, where we pick up the action.

1 Digging In (God, Show Me!)

Read Acts 4:1-13 below. As you read the passage do a couple things to notice detail:

1. **Circle or highlight every reference you see to a Jewish leader. Don't forget to mark pronouns like "they."** Be sure to notice how much time passes in these verses.
2. **Draw an *ichthus* (the sign of the fish) over references to the apostles.**

When you've finished reading, look at your references to Jewish leaders and list as much detail about them as you can on a sheet of paper or in an e-doc. Who were they? What was their attitude? What was their social status?

Then, write out what you learn about the apostles. How were they described? What traits did they display?

Acts 4:1-13

¹ And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, ² greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. ³ And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. ⁴ But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.

⁵ On the next day their rulers and elders and scribes gathered together in Jerusalem, ⁶ with Annas the high priest and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. ⁷ And when they had set them in the midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?"



⁸ Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders, ⁹ if we are being examined today concerning a good deed done to a crippled man, by what means this man has been healed, ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ This Jesus is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, which has become the cornerstone. ¹² And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved." ¹³ Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus.

2 Taking It Inward (God, Teach Me!)

Did you catch the contrast in this scene? The Jewish leaders were elite, powerful, intimidating, and antagonistic toward the apostles. The apostles, as described in verse 13, were unschooled and ordinary. They were fishermen who probably smelled like fish. Keep that contrast in mind for a minute. The turnaround in this scene is remarkable. Use the questions below to bring the power of this scene into your own life.

How would you describe the attitude of the Jewish leaders before Peter's speech?

How would you describe their attitude after Peter's speech? Why did it change?

What gave the apostles confidence and courage?

How does this scene speak to your life personally?

What "Jewish leader" type situations do you have in your life? Your "Jewish leaders" situations would be people or things that make living out your Christian faith difficult---temptations, people who belittle you, etc. Write these down.

3 Seal the Deal (God, Change Me!)

Two big things you may have noticed that gave Peter and John their courage: the Holy Spirit (v. 8), and they had been with Jesus (v. 13). So this leads to a couple questions:

1. What do you need to change to trust the power of the Holy Spirit in your life?

2. What do you need to adjust so that you can spend the kind of time with Jesus that gives you confidence and courage in facing situations that are detrimental to your faith?

Over the next few days, trust the power of the Holy Spirit in your life and spend more time with Jesus than you usually do. Schedule a mini-retreat and read one of Jesus' big teachings, such as Matthew 5-7 or John 13-17.

Fold or Cut