**Live in Community**



Small Group Study

**Volume Overview**

**Stand Firm**

Put on every piece of God’s armor so you will be able to resist the enemy in the time of evil. Then after the battle you will still be standing firm. ([Ephesians 6:13](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Eph6.13))

*The world thinks of power as action. Powerful people are able to take control, able to change things. But Jesus blessed the meek, the hungry, and the poor. There is a power this world overlooks. There is power in standing firm in faith. Christians have long stood their ground, not to gain this world’s power but as witnesses to a better world to come. So we stand strong, committed, and bear witness to the world.*

**Session Overview**

**Bear Witness**

**Biblical Encounter:** Peter and John Stand Trial ([Acts 4:1–21](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac4.1-21))

**Outcome:** Live in such a way that even adversaries can tell you’re committed to Jesus.

*In this session, we see a bold display of true commitment to Jesus. Peter and John, disciples of Jesus, were confronted by religious leaders who didn’t like the message they were sharing with people. Though the disciples were arrested, questioned, and threatened, Peter and John didn’t back down from the message they felt compelled to share. Their example inspires us today to live for Jesus and continue to spread His message of salvation, even when we face opposition.*

|  |
| --- |
| First time leading *Live* for Adults? Check out the [Facilitator Guide](https://0b769b0ed3569ef9d18b-f88d8272f61086866d50d048b43ef630.ssl.cf2.rackcdn.com/sites/biblengagementproject/Listen_Facilitator_Guide.pdf). |

To access session content and videos from a computer, visit: [BibleEngagementProject.com/downloads](https://bibleengagementproject.com/downloads)

**Engage**

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  Can you think of a time when you defended someone you cared about regardless of the personal cost? Tell us about it. |

We often hear that courage is not the absence of fear, but facing our fears instead and proceeding anyway. Many things can stir up fear in our life, and many decisions we make are based in fearing negative consequence for taking a risk.

Fear of rejection is a huge weight many of us carry into our social relationships. It’s common to be fearful of sharing beliefs or opinions in certain situations because we want people to like us. We want to fit in and not be made fun of. But some things in life are so important that they should outweigh the fear of rejection from others.

**Watch**

As we watch this video, think about your answer to this question: What has God done for you that you’ve told others about many times?



|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  What has God done for you that you’ve told others about many times? |

**Consider What the Bible Says**

The Book of Acts is packed full of action and exciting stories about the Early Church. After Jesus died, rose again, and went back to heaven, He gifted His early followers with the Holy Spirit to help them live out their faith and share it with others. Jesus prepared them to spread the good news of salvation with everyone they could. But as you’ll read today, sharing this message would not be without struggles.

Peter and John, two of Jesus’ closest friends and disciples, began preaching publicly after they were baptized in the Holy Spirit. Many people believed in Jesus because of their message. The Holy Spirit also did signs and wonders through Peter and John to point people to Jesus. Just before today’s passage, a beggar who couldn’t walk had been healed near the temple when Peter told him to stand up and walk. That drew a large crowd, and Peter shared the gospel. The religious leaders were unhappy with what Peter and John said, and they wanted to silence them.

**Religious Leaders Disturbed**

Read [Acts 4:1–7](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac4.1-7).

After Jesus’ death, the religious leaders had hoped this small movement of His followers would die out. But here were Jesus’ disciples, Peter and John, preaching and performing signs and wonders in His name. And the group was growing!

The leaders needed to silence this group in order to protect their own traditions. They were disturbed by these events and wanted to know whose authority Peter and John were acting under. After all, the leaders certainly hadn’t given permission to Peter and John to teach these things.

Authority was a big deal to these Jewish leaders because this gave them power to tell fellow Jews how to live and believe. Those who questioned their authority could be shunned, which would make them no longer able to participate in Jewish religious society. Peter and John were walking on dangerous ground!

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  Do you think the religious leaders were more concerned about the loss of power or preserving their religious traditions? Why? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  If you had been with Peter and John during this questioning, what would you have advised them to do? |

**Peter Responded with Boldness**

Read [Acts 4:8–12](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac4.8-12).

Peter did not shy away from answering the religious leaders’ questions. He even went so far as to remind them that they had helped to crucify Jesus! Peter used [Psalm 118:22](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps118.22), a verse the Jewish leaders would have been familiar with, to show that they were fulfilling this prophecy by rejecting Jesus as the Messiah. This may have made the leaders even more furious. Here was an ordinary fisherman daring to teach these elite, educated men from Scripture! But Peter, who had once denied knowing Jesus, wasn’t showing any fear.

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  What do you think fueled Peter’s boldness and courage as he faced the questioning of these leaders? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  How would you compare the questioning of Peter and John by the religious leaders to what believers might face from opponents today? |

**Religious Leaders Were Stumped**

Read [Acts 4:13–17](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac4.13-17).

After Peter’s courageous response, the religious leaders had no idea what to do. They were shocked by the ability of these men to bring about a healing miracle. No one could deny their connection to Jesus! But the leaders needed to make a decision.

The only thing the religious leaders could do to save face was pull away from the crowds and brainstorm what to do together. If they allowed Peter and John to continue teaching in Jesus’ name, even more of the people they were trying to control might turn to follow this movement. But if they punished Peter and John after such a visible miracle, the crowds might turn against them.

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  If you had been in the crowd, what do you think you might have observed about the religious leaders’ reactions and emotions? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  How do you think the religious leaders recognized that Peter and John “had been with Jesus” (verse [13](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac4.13))? What characteristics or qualities do you think the leaders saw in the two disciples? |

**Peter and John Refused to Be Silent**

Read [Acts 4:18–21](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac4.18-21).

The miracle that took place had done nothing to change the hearts of these leaders. They were too worried about the crowd’s response and their own selfish interests. But their “don’t do this again or else” threat did nothing to dissuade Peter and John. Even worse, the crowds seemed to be on Peter and John’s side. After all, no one could deny that the miracle had happened.

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  What do you think might have happened if Peter and John had backed down and submitted to the religious leaders? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  Do you think you could have been as bold as Peter and John were? Why or why not? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  Have you ever seen someone display this kind of boldness for the gospel? What was the situation? |

**Did You Know?**

|  |
| --- |
| *Peter and John were standing trial before the same Jewish leaders who were responsible, alongside Pilate, for the death of Jesus. High priests Caiaphas and Annas, the main architects behind the plot against Jesus, and the Sadducees all represented the Sanhedrin—the ruling body of Jewish religious leaders. But Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, was not intimidated by them. Anyone present would have been shocked that Peter boldly placed the blame on them for Jesus’ crucifixion because they did not have the power to crucify anyone unless done hand in hand with Pontius Pilate, the Roman authority.* |

**Reflect**

**Live in such a way that even adversaries can tell you’re committed to Jesus.**

Peter and John were sold out for Jesus. They were committed to Him no matter what opposition came their way. Their belief in Jesus, His salvation and forgiveness, and His power to heal were impossible for them to ignore because they had seen and experienced it firsthand.

Our beliefs and experiences inform our actions, too. When you truly believe something, it will change how you behave. Have you experienced this personal relationship with Jesus in a way that changes your behavior? Do you, like Peter and John, live out your belief in Jesus in ways that nonbelievers can see and no one can deny you belong to Him?

**Listen to God**

Let’s pause and listen to what God might want to say to us about what we have read and shared. Be silent for a few moments and reflect on the following questions. Respond to the one that most resonates with what God is saying to you now. Then complete the others during Day 1 of your devotion time this week.

**Personal Reflection Questions**

*Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.*

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  Do you feel it’s easy for others to see your commitment to Christ? Why or why not? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  What fears do you have about being a bold witness for Christ? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  Describe a time when you have faced opposition to your Christian beliefs. How did you handle the situation? |

**Activate**

Peter and John were just normal men who had changed through Jesus’ love and power. Their relationship with Him transformed them, and their lives and behavior reflected their commitment in return. They lived boldly, even when challenged. We, too, who have been changed by Christ, must live boldly as we are empowered by the Holy Spirit!

**Challenge**

Share with a friend this week your fears about being a bold witness for Christ. Ask that friend to pray with you for the Holy Spirit to fill you with boldness and opportunities to share your faith. Be sensitive and watch for a moment where you can step out and share with one unbeliever about Jesus. Remember the Holy Spirit is always with you and will help you to find the words to say. Be sure to report back to your prayer partner, so you can encourage each other about how God used you.

**Prayer Requests**

|  |
| --- |
| Note any requests from the group and pray together. Also remember to pray for them during the week. |

God wants us to be bold in witnessing about Him to others, even when it’s challenging. His Word is a powerful tool to help us as we step out to share. It’s important that we listen to God through His Word both in community and individually. Personal devotions have been provided here as an extension of this discussion.

**Live on Your Own**

|  |
| --- |
| *Before you begin each devotion, pray and ask God to speak to you through His Word. Record your answers to the following questions in the space provided or in your personal journal.* |

**Day 1: Peter and John Stand Trial**

Read [Acts 4:1–21](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ac4.1-21).

Look back over Live in Community and complete your responses to the Personal Reflection Questions. Plan how to complete the Activate component if you haven’t already done so. If time permits, reread the Scripture too.

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  What is God saying to you about living in such a way that even opponents can tell you are committed to Jesus? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 2: Overcome Fear**

Read [Psalm 56](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Ps56).

In this psalm, David cried out to God about his enemies, how they were making life very difficult for him and causing him to fear. But David didn’t allow that fear to control him. Instead, he placed his hope and trust in God.

Similarly, God promises to never leave us. He is with us no matter what we face, even when people challenge our witness of what Jesus has done in our life. God has chosen to partner with us to make His glory known to everyone, and He will surely equip us to do just that. Look to Him to be your help and strength!

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  What are some times in your life when you have felt God helping you overcome fear? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  How can this psalm (and God’s promises) help you push past the fear of what people think about you? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 3: Be Prepared**

Read [1 Peter 3:13–17](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.1Pe3.13-17).

Peter wrote to persecuted Christians in this passage about suffering for Jesus. He admitted that, at times, they would suffer for doing good. Peter also encouraged these believers that they should always be ready to answer unbelievers about their hope in Christ, but they needed to do it with gentleness and respect.

In the same way today, we can draw encouragement from these words. Even as we live boldly for Christ, we should always be prepared to share our faith. Doing so with gentleness and respect will go a long way to help our witness be trustworthy and accepted.

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  Why does Peter tell the Gentile Christians not to worry or be afraid of people’s threats? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  How can you apply this Scripture as you share with others about Christ? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 4: Shine Brightly**

Read [Philippians 2:12–18](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.Php2.12-18).

Paul encouraged the Philippian church to shine brightly for Jesus. He instructed them to work hard so others could tell that they followed Jesus and strived to please and obey Him. When we live as Jesus did, we will shine like bright lights in a dark and wicked world. It’s not only through our bold words that we share Christ, but also through our actions and attitudes. People notice those, just like they notice a light in a dark room.

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  What stands out in this passage about how we are to live our life for Jesus? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  In what ways are you letting your light shine brightly in your places of influence? |

**Live on Your Own**

**Day 5: Don’t Be Ashamed**

Read [2 Timothy 1:7–12](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Ti1.7-12).

Paul wrote to a younger disciple named Timothy in this letter. Paul encouraged and instructed Timothy in many things, but in this passage, he reminded Timothy not to be afraid or be ashamed of the gospel. In this time , it was not popular to be a believer. Paul reminded Timothy that what God has done for us is greater than any hardship we might face. We can lean on God’s strength and trust Him through anything, even rejection or persecution from others. There is no shame in suffering for Christ!

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  What kind of spirit does God want us to have as believers (verse [7](https://ref.ly/logosref/Bible.2Ti1.7))? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  Why is it important to have a firm foundation of trust in God as we share our faith with others? |

|  |
| --- |
| **QUESTION**  Have you ever felt ashamed to share the gospel? What have you learned from these Scriptures in this study that can help you overcome those feelings? |