

The Holy Spirit Makes Ordinary Christians Bold and Courageous

Message 01 of the series: "Marvels of Acts"

1. Peter was an ordinary man who became a **bold** witness for Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

"Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, 'Rulers and elders of our people, are we being questioned today because we've done a good deed for a crippled man? Do you want to know how he was healed? Let me clearly state to all of you and to all the people of Israel that he was healed by the powerful name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, the man you crucified but whom God raised from the dead... There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name under heaven by which we must be saved.' The members of the council were amazed when they saw the **boldness** of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus. But since they could see the man who had been healed standing right there among them, there was nothing the council could say... So they called the apostles back in and commanded them never again to speak or teach in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John replied, 'Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him? We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard.' The council then threatened them further, but they finally let them go because they didn't know how to punish them without starting a riot. For everyone was praising God for this miraculous sign—the healing of a man who had been lame for more than forty years."

Acts 4:8-22 (NLT)

Note: "boldness" = a free and fearless confidence or courage

Note: Peter had tried being bold for Jesus in his own strength and failed miserably. "Lord, if it's you,' Peter replied, 'tell me to come to you on the water.' 'Come,' he said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water and came toward Jesus. But when he saw the wind, he was afraid and, beginning to sink, cried out, 'Lord, save me!' Immediately Jesus reached out his hand and caught him. 'You of little faith,' he said, 'why did you doubt?'" Matthew 14:28-31 (NIV)

"Peter declared, 'Even if everyone else deserts you, I will never desert you.' Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, Peter—this very night, before the rooster crows, you will deny three times that you even know me.' 'No!' Peter insisted. 'Even if I have to die with you, I will never deny you!'" Matthew 26:33-35 (NLT)

Life Application: None of us are strong enough to boldly follow Jesus in our own strength.

"Keep watching and praying, that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." Matthew 26:41 (NASB77)

Life Application: All of us can be bold witnesses for Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit.

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere..." Acts 1:8 (NLT)

"For God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him." Philippians 2:13 (NLT)

2. When the rest of the believers heard how boldly Peter and John had witnessed for Jesus, they **prayed for boldness too!**

"As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said. When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God: 'O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them— you spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant, saying, "Why were the nations so angry? Why did they waste their time with futile plans? The kings of the earth prepared for battle; the rulers gathered together against the Lord and against his Messiah." In fact, this has happened here in this very city! For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed. But everything they did was determined beforehand according to your will. And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, **great boldness in preaching your word**. Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.'" Acts 4:23-30 (NLT) (see also Psalm 2:1-2)

Note: The early Christians recognized that God can sovereignly use the evil actions of rebellious sinners to accomplish His purposes. "You intended to harm me, but God intended it all for good." Genesis 50:20a (NLT)

Note: The early Christians did NOT ask God to remove them from danger but to give them boldness in preaching God's Word. "I'm not asking you to take them out of the world, but to keep them safe from the evil one. They do not belong to this world any more than I do. Make them holy by your truth; teach them your word, which is truth. Just as you sent me into the world, I am sending them into the world. And I give myself as a holy sacrifice for them so they can be made holy by your truth." John 17:15-19 (NLT)

Note: The early Christians prayed that God's power would be miraculously displayed through them in order to bring glory to Jesus. "You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father." Matthew 5:14-16 (NLT)

Note: The early Christians all wanted to participate in ministry, and God answered their prayer. "After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with **boldness**." Acts 4:31(NLT)

Life Application: We need to pray for boldness right now.

"If anyone is ashamed of me and my message in these adulterous and sinful days, the Son of Man will be ashamed of that person when he returns in the glory of his Father with the holy angels." Mark 8:38 (NLT)

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Connect Group Questions

1. Describe a time in your life when you felt unworthy, unqualified, or simply in over your head. What did you do?
2. Compare and contrast what Peter was like in the following passages:
 - Matthew 14:28-31
 - Matthew 26:31-35, 69-75
 - Acts 4:1-22

How did Peter respond to adversity in these situations? What changed in Peter's life? (see Acts 1:8, *Philippians 2:13*)

3. Read John 17:13-20. Why didn't Jesus pray that his disciples would be taken out of this evil world?
4. Discuss the following statement, "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." (see *Matthew 26:41*) How have you experienced this in your spiritual journey?
5. Read Acts 4:23-30 & Mark 8:38. Have you ever prayed for boldness? What would Christian boldness look like in our church, in our city, in our workplaces, and in our families?
6. Spend some time as a group praying for boldness for our church, our staff, and every member of your Connect Group.
7. Discuss the following quotations:

"Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on Earth." John Wesley

"And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So, pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should."

The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 6:19-20

"There is a false boldness for Christ that only comes from pride. A man may rashly expose himself to the world's dislike and even deliberately provoke its displeasure, and yet do so out of pride... True boldness for Christ transcends all; it is indifferent to the displeasure of either friends or foes. Boldness enables Christians to forsake all rather than Christ, and to prefer to offend all rather than to offend Him."

Jonathan Edwards