



Introduction

To prepare for this lesson, resource *The Moody Bible Commentary* page 1682 (Acts 4:23-31). This will be a helpful framework for discussion of the text.

Have you ever attended a prayer meeting? Like one of those old-school, everyone gathers and prays and the expectation of God to do something big was palpable! What feelings, thoughts, or emotions went through your heart and soul? Do you wish that you could experience that again? Do you wish that others could now experience something like that? For many people, we don't know that we can experience something like that until we have prayed with others who live that way. But it is real and it is possible.

Consider the believers here in Acts 4 as they have a prayer meeting in response to Peter and John's report.

Scripture Text

Acts 4:23-31

23 When they were released, they went to their friends and reported what the chief priests and the elders had said to them. 24 And when they heard it, they lifted their voices together to God and said, "Sovereign Lord, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and everything in them, 25 who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit, "'Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain? 26 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers were gathered together, against the Lord and against his Anointed'— 27 for truly in this city there were gathered together against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, 28 to do whatever your hand and your plan had predestined to take place. 29 And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness, 30 while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus." 31 And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness.



HOW IS WHAT I
KNOW INCREASING?



HOW IS MY WORSHIP
BEING TRANSFORMED?



HOW CAN I TAKE WHAT I'VE
LEARNED INTO THE WEEK?

Head

"In (Acts) 4:23-31, Luke showed how the church responded to the threats of the Sanhedrin.* They prayed!" This is how the Moody Bible Commentary opens up the section for today's passage. Sit with that for just a moment. When faced with threats, the early believers PRAYED. They did not retaliate with aggressive, or passive-aggressive, responses. They instead turned to the Sovereign Lord of the Universe and prayed. When you experience threats, pain, discomfort, irritation, or frustration, what is your first response? And if (and when) you do pray, do you pray against others or for God's glory and will?

* The Sanhedrin was essentially the supreme court of ancient Israel, made up of 70 men and the high priest. For more information go to <https://bit.ly/3xqLSGn>

Why would these Christians pray *with all boldness and for signs and wonders* to accompany the words of the disciples?

In verse 23, the ESV says that Peter and John went back to their friends. Other translations say "their own people", other "believers", and own "companions." Is there anything interesting or compelling about the use of the word "friends" or "companions"? Why is that? What might it teach us about the way they viewed the relationships and cared for other believers?

Heart

It is clear that the prayer (both in content and the practice of) of the disciples was **Formative** and **Missional** in nature. They sought to align with God's will. Without prayer, there is no power. And without power, there is only vain striving. Because of the example of these believers, and through the understanding that we have the opportunity to pray to the same Sovereign God, how often do you pray for boldness to share the gospel with words AND live a life that is disruptive to the ways of a fallen and sinful world? How often do you pray for big things to happen when you are serving people? How has that desire or your prayers changed over time? How is the Holy Spirit using this study in Acts to help reform your prayers and desires?

As mentioned, prayer is **Formative**. And specifically in this passage in Acts, the disciples use Scripture to pray. For the Jewish and early Christian cultures, the Psalms were normative for use during prayer. Many used the Psalms in morning and evening prayers. Do you use the Psalms (or have you considered using them) as a source for guiding your prayers? If you have used them, how has your prayer life changed? What do you enjoy about using them? If you haven't used them, what will you do this week to try them? Do you use apps on your phone to help you pray? If so, what apps are they and how have they helped?

Hands

Consider for a moment prayer meetings. Maybe you have been a part of one or you have an idea of what they look like. Within the prayer meeting, there are people who are depending on the Lord to work and act in miraculous ways for God's glory and for the sake of people. Take inventory of your own life. Do you pray as the believers did in today's passage? When was the last time you prayed for big and bold things to happen with other believers (outside of a Sunday service or your Life Group)? What does your prayer time in Life Group look like? How might you pray for boldness and mission right now?

Conclusion

Is there anything else you would like to discuss from Pastor Kevin's sermon?

What is one thing you learned today or from Pastor Kevin's sermon?

What is one thing that has changed about your prayer requests?

What is one thing you will now do with/for others as you pray?

Remember Acts 4:31 reads - "And when they had prayed, the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and continued to speak the word of God with boldness."

Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."

Pray

Take time at the end of your meeting to pray Scripture, to pray with boldness, and to pray with complete trust for God to do big things in your lives.