

ACTS

Chapters 4 and 5

Note from Kathy

If there has been one common theme among people throughout the ages, it is that people have problems. This new, budding church is no different. In chapter 4, we see some of the external problems, and in chapter 5 we read about some of the internal problems. Since no one will ever have a problem-free life, it would be a good idea for us to learn how to faithfully handle problems that come our way. Let's look at the examples Peter and John set for us.

9 Acts 4:3-4

"They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. ⁴But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand."



Acts 4: Observation

1. While Peter and John were speaking to the people, who came up through the crowd to offer their objections?
2. The scriptures tell us that the apostles' teaching "greatly disturbed" some of those present that day. What were they disturbed about?
3. Because it was late, they had Peter and John put in jail to deal with them the next day. In verse 4, even though they were placed in jail, what do we see God continuing to do through their message?
4. Who was assembled to question these two godly men first thing the next morning?

This is the same opposition Jesus faced. What was their question?

9 **Acts 4:8-14**

“Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: ‘Rulers and elders of the people!’⁹ If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed,¹⁰ then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. ¹¹ Jesus is ‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone.’¹² Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.’¹³ When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus. ¹⁴ But since they could see the man who had been healed standing there with them, there was nothing they could say.”

10 **Acts 4:17-19**

“But to stop this thing from spreading any further among the people, we must warn them to speak no longer to anyone in this name. ¹⁸Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹But Peter and John replied, ‘Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges!’”

5. According to verse 8, how was Peter able to stand up before this jealous crowd of leaders and speak truth?
6. First Peter clarifies what he and John are in trouble for. What did he say the action was that got this vicious ball rolling against them?
7. Peter did not shy away from making it clear why and how the man was healed. What did he say was the power behind this event?

But Peter did not simply leave it at that; he went on to remind them of their not so distant actions and sin. What had they done?

8. What are the three great take-away truths found in Acts 4:10-12
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
9. These accusers noticed in verse 4:13 that there is something very different about Peter and John. What is it?
10. What undeniable truth stood in plain sight in verse 14?
11. Can you imagine the conversation as the priests and officials opposing them gathered privately to discuss what they could do to stop Peter and John from teaching?

The could not deny the amazing result of their ministry. So, what did they try according to verses 4:17-18?
12. Peter and John will not be bullied to do anything that would hinder the furtherance of the gospel. Read Acts 4:19 again. What did they direct the priest’s and official’s attention to that day that would serve us well to remember?
13. After a few more threats they let them go. According to Acts 4:23-31, what was the reaction of Peter and John to all these questions and threats?

Acts 4:32-37

“All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need. ³⁶Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means ‘son of encouragement’), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostle’s feet.”

Acts 5:13-17

“No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. ¹⁴Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. ¹⁵As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. ¹⁶Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed. ¹⁷Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy.”

14. Satan desires to tear believers apart from one another—to place fear in our hearts and to scatter the sheep. Acts 4:32-37 shows us a beautiful picture of God’s people loving like Jesus loved. What were they doing?

Acts 5: Observation

15. The church will never be problem free. We have seen some external problems in Acts 4, and now we will see some problems from within. In this chapter, we read the sad story of Ananias and Sapphira. Quite obviously they must have offered to sell a piece of property as Barnabas had done in Acts 4:36-37 and give it to the apostles for the needs of others in the church. Did they sell their property?
16. Ananias came and also laid his money at the feet of the apostles just as Barnabas had done. What was the problem in verse 5:2?
17. What happened to Ananias?
18. Sapphira was not with Ananias when he brought the money to the apostles. Perhaps he sent her back home with the part they had taken for themselves. It really does not matter what she was doing, the important point is, did she have knowledge of the vow and the lie they entered into together? In verse 5:8, what question did Peter ask her that gave Sapphira an opportunity to confess?
19. What was the fate of Ananias and his wife Sapphira?
20. As we said, this is a very sad story. The church was in its infancy, and it was not the time to coddle sin. God is establishing the church—his bride. There is no place for lies. What did verse 5:11 say was the reaction of other believers at this event?
21. Even though many people were afraid to take a bold stand and join the believers, they believed they had the power to heal. According to Acts 5:13-16, what did they do that caused many to believe the apostles had the power of God on them?
22. What is the external problem spoken of in Acts 5:17?

9 Acts 5:28-32

“We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,” he said. “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.”²⁹ Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings!³⁰ The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross.³¹ God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins.³² We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

23. In spite of the fact that all the apostles were locked up in jail, what did God do to show they were his men, doing his work in verse 5:19?
24. The next morning, what were the apostles busy doing?
25. When they were located, they were escorted to stand before the Sanhedrin and were questioned by the high priest. What did the high priest remind them about from verse 28?
26. Without missing a beat, what question did Peter pose to the high priest?
27. After just a bit more conversation back and forth what was the reaction of the Sanhedrin? What would have made them happy at this time?
28. Just in the nick of time God had a man, Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, stand up and attempt to reason with this crowd of haters. He reminded them of other recent groups that had been started up by men. What had happened to them?
29. What was Gamaliel’s advice in verses 5:38-39 concerning the apostles?
30. Did his words of caution work?
31. Did his words stop all persecution?
32. What was the response of the apostles to this tremendous persecution?

Acts 4 and 5: Application

1. It is hard to believe that sharing such good news could cause so much jealousy, but it did. The apostles were simply sharing the gospel, and yet, they faced the hatred of the religious leaders. How do you respond when people react in a negative way toward your faith?
2. America sends ambassadors to other countries every day. These ambassadors go with full authority and must be very careful what they say and do because they represent our country. Everywhere the apostles went they represented Jesus and shared his message of salvation. Believers are still called today to represent Jesus in all we say and do. How are you representing Jesus’ amazing grace and love to those God brings your way?

▣ **Acts 4:13**

“When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.”

3. Acts 4:13 is one of my favorite verses in the Bible. The courage of Peter and John amazed their opposition because it was clear to see they were simply ordinary men, and yet, it was undeniable that God was using them in an amazing way. It gives me hope to think of all God can do with ordinary men and women who are fully devoted to him. Would you say your heart is fully devoted to God’s will?

If not, what is standing in your way of being powerfully used by God?

4. In Acts 4:20, Peter and John told the men questioning them, “We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.” Is this true for you? When was the last time you spontaneously shared your faith (the good news of all God has done for you) with someone else?
5. The apostles did not merely share here and there. The scriptures say they were filled with the Spirit and spoke boldly. This does not mean that they did not recognize the possibility that there might be a price to be paid. Boldness requires one to press through their fears and do what they know is right. How can we become bolder for Christ? Think of some small way you can be bold for Christ today.
6. This new body of believers enjoyed great unity. I do not believe that all these people agreed on every detail, but they had unity of their mission. They were willing to work together for a common goal, serving Christ well. Do you recall “citizenship section” of your grade school report card? It said things like: Considerate of others, respects others property, shows respect for authority and follows directions, etc. What would your “Christian citizenship” report card look like if someone graded you on last week?
7. We are all setting an example for someone. Someone is always watching us and taking their cues from us. Barnabas set a wonderful example in Acts 4:36-37, but then Ananias and Sapphira set a terrible example, promising one thing and giving something else. Who are you influencing? Who is following your lead? If you say no one, you are deceiving yourself.

▣ **Acts 4:36-37**

“Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means ‘son of encouragement’), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet.”

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8. Think of some acts of generosity you are willing to do this week and do it. Find a need and meet it.
 9. Righteous living does not guarantee exemption from trials. The Life Application Bible notes on Acts 5:17-18, "Faith in God does not make troubles disappear; it makes troubles appear less frightening, because it puts them in perspective." We do a disservice if we imply that salvation is the key to a life of ease. We are called to take up our cross daily and follow Him. How has studying these two chapters built up your faith?
 10. Acts 5:33-39 told of a very wise man, Gamaliel, a teacher of the law. He helped the men who stood against the apostles see truth. He cited examples of other men who had attempted to lead the people in a rebellion, and how they had failed. Gamaliel said, "But if these men are from God as they say they are, you will not be able to defeat them; you will find yourself fighting against God." Can you let God handle the uprisings around you and simply remain focused on what God has called you to do?

What has God called you to do?

11. In spite of the fact that Gamaliel had persuaded the Jewish leaders not to kill the apostles, they still ordered them flogged. Flogging was no small punishment. It was often 39 lashes by soldiers who were experts at severely beating the prisoner without killing him. Scripture tells us that after this flogging the apostles left "rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name." This is an example worthy of our full attention. How is this possible? Have you ever experienced suffering for Christ? What was your attitude after?
12. What would it take to live our life in such a way that even the most severe treatment could be a catalyst for rejoicing?
13. Even after all they have endured, the scripture says, "they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah." What are you doing to proclaim this message? Share an example from your week. If you do this study guide early enough in the week, you will have plenty of time to make this a reality.