

REFLECTION GUIDE

ACTS 4:23-31 - PRAYER & WORSHIP SUNDAY

KEY TERMS

Herod and Pontius Pilate - The two Roman officials men primarily responsible for questioning and executing Jesus. Herod was the ruler of Galilee, where Jesus was from, and Pilate was the ruler of Judea, where Jesus was arrested.

Chief Priests and Elders - These were Jewish leaders who enjoyed a great deal of both religious and socio-political influence within areas of the Roman Empire. Their decision to let Peter and John go was more from social pressure than from a realization of the truth they proclaimed.

Word of God - In the book of Acts, this term refers to the gospel, or good news, that salvation is available in Jesus (see Acts 6:2, 6:7, 11:1, 13:5, & 18:11). This term is similar to *euangelion*, which is where we get our word evangelism, and is usually translated "good news."

DID YOU KNOW?

The title *Sovereign Lord* (v. 24) is from the Greek word *despótēs*, a common word for "master" used 23 times in the NT (see Mt 13:27 & 1 Tim 6:1)

However, of the 23 uses this title is only applied to God the Father 3 times in the NT (Acts 4:24, 2 Pt 2:1, & Rev 6:10) and to Jesus once (Jude 4).

BACKGROUND

After being released from their first arrest (v. 3), Peter and John return to *their friends* (v. 23) and report what they were told (see v. 15-18). In response to hearing the report, the Church prays to God (addressing him as *Sovereign Lord* in v. 24). Their prayer cites Psalm 2 and Psalm 146 and focuses on the fact that God is sovereign over all of creation and proved himself sovereign over Jesus' death, which gives them hope that God will care for them and sustain their mission even in the midst of opposition. At the heart of their prayer is the petition, *grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness* (v. 29). After they finish praying, Luke says *the place in which they were gathered together was shaken, and they...continued to speak the word of God with boldness* (v. 31).

GOING DEEPER

Read Matthew 6:9-13, Ephesians 3:14-21, and Colossians 1:3-14. What stands out to you about these prayers? How are they similar or dissimilar to Acts 4:24-30? How do these verses challenge your own prayer life?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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1. Read Acts 4:23-31. What stands out to you? Make 3-5 observations.
2. Peter and John were imprisoned for preaching the gospel and told to stop telling people about Jesus, but when they were released they continued to boldly proclaim Jesus. We don't face imprisonment for telling people about Jesus in our context, yet it's a challenge for us to boldly proclaim Jesus. What barriers keep you from boldly telling others about Jesus?
3. What about the reactions of Peter and John and their hearers in these verses compels you?
4. Why do you think the primary response the early Church had to opposition was prayer?
5. What does it teach you about God that he responds to the prayers of the Church and empowers the believers to continue proclaiming Jesus with boldness?
6. Spend 30 min in prayer using Acts 4:23-31 as a model. In this passage, the Church prays...
 - ...Scripture back to God (v. 25-26)
 - ...thanksgiving for what God has done in the past (v. 27-28)
 - ...for protection against opposition (v. 29)
 - ...for boldness to proclaim Jesus (v. 29)
 - ...for physical healing (v. 29)
 - ...for God to display his power through signs and wonders (v. 29)