

### **MAIN POINT**

When we make room for more OF God, we are filled with more FROM God.

### **INTRODUCTION**

What is the most outlandish request you or one of your children have made to Santa Claus? What would have happened if you or your children had actually gotten what you asked for?

What did your request reflect about what you (or your children) were thinking at the time? Do our requests reveal what's in our hearts?

The Book of Acts describes the gospel's advance in the church's earliest days. Jesus told the disciples to stay in Jerusalem until they received the Spirit's power. [Acts 1-7](#) describes the disciples' empowerment to witness and what unfolded for them in Jerusalem. Chapter 3 details Peter and John healing a crippled beggar as they entered the temple. Alarmed by the attention the disciples were receiving, the religious leaders and temple authorities in chapter 4 seized and interrogated Peter and John. They were brought before Jewish rulers, elders, scribes, and the high priest and his family. "After they had Peter and John stand before them, they began to question them: 'By what power or in what name have you done this?'" ([Acts 4:7](#), HCSB). This sounded more like a challenge than a sincere question. Peter and John explained that the crippled man had been healed in the name of Jesus.

### **UNDERSTANDING**

#### **READ [ACTS 4:12-14](#).**

Why was Simon Peter so adamant at the end of his answer to the religious leaders?

What had Peter and John done that was courageous?

How did Peter and John's actions back up their beliefs?

The religious leaders saw that Peter and John were uneducated and untrained men. The disciples were laymen who had no formal rabbinical training and no officially sanctioned religious authority. The religious leaders recognized, though, that the disciples responded boldly for one reason—they had been with Jesus. They gave them an order that they could never again "preach or teach at all in the name of Jesus" ([v. 18](#), HCSB). But Peter and John said they had to tell others what they had seen and heard from Jesus.

#### **READ [ACTS 4:23-24\(A\)](#).**

When have you had great news that you could not wait to get back and share with those you love?

Why was prayer an appropriate response by the group?

We can be astonished to think about everything Peter and John had experienced in the last couple of days. They were innocently going to the temple when they stopped to speak to this crippled man, and they healed him. Simon Peter saw the crowd and again told them about

Jesus. They were then arrested and stayed overnight in jail. They made a bold stand before the Sanhedrin and other religious leaders.

**READ [ACTS 4:24B-28](#).**

**What is the theme of their prayer so far? Why would this have been an important topic to address in prayer?**

**Have there been times in your life that you have had to stop and remind yourself that our God is faithful?**

In these verses, we gain a picture into the life of the early church. [Acts 2:42](#) said that the believers gathered for prayer and the teaching of the apostles' doctrine. In these verses in chapter 4, we get a glimpse into the actual content of their prayers. They began by proclaiming how God had been faithful from the opening of His creation. They next pointed to David and explained how God had spoken through him, Israel's greatest king. They explained that even through Jesus' death, and burial, God had been faithfully working according to His divine plan.

**READ [ACTS 4:29-30](#).**

**Why do you think that was the only request they made of God?**

**Why was this a priority to the people? What does this say to us about needing to speak boldly about Christ? What keeps us from doing that today?**

In making this request, they were asking for God's help so they could fulfill what Jesus had instructed His followers to do. They were to be His witnesses ([Acts 1:8](#)). They were to go and make disciples of all nations ([Matthew 28:19](#)). It's a reminder that how a church prays indicates whether it has strayed in its mission and task. Verse 30 reveals that the people expected God to work miraculously. There's a saying, "When God shows up, God shows out." The people lived with that belief—that God could and God would do mighty acts among them.

**What is an example of an audacious prayer?**

**What do you think would happen in our church if we prayed audacious prayers?**

**What is the significance of the place shaking?**

**How do you think the people interpreted that phenomenon?**

**Take a look at [Exodus 19:18](#). What kind of light does this verse shed on the [Acts 4:31](#) event?**

There was a violent shaking, as if it was caused by an earthquake. This was tangible evidence of God's presence and power and His hearing the believers' prayer. The text then says that the believers were filled with the Holy Spirit. This experience was not a repetition of Pentecost. The believers received a fresh infusion of the Spirit's power and inspiration in answer to their prayer. By the Spirit's power, they began to speak God's message with boldness. God gave them exactly what they had requested in verse 29.

**READ [ACTS 4:32-35](#).**

**What excuses do some Christians give for not sharing their financial resources?**

**What obligations do we have to help other believers?**

**How is helping others materially an expression of Christian stewardship?**

The apostles spoke with great power about Jesus' resurrection. Again, this was a direct answer to the people's prayer. Their message was a reminder that the church was launched around the good news that Jesus is the Holy One of God and that sin has been defeated.

## **APPLICATION**

How do our prayers reflect our concern for our church and its ministry in the community?

Do our prayers reflect that we have a passion for fulfilling what Jesus instructed us to do?

What would happen if we prayed audacious prayers, both individually and corporately?

## **PRAYER**

Ask for forgiveness when you have failed to speak boldly the message of Jesus. Ask the Holy Spirit to embolden you and to open opportunities for you to meet the needs of others.

## **COMMENTARY**

### **[ACTS 4:12-14](#)**

**4:12** Peter concluded by making clear the uncompromising claim of Christianity: There is salvation in no one else besides Jesus. This message rings throughout the NT. Jesus Himself said, "No one comes to the Father except through Me" ([John 14:6](#)).

**4:16-18** Remarkably, the Sanhedrin admitted that an obvious sign had been done through them (the apostles), and yet rather than repent and believe they focused on damage control among the people. They sought to halt the spread of Christianity at all costs, so they ordered the apostles not to preach or teach any more about Jesus. It seems they wished to guard their status as religious authorities even at the expense of obvious truth.

### **[ACTS 4:24-35](#)**

**4:24-28** When Peter and John told the members of their fellowship what had happened, they all recognized this persecution as fulfillment of [Psalms 2:1-2](#). Gentiles and the people of Israel had united in opposition to God's holy Servant Jesus and His followers. Then and now, believers take comfort in knowing that Jesus' sufferings (as well as their own) are not by chance, but are predestined by God.

**4:29** The early Christians recognized that just as Jesus had been promised trouble, they too would encounter persecution for proclaiming Him as Messiah. They asked God for the power to speak with complete boldness, even if punishment should follow.

**4:30** Besides boldness in testifying, the early Christians expected to receive power from God to perform healing, signs, and wonders through the name of... Jesus.

**4:32-35** As long as there was complete unanimity of purpose and intention among them, the early Christians shared their possessions freely, such that there was not a needy person among them. They were able to do this not because of their own strength, but because great grace was on all of them. Therefore the generosity was above all a work of God. Yet trouble was coming ([5:1-11](#)).