



weekend

resource guide for the week of 20 May

The next day their rulers, elders, and scribes assembled in Jerusalem, 6 with Annas the high priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family. 7 When they had made the prisoners [Peter and John] stand in their midst, they inquired, "By what power or by what name did you do this?" (Acts 4.5-7).

Peter and John were in a tough situation. Their Master had been crucified and they were in danger of the same fate. Here they were in front of the religious leaders who had brought about Jesus' death. They could have chosen to answer cautiously as they guardedly equivocated concerning their relationship with Jesus. Instead Peter declared, "Let it be known to all of you, and to all the people of Israel, that this man is standing before you in good health by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead." (Acts 4.10).

In a July 2013 article, Scientific American studied what most people talk about the most and what they discovered surprised me — probably because my emotional intelligence is not high! Here is their observation: on average people spend 60% of their time talking about themselves! This number goes up to 80% when communicating on social media. So what are the implications for Christians if we spend all this "time" communicating and our faith does not or rarely comes up with others?

Someone has written, "Reticence can be as harmful as unguided speech, and it is not always what Christians say, but what they don't say, that misrepresents the things of God." If we say nothing about these things, people have every right to assume that they are not important. Worse still, if we remain silent when we have an opportunity of speaking for Christ, we are virtually denying Him.

Why are some bold and others reticent when it comes to sharing our faith? The answer lies partly, but not predominantly in temperament and personality. We talk and share experiences about the things and relationships that we value the most. If we truly place God on the highest place in our lives; if we are filled with a love for Jesus; and if Kingdom issues are very real to us — then we will testify easily and naturally to the truth, forgiveness, and freedom that we have found in Christ.

Therefore we need to pray for ourselves and other women and men to have a fresh vision and experience of Jesus and the reality of His Kingdom come. We cannot just rely on the great spiritual experiences of our past. We need the Holy Spirit's presence and activity each day as we read the Bible, pray, and go about our daily lives. Otherwise we shall find ourselves preoccupied with things of secondary importance.

Please take a moment now and ask the Lord to show you situations where He may be asking you to speak up in Jesus' name. Ask the Lord to give you peace and confidence for those people/situations that intimidate you. Remember, the purpose of your witness is not to judge, but to save— to love and befriend— not to shame and condemn (John 3.17).

Enjoy your LifeGroup!

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Mark'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Getting to know one another better..

What skill or talent would you like to cultivate during the rest of this year?

Acts 4:1-22: For we cannot stop speaking... or can we?!

As they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to them, being greatly disturbed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the message believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

*On the next day, their rulers and elders and scribes were gathered together in Jerusalem; and Annas the high priest was there, and Caiaphas and John and Alexander, and all who were of high-priestly descent. When they had placed them in the center, they began to inquire, "By what power, or in what name, have you done this?" Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers and elders of the people, if we are on trial today for a benefit done to a sick man, as to how this man has been made well, let it be known to all of you and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead — by this name this man stands here before you in good health. "He is the **STONE WHICH WAS REJECTED** by you, **THE BUILDERS**, but **WHICH BECAME THE CHIEF CORNER** stone. "And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved."*

Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they began to confer with one another, saying, "What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. "But so that it will not spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name." And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard." When they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened; for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.

What? (does the Bible say)

How did the authorities respond to Peter and John? After the Sanhedrin consulted together, what action did they take against the apostles?

What was Peter and John's response to the Sanhedrin?

What opposition did the people of the early church experience? How did they respond?

Now what? (how will I think based on what this passage says)

In our society, when should a Christian stand up for his or her faith in Christ?

What is the most difficult situation you've faced because of your faith in Christ?

What are some of the risks in telling others about Christ?

How can we prepare ourselves for the costs we may have to pay for following Christ?

What opposition have Christians you know experienced?

So what? (difference will this passage make in how I live)

What opportunities to share or demonstrate your faith has God given you lately?

When are you afraid to speak up for Christ? What inhibits you?

What, if anything, can Christians do to become more transparent in their witness to Christ?

Which of the possible actions listed in the question above would you like to take at this time?

In what way can your LifeGroup strengthen your sense of courage about being a Christian in your place of friends, work, neighborhood, or family?

My prayer requests (write in advance what you want your group to pray for...)

Praying for my group...