



YOU: Connect. Grow. Serve. Go!
Fall 2018 Leader Commentary

Unit 3: One Mission, One Message
Session 2: What's in a Name? (see pp. 146-149)

The Question: What's in a name?

The Point: When we're convinced in the power of Jesus' name for salvation, we will boldly lift Him up to others.

Background Passage: Acts 4:1-22

Focal Passage: Acts 4:12-21

This commentary is designed to help you think about the question, "What's in a name?" and drive home this one truth: When we're convinced in the power of Jesus' name for salvation, we will boldly lift Him up to others.

Focus on These Points

The Focus of Our Mission
(Acts 4:12)

Peter healed a lame beggar, who then accompanied Peter and John into the temple, "walking, leaping, and praising God" (Acts 3:8). A crowd gathered, and Peter preached about the death and resurrection of Jesus. The temple officials moved in to see what was causing such a commotion in the temple complex (Acts 3:1–4:1). These officials were the priests, the commander of the temple guard, and the Sadducees, who had the authority to arrest offenders. They arrested Peter and John for teaching without proper authority and for "proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead" (Acts 4:2). This opposition was dual pronged: the Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection of the dead and they wanted to maintain peace in the city and temple. The Sadducees typically were from wealthy, aristocratic families who sought to maintain their economic advantages by cooperating fully with the Roman occupation forces. Any kind of uproar could bring the Roman authorities and cost the Sadducees their favored positions and prosperity.

After spending the night in custody, Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin the next day. This 71-member supreme court, or council, had jurisdiction over the temple and met every day except Sabbaths and feast days. They made the apostles stand before them and demanded to know by what power or in what name Peter and John had healed the lame man. To the Sanhedrin these disciples were nobodies who had assumed religious authority to which they were not entitled (see Acts 4:5-7).

"Filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 4:8), Peter bravely witnessed to the Sanhedrin about Jesus. He announced that the man had been healed in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene whom they had crucified, and God had raised from the dead. He pointed out Jesus was the chief

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cornerstone they had rejected (Acts 4:8-11) and declared Jesus as absolutely the only Savior God has provided to rescue people from sin and death. There is salvation in no other name. Our society is increasingly pluralistic. Pluralism asserts that all religions are equally valid and they all lead to God. Today many believe that the death of Jesus was necessary for anyone to be saved, but that there are other ways to God if one does not know about Christ. Verse 12 will not allow this view. In fact, it is one of the most exclusive statements in the Bible.

Boldness for Our Mission (Acts 4:13-18)

Peter and John's boldness was evident to members of the Sanhedrin. They were impressed, and perhaps taken aback, by the disciples' firm stand. The religious leaders realized Peter and John were uneducated and untrained men. They were laymen who had no rabbinical training and held no official position among the people. They represented the majority of the population known as "the people of the land." The Sanhedrin members were amazed at the disciples' straightforwardness; literally, "they began to be amazed and continued to be so." They were aware that Peter and John had been with Jesus—that is, they were Jesus' disciples and had accompanied Him during His ministry. Jesus also was not trained formally as a rabbi but showed superior insights; He had defied the religious leaders and thus was seen as dangerous, even as His disciples now were. The disciples' boldness had not come from their education or status in society. Their boldness was rooted in the fact that they had been with Jesus.

The members of the Sanhedrin didn't have anything to say in response to Peter because the man the disciples had healed was standing right there with them. The authorities could not deny the miracle, for the man certainly had been healed, and too many people had witnessed the healing. They brought in the disciples and ordered them not to preach or teach at all in the name of Jesus, meaning on His behalf or in His authority.

Courage in the Mission (Acts 4:19-21)

Peter and John heard the court's order. Far from being cowed, Peter and John responded firmly and bravely—in fact, defiantly (v. 19). In essence the disciples asked: "Who is the greater authority, you or God?" The apostles responded courageously to the religious leaders because they feared God, knowing they were accountable to the One who held all the wealth and power of the universe in His hands. They were eyewitnesses to history's greatest event—God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ. They had heard Jesus' teachings and commands. They had seen His marvelous deeds and selfless acts of ministry, His crucifixion, His resurrection appearances, and His ascension. Jesus had commanded them to continue His work of spreading the good news of saving grace in Him. They were unable and unwilling to be silent. They had no choice but to defy the Sanhedrin's command.

Some Christians have shared the gospel and led people to Christ in countries that have laws against trying to convert people from one religion to another. Some believers have smuggled Bibles into lands where the Bible is an illegal Book. Are such believers lawbreakers? Some say

they are. However, these believers' response is in line with that of Peter and John—they are listening to God and obeying Him, not human authorities.

Because of the boldness demonstrated by Peter and John in the face of opposition, many more would come to know Christ. Motivated by compassion for lost and hurting people who urgently need to hear the gospel, Christ's followers find they are unable and unwilling to stop speaking and lifting up the name of Jesus because they are absolutely convinced that, "There is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to people by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).