



WEEKLY STUDY

The Marks of a Movement - Week Three

This summer, we have been identifying the marks of the movement of the early church as described in the book of Acts. The movement was (is) small, bold, and inspiring. The word *Inspiration* can refer to the act of inhalation—breathing in. We can breathe more deeply and with more confidence when we are walking in the midst of a movement of God.

Please note our prayer focus for the week in the box below. Join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Prayer Focus:

- In our area, this is the start of “dead period” where no school activities are planned. Pray for all of those who are traveling this week. Pray for families who get a chance to relax and reconnect before the return of school activities.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: ACTS 4.1-4 (NIV)

The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. ² They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. ³ They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. ⁴ But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.

- The priests and the captain of the temple guard were primarily Sadducees, a sect known for their rejection of resurrection of any kind. They didn't find it in the Pentateuch (the first 5 books of the Old Testament) and were allergic to the concept as a whole. So the arrest of Peter and John was meant to silence their proclamation. We can see in these first few verses of chapter 4 that it was too late! The movement of the early church was expanding even as persecution began. It grew to about five thousand! Do you see barriers to the advancement of the church in today's world? Instead of focusing on those barriers, how might you look for the advancement of the movement anyway?
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- **Prayer Prompt: "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past.
¹⁹ See, I am doing a new thing!
Now it springs up; do you not perceive it?
I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. (Isaiah 43.18-19)**
- *God, I know that you are on the move through the church of Jesus Christ. Help me to fix my eyes on the new thing you are doing even now. I want to follow your way in the wilderness. Amen.*

TUESDAY: ACTS 4.5-7 (NIV)

The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. ⁶ Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. ⁷ They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"

- Many of the same rulers who played a role in the crucifixion of Jesus were now keeping audience with a couple of fishermen who were his disciples. They had heard about Peter's sermons and the actions of the disciples that stirred up crowds. A lame man had been healed! "By whose authority?" they asked. "By what power or what name?" By asking the question it was clear that they did not see the healing as a divine act. It must have been something else...Yet by asking about power and authority they teed up Peter's next speech. Can you imagine being a part of something so amazing that it caused the people in charge to ask questions like this? Where does your power come from? Who sent you to do good works?
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- **Prayer Prompt:** Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”²² **And with that he breathed on them and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit. (John 20.21-22)**
- *God of Power and Might, wherever you send me today, I rely on your power and your mission to guide me. Make me an instrument of your Kingdom. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: ACTS 4.8-10 (NIV)

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.

- Did Peter use a touch of sarcasm here? “We are being called to account today for an act of kindness...”! Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit at this moment (a sense he must have been growing used to!). He gave a direct answer to the rulers’ question. The healing that had taken place was by the name of Jesus, the previously dead man, **and because he’s alive, the lame man can stand before you today.** Oh that those words could be said about any one of us who follow Jesus. Complete this sentence for yourself or someone close to you.
Because Jesus is alive, I can _____.

- **Prayer Prompt:** Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die;²⁶ and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. (John 11.25-26)
- *O God of life and resurrection, resurrect in me the hope and confidence of one who will never die. Amen.*

THURSDAY: ACTS 4.11-14 (NIV)

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.*

- Peter (as Jesus often did) referred to the Hebrews scriptures to make sense of what was happening in the moment. Psalm 118 gave words to a hoped for salvation for the nation of Israel. The right accusation from Peter is that these men had rejected their only hope for salvation. Facing this possibility, the men who were responsible for guiding the nation, began to look for ways to speak against Peter and John. They took note that they were just average, unschooled men, but as long as a healed man was standing in front of them, there was not much they could say. We live in confusing times. What evidence of God's movement and miracles keep you focused on Jesus?
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- **Prayer Prompt: The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;**
²³ **the LORD has done this,**
and it is marvelous in our eyes.
²⁴ **The LORD has done it this very day;**
let us rejoice today and be glad. (Psalm 118.22-24)
- *God, you have done it this very day! Jesus is the cornerstone of your Kingdom and you are still moving today. It is marvelous in my eyes! I rejoice in your gift of salvation. Amen.*

FRIDAY: ACTS 4.15-20 (NIV)

So they ordered them to withdraw from the Sanhedrin and then conferred together. ¹⁶ "What are we going to do with these men?" they asked. "Everyone living in Jerusalem knows they have performed a notable sign, and we cannot deny it. ¹⁷ 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."

¹⁸ Then they called them in again and commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. ¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, "Which is right in God's eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! ²⁰ As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

- In the face of an undeniably "notable sign" the rulers could only flex their positional power and command Peter and John to cease speaking the name of Jesus. In many ways, this was an admission that they could not argue with visible signs and miracles. They had to hope the movement would die down and that the people would forget the name of Jesus. The Spirit and momentum were on the side of the apostles and they were emboldened to deny the command. The order was contrary to what God had been doing since Pentecost. Are you aware of times that rulers and authorities (or the culture itself) attempts to quiet your faith in Jesus? Are there moments when listening to God leads you to stand your ground and point to Jesus?
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- **Prayer Prompt: “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.” (Luke 19.40)**
- *God, I want to be a part of the small, bold, inspired movement that still sweeps across the world. Give me your breath of inspiration to speak the name of Jesus. Amen.*

SATURDAY: ACTS 4.21-22 (NIV)

After further threats they let them go. They could not decide how to punish them, because all the people were praising God for what had happened. ²² For the man who was miraculously healed was over forty years old.

- Notice the shift in the impact of the crowd from Jesus’ trial (crucify him!) to the arrest of Peter and John (the people were praising God for what had happened). The reaction of the crowd to a healing in Jesus’ name was more powerful than the rulers’ desire to punish them. That’s why it is so important that we remind each other what God has done for us. What are you praising God for today? Who will you share that with?

- **Prayer Prompt: Praise God in his sanctuary;
praise him in his mighty heavens.
² Praise him for his acts of power;
praise him for his surpassing greatness. (Psalm 150.1-2)**
- *God, I praise you for your acts of power. Show me how to share the story of your surpassing greatness. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

Pastor Jacob gave us these points that were distilled from Acts 4.

Conviction always leads to confrontation.

- When has that been true for you? Where do you feel your convictions are being confronted?

Proclamation always leads to persecution.

“Three times Christ designated Satan as the prince of this world. The Bible is clear that either the world’s inhabitants are under the influence of this world with its cunning, deception, and spell; or they are in Christ and under the direction of the Spirit of God. There is no neutral ground.”-Billy Graham

- Do you find these words encouraging? Challenging? Do you find yourself looking for neutral ground?

Inspiration always leads to glorification.

- When have you felt the inspiration of the Holy Spirit? How can your inspired life give glory to God?