

FACILITATOR / TEACHER GUIDE

EMPOWERED

Session 4 – Empowered to Stand

Acts 3:1–4:31

SESSION PURPOSE

This session explores how the Holy Spirit empowers believers to live faithfully and courageously in the world. Participants will examine how Peter and John responded to pressure, opposition, fear, and public scrutiny—not through aggression or panic, but through dependence on God, compassion, prayer, and Spirit-led courage.

The goal of this session is not to create argumentative or confrontational Christianity.

Instead, participants should begin understanding that the Holy Spirit empowers ordinary believers to:

- live visibly faithful lives,
- remain steady during pressure,
- and continue following Jesus courageously in everyday situations.

This session also helps participants explore the difference between:

- Spirit-led courage
and
- fear-driven reaction.

The Holy Spirit forms believers who remain:

- compassionate,
 - truthful,
 - prayerful,
 - and faithful,
even when following Jesus becomes uncomfortable or costly.
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LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- Understand how the Holy Spirit empowers believers for public faithfulness
- Recognize the connection between compassion and witness

- Explore how fear shapes spiritual life and decision-making
 - Reflect on the role of prayer in strengthening courage
 - Identify the difference between biblical courage and hostility
 - Understand that Spirit-led living includes both conviction and humility
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KEY PASSAGES

Primary Passage:

- Acts 3:1–4:31

Supporting Passages:

- Matthew 5:14–16
 - Isaiah 41:10
 - 2 Timothy 1:7
 - Hebrews 10:23–25
 - Ephesians 6:10–18
 - Romans 8:31–39
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SESSION LENGTH

60–75 minutes

(Adaptable depending on group size and discussion depth.)

MATERIALS NEEDED

- Bible (print or digital)
 - Participant Study Guide
 - Pen or journal
 - Comfortable discussion environment
 - Optional whiteboard or notepad for themes
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FACILITATOR PREPARATION

Before leading this session:

- Read Acts 3:1–4:31 slowly several times
- Reflect honestly on situations where fear, pressure, or discomfort affected your willingness to live openly as a Christian
- Prepare for participants carrying:
 - anxiety
 - fear of rejection
 - conflict avoidance
 - spiritual insecurity
 - or painful experiences with aggressive or unhealthy forms of Christianity

Important:

This session is NOT about:

- becoming louder,
- more combative,
- or emotionally intense.

The focus is:

- Spirit-dependent courage,
- compassionate witness,
- prayerful steadiness,
- and faithful presence.

Allow participants space to reflect honestly on fear and uncertainty without shame.

SESSION FLOW (60–75 MINUTES)

1. WELCOME & OPENING PRAYER (5 MINUTES)

Welcome participants and reconnect briefly to the previous session.

Suggested transition:

“Last week we explored how the Holy Spirit strengthens believers during fear and uncertainty. This week we look at how the Spirit empowers believers to live faithfully and courageously in public life.”

Open with prayer.

Suggested prayer focus:

- courage
 - wisdom
 - compassion
 - humility
 - and attentiveness to the Holy Spirit.
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2. OPENING REFLECTION: FEAR & PUBLIC FAITH (10 MINUTES)

Invite thoughtful discussion.

Discussion prompts:

- Why do people often keep faith private?
- What fears most often affect public faithfulness?
- What makes difficult conversations feel uncomfortable?
- What is the difference between courage and aggressiveness?

Facilitator Guidance:

Keep the conversation grounded and personal rather than political or argumentative.

Encourage honesty.

Important:

The goal is not to create “culture war” conversation.

The focus is faithful Christian living shaped by the Holy Spirit.

3. READING THE PRIMARY PASSAGE (5 MINUTES)

Read Acts 3:1–4:31 aloud slowly together.

Encourage participants to notice:

- how Peter and John respond to people
- how they respond to pressure
- and how the Holy Spirit shapes their actions and attitudes.

Optional Reflection Prompt:

“What part of this story stands out most strongly to you?”

4. MOVEMENT 1 – THE HOLY SPIRIT EMPOWERS COMPASSIONATE ACTION (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

The Holy Spirit moves believers toward people with compassion and attentiveness.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 3:1–10
- Matthew 5:14–16

Key Truths:

- Peter and John notice the hurting man rather than ignoring him
- Spirit-led living moves outward toward people
- Compassion becomes part of Christian witness

Key Emphasis:

The miracle begins with attentiveness.

The Holy Spirit does not make believers detached from the world.

The Spirit moves believers toward real people and real needs.

Facilitator Insight:

Many people assume spirituality is primarily inward or emotional.

Acts shows the Spirit producing outward compassion and engagement.

Discussion Questions:

- Why is it easy to overlook people around us?
- How does compassion become part of Christian witness?
- Where might God be inviting us to become more attentive?

5. MOVEMENT 2 – THE HOLY SPIRIT GIVES COURAGE TO SPEAK ABOUT JESUS (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

The Holy Spirit empowers believers to speak truthfully and faithfully even when uncomfortable.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 3:11–16
- Acts 4:18–20
- 2 Timothy 1:7

Key Truths:

- Peter points people toward Jesus, not himself

- Public faithfulness often creates pressure
- Spirit-led courage is rooted in faithfulness rather than personality

Key Emphasis:

Fear loses power when faithfulness becomes more important than self-protection.

Facilitator Guidance:

Avoid turning this into:

- political argument,
- confrontation training,
- or pressure toward performative evangelism.

The deeper issue is:

remaining faithful and truthful while depending on God.

Discussion Questions:

- What fears most often silence people spiritually?
- Why is speaking openly about faith sometimes uncomfortable?
- What does healthy spiritual courage look like?

6. MOVEMENT 3 – THE HOLY SPIRIT STRENGTHENS BELIEVERS THROUGH PRAYER (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

The early Church responds to pressure through prayer rather than panic.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 4:23–31
- Isaiah 41:10

Key Truths:

- The believers pray for boldness, not escape
- Prayer reorients believers toward God's presence
- The Holy Spirit strengthens believers within difficulty

Key Emphasis:

Spirit-led courage grows through:

- prayer
- dependence

- and awareness of God's presence.

Facilitator Insight:

Many Christians instinctively react to fear through:

- anxiety,
- anger,
- defensiveness,
- or withdrawal.

Acts presents another way.

Discussion Questions:

- Why do people often react before praying?
 - How does prayer change the way believers respond to pressure?
 - What helps people remain spiritually steady during uncertainty?
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7. MOVEMENT 4 – THE HOLY SPIRIT FORMS COURAGEOUS COMMUNITIES (10 MINUTES)

Teaching Focus:

The Holy Spirit forms communities that strengthen one another spiritually.

Read Scripture:

- Acts 4:32–35
- Hebrews 10:23–25

Key Truths:

- Courage becomes difficult to sustain alone
- Isolation often increases fear
- Christian community helps believers remain faithful

Key Emphasis:

The Spirit forms communities marked by:

- generosity
- encouragement
- prayer
- and shared purpose.

Facilitator Guidance:

This section should feel hopeful and relational.

Avoid idealizing churches unrealistically.

Acknowledge honestly:

community is imperfect,

but the Holy Spirit still forms believers together.

Discussion Questions:

- Why does isolation often increase fear or discouragement?
 - How can Christian community strengthen faithfulness?
 - What characteristics make a church spiritually healthy and emotionally safe?
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8. SUMMARY & KEY INSIGHT (5 MINUTES)

Key Insight to Emphasize:

The Holy Spirit empowers believers not merely to feel inspired privately, but to live faithfully and courageously in the world.

Spirit-led courage is not:

- hostility,
- fearlessness,
- or spiritual performance.

It is ongoing faithfulness rooted in:

- prayer,
- compassion,
- truth,
- and dependence on God.

Key Takeaway:

The Holy Spirit empowers ordinary believers to remain faithful even when life becomes uncomfortable or uncertain.

9. FINAL REFLECTION & PRACTICE (5 MINUTES)

Final Reflection Question:

What would it look like to respond more prayerfully and faithfully in situations where fear currently shapes your decisions or reactions?

Practice for the Week:

Encourage participants to:

- Read Acts 4:23–31 daily
- Pause before reacting in stressful situations
- Pray:

“Holy Spirit, help me remain faithful here.”

- Practice one intentional act of courage, compassion, or honesty this week

Encourage attentiveness rather than pressure.

CLOSING PRAYER (FACILITATOR-LED)

Pray for:

- courage
- wisdom
- compassion
- steadiness
- and deeper dependence on the Holy Spirit

Suggested emphasis:

Ask God to help participants remain faithful, prayerful, and compassionate in everyday life.

FACILITATOR REMINDER

Do not allow this session to drift toward:

- political debate,
- aggressive apologetics,
- or emotionally performative “boldness.”

The goal is helping participants recognize:

- courage grows through dependence on God,
- compassion and truth belong together,

- and the Holy Spirit strengthens ordinary believers for everyday faithfulness.

If participants leave:

- more thoughtful about fear,
- more open to prayerful dependence,
- and more willing to live faithfully with humility and courage,

then the session has succeeded.

Keep the tone:

- grounded
- pastoral
- reflective
- and centered on Spirit-dependent living.

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