

Session 4



EMPOWERED

Session 4: Empowered to Stand

Primary Scripture

Acts 3:1–4:31

Introduction — Why Faith Often Feels Difficult in Public

Many people find it relatively easy to practice faith privately.

It is easier to:

- pray alone
- read Scripture quietly
- or believe internally

But living faithfully in public is often much harder.

The moment faith becomes visible, many fears begin to surface:

- fear of rejection
- fear of conflict
- fear of criticism
- fear of standing out
- fear of saying the wrong thing
- or fear of not feeling spiritually strong enough

As a result, many Christians quietly separate:

- private belief
from
- public faithfulness

But the Book of Acts presents believers who were empowered by the Holy Spirit to live visibly, courageously, and faithfully in the world around them.

Not perfectly.

Not fearlessly.

But faithfully.

Acts 3 and 4 show us something important:

the Holy Spirit does not merely comfort believers internally.

The Spirit empowers believers to stand faithfully for Jesus in real life.

This session explores an important question:

How does the Holy Spirit give ordinary believers courage to live faithfully in a difficult world?

Because Spirit-led living is not only about private spirituality.

It is also about public faithfulness.

Movement 1 — The Holy Spirit Empowers Compassionate Action

Acts 3 begins with Peter and John encountering a man who had been unable to walk since birth.

Read Scripture: Acts 3:1–10

The man expected money.

Instead, Peter offered something deeper:

“In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!”

The man is healed publicly and dramatically.

But notice something important:

the miracle began with attention and compassion.

Peter first said:

“Look at us.”

The Holy Spirit does not make believers detached from human need.

The Spirit makes believers more attentive to people.

Throughout Acts, the Holy Spirit continually moves believers outward:

- toward suffering
- toward brokenness
- toward people who are overlooked
- and toward opportunities to reveal the love and power of Jesus

This is important because many people assume Spirit-led living is primarily about:

- inward spiritual experiences
- emotional moments
- or private religious feelings

But in Acts, the Spirit repeatedly empowers believers to engage the real needs of real people.

Read Scripture: Matthew 5:14–16

Read Scripture: Galatians 6:9–10

The Holy Spirit does not pull believers away from the world.

The Spirit sends believers into it with compassion, courage, and attentiveness.

Reflection

Where do you tend to overlook people or needs around you in everyday life?

How might the Holy Spirit be inviting you to become more attentive and compassionate?

Movement 2 — The Holy Spirit Gives Courage to Speak About Jesus

After the healing, a crowd gathers in amazement.

Peter immediately begins speaking about Jesus.

Read Scripture: Acts 3:11–16

Notice:

Peter does not draw attention to himself.

He points people toward Christ.

This is one of the clearest signs of the Holy Spirit's work:
the Spirit continually points people toward Jesus.

But this public witness quickly creates opposition.

Read Scripture: Acts 4:1–3

Peter and John are arrested because of their public faithfulness.

This reminds us that Spirit-led living will not always feel comfortable or culturally safe.

The apostles are pressured to stop speaking publicly about Jesus.

Read Scripture: Acts 4:18–20

Their response is remarkable:

“We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard.”

Why were they able to respond with courage?

Not because they were naturally fearless.

But because the Holy Spirit had transformed their priorities.

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

This matters today.

Many Christians want faith to remain:

- private
- safe
- and disconnected from everyday life

But the Holy Spirit continually empowers believers to live visibly and faithfully in the world around them.

Not aggressively.

Not arrogantly.

But courageously.

Reflection

What fears most often keep you from speaking or living openly as a follower of Jesus?

What is the difference between spiritual courage and being argumentative or aggressive?

Movement 3 — The Holy Spirit Strengthens Believers Through Prayer

After being threatened and released, the believers gather together to pray.

Read Scripture: Acts 4:23–31

Notice what they pray for.

They do not pray:

- for comfort

- for easier circumstances
- or for opposition to disappear

Instead, they pray for boldness.

This reveals something deeply important about the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit does not always remove difficulty.

Often, the Spirit strengthens believers within difficulty.

This changes how Christians approach fear and uncertainty.

Many people instinctively respond to pressure through:

- anxiety
- panic
- withdrawal
- anger
- or self-protection

But the early Church responded through prayer.

Prayer reminded them:

- God was still present
- God was still working
- and they were still participating in the mission of Jesus

Read Scripture: 2 Timothy 1:7

Read Scripture: Isaiah 41:10

The Holy Spirit does not produce panic.

The Spirit produces:

- courage
- steadiness
- wisdom
- and endurance

And importantly:

Acts says they were filled again with the Holy Spirit.

This reminds us that dependence on the Spirit is not a one-time event.

Believers continually need:

- renewal
- strengthening
- guidance
- and awareness of God's presence

Spirit-dependent living is ongoing.

Reflection

How do you usually respond when you feel pressure, fear, or uncertainty?

What would it look like to respond more prayerfully instead of reactively?

Movement 4 — The Holy Spirit Forms Courageous Communities

Acts 4 does not describe isolated spirituality.

The believers stood together.

Read Scripture: Acts 4:32–35

The Spirit formed a community marked by:

- unity
- generosity
- courage
- and shared purpose

This matters because courage becomes difficult to sustain alone.

Isolation often strengthens fear.

Healthy Christian community helps believers:

- remain faithful

- encourage one another
- pray for one another
- and continue following Jesus when life becomes difficult

Read Scripture: Hebrews 10:23–25

Read Scripture: Ecclesiastes 4:9–12

The Holy Spirit forms communities where believers strengthen one another spiritually.

And importantly:

their courage was not hostile or combative.

Acts does not portray Spirit-filled believers as:

- harsh
- arrogant
- reactionary
- or obsessed with winning arguments

The Spirit produced:

- conviction with humility
- truth with love
- courage with compassion
- and faithfulness without fear

This is important in every generation.

Christian courage is not about domination.

It is about faithful witness.

Reflection

Who helps strengthen your faith and courage right now?

How can Christian community help people remain faithful in difficult seasons?

A Note on Spirit-Led Courage

Some people assume courage means:

- never feeling fear
- always feeling confident
- or having strong personalities

But biblical courage is different.

The courage produced by the Holy Spirit is not personality-driven.

It grows from:

- dependence on God
- awareness of His presence
- prayer
- and trust that Jesus is still at work

The goal is not to become loud or impressive.

The goal is to remain faithful.

The Holy Spirit empowers ordinary believers to stand faithfully in everyday life:

- at home
- at work
- in relationships
- in hardship
- and in moments where following Jesus requires courage.

Formation Practice (This Week)

Practice: Small Acts of Faithful Courage

Each day this week:

Step 1 — Read Slowly

Read Acts 4:23–31 slowly each day.

Pay attention to:

- what the believers prayed for

- how they responded to fear
- and how the Holy Spirit strengthened them

Step 2 — Identify One Fear

Each day, honestly identify one fear that influences:

- your decisions
- your relationships
- your faith
- or your willingness to live openly as a Christian

Step 3 — Pray for Faithfulness

Instead of praying only for circumstances to change, pray:

“Holy Spirit, help me remain faithful in this situation.”

Step 4 — Practice One Small Act of Courage

Choose one intentional act of faithfulness:

- speak honestly
- encourage someone
- pray with someone
- apologize
- tell the truth
- show compassion publicly
- or take a step you have been avoiding

Do not aim for dramatic.

Aim for faithful.

Living It Out

What fear currently has the strongest influence over your life?

Where might the Holy Spirit be inviting you to greater courage or faithfulness?

What is one practical step of Spirit-led courage you can take this week?

Final Reflection

The early Church was not fearless.

They were Spirit-dependent.

And because they depended on the Holy Spirit, they were able to remain faithful even when life felt uncertain or difficult.

The Holy Spirit still empowers believers today:

- to speak truthfully
- to live courageously
- to love compassionately
- and to remain faithful in a fearful world

The question is not:

“Will I ever feel afraid?”

The question is:

“Will fear or faithfulness shape my response?”

Weekly Prayer

Holy Spirit,

When fear begins to shape my thinking,
remind me that I am not alone.

Give me courage where I feel uncertain,
wisdom where I feel overwhelmed,
and compassion where I become self-protective.

Help me remain faithful to Jesus
in both small moments and difficult ones.

Teach me to depend on Your presence
more than my own strength.

Amen.