**Sermon Based Community Group Leader Guide**

**Acts 3:1-4:31**

**\* Read Acts 3:1-4:31. Open in Prayer.**

**\* Sermon Overview**

In this sermon, Pastor Aaron will emphasize that God designs a new community, “the church,” for His mission. His outline will be something like the following: living with a new purpose, know what you don’t have, know whom you have, and living the call of Jesu. As you listen to this sermon, ask yourself: How am I living on mission? Am I a witness who continually proclaims the name of Jesus to others?

**\* Prompt Questions**

1. Was there anything that stood out to you in the pastor’s sermon? Are there any clarifying questions that you may have regarding the sermon?

2. How have you been seeking to apply the sermon in your own life this week? Or, what is one way that you can apply the sermon to your life this week?

3. What was the take away from the sermon for you? If you had to sum up the main idea of the sermon in one sentence, what would it be? What main themes do you see in the text and did you hear in the sermon?

4. How have you seen God at work this week in your life and in the lives of those around you? How has God been working in you this week through His Word, through prayer, through the body of Christ, and through service/evangelism? What were the highlights and lowlights of your week? How can we be praying for you specifically?

**\* Observation/Interpretation Questions[[1]](#footnote-1)**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to get through every one of these questions. I have given them in hopes that they will drive us back to the text so that we may diligently search the Scriptures as the Bereans did (Acts 17:10-15). These questions will give us a grasp of what the text says/means so that we can apply the text to our lives. I would encourage you to spend the majority of your time on application questions so that we can become “doers of the Word and not hearers only” (James 1:22).

**1. What is the context of Acts 3:1-4:31?**

*Luke wrote Luke and Acts (written around A.D. 62) to Theophilus in order to give him an accurate account of the life, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus and to tell how Jesus continues to work through Spirit-empowered witnesses to carry the gospel to the end of the earth without hindrance and with boldness. Acts 1:8 serves as the theme verse of the book and as the outline for the book, for chapters 1-7 focus on Jerusalem, chapters 8-12 focus on Judea and Samaria, and chapters 13-28 focus on the end of the earth. The risen Lord sends His Spirit to empower followers of the Way to be witnesses who proclaim the kingdom of God to the end of the earth.*

*As God’s new community for mission, Acts 3:1-4:31 provides a glimpse into the rising tension that the church faces in Jerusalem due to the name of Jesus. Peter and John heal a man on their way to pray in the temple, which leads to another opportunity for Peter to proclaim the name of Jesus. In response to this preaching in the name of Jesus, Peter and John are arrested, interrogated, and threatened upon their release to not speak anymore in the name of Jesus. Yet, Peter continually proclaims the name of Jesus with boldness throughout this event, and upon their release, they gather with the church to pray for boldness to speak the name/gospel of Jesus in spite of rising persecution. In short, the name of Jesus dominates this passage from beginning to end, being mentioned 9 times (vv. 3:6, 3:16 [2x], 4:7, 4:10, 4:12, 4:17, 4:18, 4:30).*

*For accounts that show the healing ministry of Jesus (for similar healing stories, see Luke 5:17-26; 7:22) continuing in the lives of Peter and Paul, see Acts 3:1-10; Acts 14:8-11.*

**2. What is going on in Acts 3:1-10?**

*In these verses, Peter and John head to the temple at 3 in the afternoon, which was a normal time for prayer (with two other times of prayer being in the morning and evening). As Peter and John were on the way to the temple, a lame man, who was over 40 years old, asked Peter and John to give him alms. Rather than give him money, Peter and John healed the man in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, with Peter’s declaration, “I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesu Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!” After uttering these words, Peter took the lame man by the hand and raised him up. The lame man’s feet and ankles were made strong immediately so that he began walking, leaping, and praising God, which led to the people being filled with wonder and amazement at what happened to the lame man.*

*Note that the use of the word for “leap” (in verse 8) connects us to Isaiah 35:5-6, which is a passage that points to the messianic age (also, see Luke 7:18-23). Also, note that the one who for many years had been barred from entrance to the temple because of his disability is now able to enter the temple. His physical healing is a sign that points to spiritual healing/redemption that can be found in the name of Jesus Christ.*

*How do healings/miracles attest to the validity and power of the gospel message? What is your response when you see the power of God at work in your life or in the lives of those around you?*

*John Polhill writes, “In Acts the miracles are always in the service of the word. They are ‘signs’ in the sense that they point beyond themselves to the ultimate power of the gospel message of Christ’s resurrection and the salvation that is in him.” He writes, “In Acts the miracles were always in the service of the word, confirming God’s presence in the spread of the gospel or as a sign that enabled faith.”*

*ESV Study Bible: “To heal in the name of Jesus is to invoke his power and presence.”*

*Derek Thomas writes, “What we can conclude is that miracles of this kind provide us with a glimpse of the world to come. They are signs of the re-created order of things. To those who experience disability in this world, there is the promise that in the world to come they will enjoy the liberty and blessing of a new body. In our resurrection bodies, every last trace of what sin has done will be gone forever.” He continues, “These miracles—the ones performed in Jesus’ own ministry and those done by the apostles in his name—both authenticate Jesu as the Messiah and provide us a picture of what Jesus had come to do.”*

**3. What is going on in Acts 3:11-26?**

*The healing of the lame man draws a crowd around Peter and John. Peter seizes this opportunity proclaim the name of Christ and to call the Jews to faith in the name of Christ. In verses 11-16, Peter explains how the name of Jesus brings about the healing of this lame man, and in verses 17-26, Peter calls for the Jews to repent and place their faith in the name of Jesus, appealing to Scriptural proofs (see Deuteronomy 18:15-19; 2 Samuel 7:12-16; Genesis 22:18).*

*Note the titles that Peter ascribes to Jesus in this sermon: (1) Jesus is called God’s servant (v. 13); (2) Jesus is called the Holy and Righteous One (v. 14); (3) Jesus is called the Author of Life (v. 15); (4) Jesus is the greater than Moses Prophet (vv. 22-23); (5) Jesus is the greater than David King (v. 24); (6) Jesus is the Savior of the World, our High Priest (vv. 25-26).*

*Note the actions of the Jews that Peter points to in this sermon: (1) You delivered Jesus over to Pilate and denied Jesus in the presence of Pilate (v. 13); (2) You denied the Holy and Righteous One, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you (v. 14; also, see Luke 23:13-25); (3) You killed the Author of Life (v. 15); (4) You acted in ignorance (v. 17); (5) Finally, Peter gives this warning: If you do not believe in Jesus, you will be cut off from the people of God (v. 23).*

*Note these elements of Peter’s sermon: (1) Peter’s sermon is Christ-centered. Rather than take credit for the healing, Peter calls people to place their attention on the rightful object of our faith/wonder/amazement: Jesus Christ; (2) Peter’s sermon is Word-saturated. Throughout his sermon, Peter draws from Old Testament texts/allusions to show that Jesus is the Messiah; (3) Peter’s sermon calls for a response. He calls for the Jews to repent and believe in Jesus, for if they do not, then they will be cut off from the people of God. If they repent and believe in Jesu, their sins will be blotted out, times of refreshing will come, and hope/joy will be theirs in Christ in the new heaven and new earth. In this sermon, Peter reminds us redemption comes through the power and piety of Jesus Christ alone, and restoration comes through the name of Jesus Christ alone.*

*For background texts to the servant title, see Isaiah 52:13-53:12; 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; Jeremiah 11:19; Daniel 9:26; Zechariah 13:7; Psalms 22; 69. For other New Testament allusions to the Suffering Servant imagery, see Mark 10:45; 14:24; Luke 22:37; John 12:38; Acts 8:32; 1 Peter 2:21-24. For other texts to the Holy and Righteous One title, see Mark 1:24; John 6:69; 1 John 2:20; Revelation 3:7. For other texts related to the Author of Life title, see John 1:1-18; Colossians 1:16-17; Hebrews 2:10; 12:1-2. For a parallel passage to the blotting out of sins, see Colossians 2:14. For Jesus as the greater Prophet than Moses, see Deuteronomy 18:15-19; Leviticus 23:29. For Samuel’s prophecy, see 2 Samuel 7:12-16. For blessing to all, see Genesis 12:3; 22:18; 26:4. For distinction between sins of ignorance and sins of high-handedness/intentionality, see Numbers 15:22-31; 17:30; 1 Cor 2:8; 1 Tim 1:13 (also, see Luke 23:34). .*

*A. A. Whiddington writes, “Not I, but Christ, be honored, loved, exalted; Not I, but Christ, be seen, be known, be heard; Not I, but Christ, in every look and action; Not I, but Christ, in every thought and word.”*

*Derek Thomas writes, “What Pentecost had begun, and what the healing of the cripple had further evidenced, was the anticipation (and certainty) of the day of glory, the dawning of the new heavens and new earth in the consummation of the purposes of God.” He continues, “What, specifically, is repentance? It consists of two primary elements. First, repentance is a recognition of the offense that sin is to God….Second, repentance involves turning away from sin in the light of the gracious provisions of God. It is a turning away from sin and toward God—toward the merciful arms that are held out to the truly penitent. Salvation is a salvation from sin. It involves more than forgiveness. It includes our sanctification and must, therefore, engage us in turning away ‘from your wickedness’ (Acts 3:26). Salvation without such turning is a spurious repentance. Repentance is necessary, but it is not the basis on which forgiveness is given; rather it is the sign of the genuineness of the faith that lays hold of Jesus Christ.”*

**4. What is going on in Acts 4:1-22?**

*In this passage, Peter and John are arrested and interrogated (vv. 1-12) and warned and released (vv. 13-22). Peter and John were arrested because they were treaching in the name of Jesus and proclaiming the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, which irritated the Sadducees who did not believe in resurrection. Though Peter and John were arrested, interrogated, persecuted, threatened, and warned, the word of God (or the message of the gospel) went forward in great power and with great fruit, as about 5000 men came to faith in Christ (v. 4).*

*At the trial, Annas, who was the former high priest from A.D. 6-15, Caiphas (Annas’s son-in-law), who was the current high priest from A.D. 18-36, and the rest of the of the Sanhedrin (a group of 71 religious leaders who made up this judicial body) gathered to interrogate and threaten Peter and John. The Sanhedrin began the interrogation with this question: “By what power or by what name did you do this?” (v. 7; also see connected question in Acts 3:12: “Men of Israel, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we have made him walk?”) In response to this question, Peter responds that by the name of Jesus this man has been healed and by the name of Jesus alone, whom you crucified and God raised from the dead, you can be saved (vv. 8-12). In giving this call for response, Peter once again grounds his proclamation in the truth of the Old Testament texts (see Psalm 118:22). In response to the boldness of Peter and John who had been with Jesus and the evidence of the healed lame man standing before them, the Sanhedrin can only give a warning that they not speak in the name of Jesu anymore, for they fear the response of the people if they do more than give this warning (Note that the religious leaders continually act out of fear of people rather than fear of God; for example, see Matt 14:5; 21:26, 46; Luke 19:48; 22:2; Acts 4:21; 5:26; John 12:42-43). Peter responded to this warning by declaring that they could only do what God had commanded them to do, which is to be witnesses of what they have seen and heard (vv 19-20). Upon hearing this response, the Sanhedrin threatened them more before releasing them, and upon release, Peter and John gathered with the believers in Jerusalem to pray for continued boldness to proclaim the name of Christ despite persecution and opposition.*

*For teaching of Jesus related to coming persecution, see Luke 12:11-12; 21:12-19; John 15:18-25. For stone imagery, see Psalm 118:22; Isaiah 28:16; Luke 20:17; 1 Peter 2:7. For exclusivity of Jesus, see Matthew 11:27; John 3:18; 14:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 2:3; 1 John 5:12. For growth of early church, see Acts 1:15; 2:41; 4:4.*

*Tony Merida noted that the Sanhedrin ask, “What must we do to keep power?’ rather than asking “What must we do to be saved?”*

*Derek Thomas writes, “In the next three chapters of Acts, we will see three waves of opposition unfold. Here, in this chapter, it is opposition coming from the outside that needs to be resisted by faith in Jesus Christ. In the next chapter, it will be hypocrisy from within the community of faith itself that will emerge—the story of Ananias and Sapphira. This internal problem will need to be dealt with quickly and decisively. In chapter 6 of Acts, opposition will come in the form of division within the church, a division that is the result of jealousy and a sense of unfair treatment by one section of the community over the other. It will require both patience and wisdom to resolve. In every instance of opposition, however, the work is that of Satan, attempting to destroy the kingdom of God. He has but a limited repertorie, and learning his malevolent schemes will enable us to discern his activity in our own time. Satan may employ the emergence of theological error, or sudden fall of a brother or sister into notorious sin, or a distressing case of church bickering; but as serious as all of these are, we are never to lose sight of the fact that Jesu Christ is in control of his church. We are to remain confident that he spiritual weapons we are to employ in our warfare are able to destroy whatever Satan may put in our path.”*

**5. What is going on in Acts 4:23-31?**

*Upon release from custody, Peter and John gathered with believers to pray for boldness to speak in name of Jesus in the face of rising persecution and opposition. The prayer in verses 24-30 contain these elements: (1) Acknowledgement of God’s sovereignty and power (2) Meditation and reflection upon God’s Word, specifically Psalm 2; (3) Request for God’s presence and power to be bold witnesses for Christ. In response to this prayer, God filled the believers with the Spirit, who empowered them “to speak the word of God with boldness.”*

*For a parallel passage to this prayer, see Hezekiah’s prayer in 2 Kings 19:14-19; Isaiah 37:14-20. Yet, note this difference: Hezekiah prayer for deliverance from the threat; the disciples prayed for boldness to be faithful in the midst of the threat/persecution.*

*Of the “filling of the Spirit,” John Polhill writes, “It was a fresh filling, a renewed awareness of the Spirit’s power and presence in their life and witness. This was not an ephemeral ecstatic manifestation but a fresh endowment of power for witness that would continue.”*

*Of the “filling of the Spirit,” Derek Thomas writes, “It seems that Luke wants us to appreciate a special and particular filling of the Holy Spirit that enables Peter to meet the circumstances he now faces. It is because Peter is filled with the Spirit that he is able to face his circumstances with courage and boldness.” He continues, “In one sense, every believer is ‘filled’ with the Spirit and ‘baptized’ with the Spirit. If we do not have the Spirit, then we are not believers, and we are not in communion with the risen Jesus Christ (Romans 8:9). Nevertheless, Paul can make the exhortation, ‘Be filled with the Spirit’ (Ephesians 5:18), implying that there is to be an ongoing and continual filling, made all the more necessary in opportunities for proclaiming the gospel. The sense here is not a once-and-for-all filling experience, either at conversion or at some time subsequent to it. Rather, it is an exhortation to a continual filling. Here in Acts 4, it would seem that the filling is to be understood as meeting the particular demands placed upon the apostles by their imprisonment. In the hour of trial, the Spirit enables us to persevere amid forces of opposition. The Spirit is our Helper (see John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), just as Jesu had promised in the upper room. In evangelistic opportunities when we are uncertain about what to say, the Holy Spirit promises to help us. In circumstances where we might think we have no ability to endure, the Holy Spirit will come and fill us and energize us.” He concludes, “What is of special interest in the cases Luke describes is that the additional empowering by the Holy Spirit always enabled the disciples to witness and speak. These ordinary men and women, with no particular learning or training, without any evangelistic methods, were enabled to speak because they were filled with the Spirit. By the power of the Spirit, they were prepared to face opposition, beatings, imprisonments, and even death. They were convinced of the truth of the gospel, and they could not be kept quiet. Their hearts burned within them for the lost, as they longed for others to know the same Savior that they had come to know and love.”*

**\* Application Questions**

Note: Please do not feel compelled to use every question, for you will have time for 3 to 5 questions. I’ve tried to offer enough for you to pick the ones you think will best fit your group, as you know what your ladies or men are going through at this time and may need to hear. Also, please note that these questions might be adjusted to reflect what the pastor calls us to do in application of the sermon.

1. Here are some good questions to reflect on in every passage (these are from Danny Akin):

A. What does this passage teach me about God?

B. What does this passage teach me about man?

C. What does this passage teach me about Christ?

D. What does this passage want me to know?

E. What does this passage call me to do?

2. Here are some good questions to reflect on and act on this week (these were passed along to me by Pastor Aaron and Dr. Jones):

A. What do you take as the main theme from this sermon?

B. What have you learned today about Jesus’ character that has affected you daily?

C. Do you have any clarifying questions concerning the sermon?

D. What did the Holy Spirit convict you of because of His Word today?

E. Will you ask forgiveness and what will you change?

F. Will you be willing this week to pass on to someone else what you’re learning about Jesus? How will you be intentional this week to do so?

3. In his book, Asking the Right Questions, Matthew Harmon gives the following instructions/questions for understanding and applying the Bible:

A. Understanding the Bible

1. What do we learn about God?

a. Look for God’s character (who he is, what he is like).

b. Look for God’s conduct (what he is doing).

c. Look for God’s concerns (what things, events, people, he is concerned about).

2. What do we learn about people?

a. Look for aspects of what it means to be created in God’s image.

b. Look for the fallen condition.

c. Look for how God’s people should live.

3. What do we learn about relating to God?

a. Look for things to praise and thank God for.

b. Look for sin to confess and repent.

c. Look for promises and truths to believe.

4. What do we learn about relating to others?

a. Look for how we should interact with and treat others.

b. Look for ways to pursue reconciliation with others.

c. Look for specific ways to love, serve, and care for others.

B. Applying the Bible

1. What does God want me to think/understand?

2. What does God want me to believe?

3. What does God want me to desire?

4. What does God want me to do?

4. In this sermon, Pastor Aaron touched on the church in community in Acts 2:42-47. Pastor Scott emphasizes that there are four commitments of community groups to be found in these verses: growth (Bible study and prayer), relationship (knowing others and being known by others), love (meeting of needs), and mission/multiply (disciples making disciples). In your community group, how are you doing with each of these commitments? How can you as a community group grow in each of these commitments over the next month, 6 months, and 1 year?

5. When was the last time you saw God do amazing things in someone’s life? What was your response to seeing the power/grace/mercy/work of God at work in their life?

6. What does Peter include in his sermon in Acts 2:11-26? From reading this sermon, what would we want to make sure that we include in gospel conversations with unbelievers? What did Peter say about Jesus? What does Peter call the people to do in light of who they are and what they have done? What is faith and who is our faith to be placed in?

7. Every week in this study of Acts we will have the opportunity to talk about unbelievers we are having gospel conversations with in our lives. So, who did you have a chance to be a witness to this week? What unbelieving family members, coworkers, and friends can we be praying for this week: that the Father would draw them to himself, that the Spirit would convict their hearts of sin and prepare them to surrender to Christ, that the Spirit would provide opportunities for you to have gospel conversations with them, and that the Spirit would give you boldness to speak the gospel when He gives opportunities for you to share the gospel?

8. What does Acts 4:1-31 teach believers about how they are to respond in the face of warnings, threats, and persecution? What temptations/distractions do we face as witnesses of Jesus Christ that might keep us from being faithful witnesses?

9. In Acts 4:13, Luke tells us that the Sanhedrin recognized that Peter and John “had been with Jesus.” Can people recognize that we have been with Jesus? How is your walk with Jesus going? Why is your personal walk with Jesus important to your witness for Jesus? How can we as a community group help one another walk with Jesus? In terms of discipling relationships, what does Jesus’ example of sharing his life with the disciples teach us in regards to how we are to be making disciples?

10. How do you see the fear of man play out in your Christian life? How does fear of God help us be faithful witnesses? How does a daily experience of life with Jesus bring boldness to share what we have seen/heard/experienced?

11. After Peter and John have been threatened to stop speaking in the name of Jesus, they immediately gather with other believers to pray for boldness to continue speaking about the name of Jesus. What do you notice about the prayers of the disciples in Acts 4:23-31? Do you ever pray with other believers for God to give you boldness to speak about His name/gospel to others? Take time to pray for God to grant you boldness to speak of the name/gospel of Jesus this week.

**\* Sermon Take Away**

God designs a new community, the church, for His mission.

**\* Bible Reading Plan**

1. Monday—1 Corinthians 8; 1 Samuel 27

2. Tuesday—1 Corinthians 9; 1 Samuel 28

3. Wednesday—1 Corinthians 10; 1 Samuel 29-30

4. Thursday—1 Corinthians 11; 1 Samuel 31

5. Friday—1 Corinthians 12; 2 Samuel 1

6. Saturday—1 Corinthians 13; 2 Samuel 2

7. Sunday—1 Corinthians 14; 2 Samuel 3

**\* Unhindered: A Study of Acts (Part 1)**

1. October 1st –Acts 4:32-5:11

2. October 8th –Acts 5:12-42

3. October 15th –Acts 6:1-7

4. October 22nd –Acts 6:8-8:3

5. October 29th –Acts 8:4-40

6. November 5th –Acts 9:1-31

7. November 12th –Acts 9:32-11:18

8. November 19th—Acts 11:19-30

**\* Advent 2017 (Passages are Likely to Change)**

1. November 26th—Luke 1:1-25

2. December 3rd—Luke 1:26-38

3. December 10th—Luke 1:39-56

4. December 17th—Luke 1:57-80

5. December 24th—Luke 2:1-21

**\* Unhindered: A Study of Acts (Part 2)**

1. January 7th—Acts 12 (Herod’s Persecution and Death/No government can stop God’s church)

2. January 14th—Acts 13-14

3. January 21st—Acts 15:1-35

4. January 28th—Acts 15:36-16:5

5. February 4th—Acts 16:6-40

6. February 11th—Acts 17:1-15

7. February 18th—Acts 17:16-34

8. February 25th—Acts 18:1-23

9. March 4th—Acts 18:24-28

10. March 11th—Acts 19:1-41

11. March 18th—Acts 20:1-16

12. March 25th—Acts 20:17-30

--. April 1st (Easter Sunday)

13. April 8th—Acts 21:1-26

14. April 15th—Acts 21:27-22:29

15. April 22nd—Acts 22:30-23:35

16. April 29th—Acts 24:1-27

17.May 6th—Acts 25:1-12

18. May 13th (Mother’s Day)—Acts 25:13-26:32

19. May 20th—Acts 27:1-44

20. May 27th (Memorial Day Weekend)—Acts 28:1-31

1. For this discussion guide, I used the following resources: Darrell Bock, *Acts;* I. Howard Marshall, *Acts*; F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*; John B. Polhill, *Acts*; Derek Thomas, *Acts*; R. Kent Hughes, *Acts*; R. C. Sproul, *Acts*; John Stott, *The Spirit, the Church, and the World: The Message of* Acts; Tony Merida, *Exalting Jesu in* Acts; ESV *Study Bible*; *NIV Zondervan Study Bible.*  [↑](#footnote-ref-1)