

(b) How do you suppose Barnabas received his nickname?
(c) Can you discover any aspects of the life style of the early Christian community that could be very difficult to carry out indefinitely. [Clue: What were they doing that could eventually deplete their resources?] (d) How many of the customs of the early church offer us a good model for modern believers to follow? How might we be motivated to follow their example?

An Interactive Life Application Bible Study of the Acts of the Apostles for Small Groups

Key: *Blue* = New Testament *Red* = Words of Jesus
Green = Old Testament Quotes

Lesson 5

1. Background: Peter and John had been arrested and called before the Jewish Council after the Holy Spirit enabled them to heal a man who had been crippled from birth. They spoke boldly declaring that this miracle was accomplished through the name of Jesus, the only name by which there is salvation for all who believe.

2. The Jewish Council responds to Peter and John's defense of the healing of the crippled man at the Temple.

Acts 4:13 The members of the council were amazed when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, for they could see that they were ordinary men with no special training in the Scriptures. They also recognized them as men who had been with Jesus.¹⁴ But since they could see the man who had been healed standing right there among them, there was nothing the council could say.

3. Discussion: (a) What is the real explanation as to why Peter and John were so wise and so bold? (b) What was the most convincing evidence that a great miracle had taken place by the power of the Holy Spirit?

4. The Council deliberates and issues an order.

¹⁵ So the council ordered Peter and John out of the . . . chamber and conferred among themselves.¹⁶ "What should we do with these men?" they asked each other. "We can't deny that they have performed a miraculous sign, and everybody in Jerusalem knows about it."¹⁷ But to keep them from spreading their propaganda any further, we must warn them not to speak to anyone in Jesus' name again."¹⁸ So they called the apostles back in and commanded them never again to speak or teach in the name of Jesus.

Scripture taken from the
Holy Bible, New Living Translation (NLT) copyright © 1996, 2004
by Tyndale Charitable Trust.
Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers.

Study Guide Copyright © 2011 David B. Fenwick
Published and Distributed by **Yeshua Glow, Inc.**
5718 Monterey Road, Los Angeles, CA 90042

¹⁹ But Peter and John replied, “Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him?” ²⁰ We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard.”

²¹ The council then threatened them further, but they finally let them go because they didn’t know how to punish them without starting a riot. For everyone was praising God ²² for this miraculous sign—the healing of a man who had been lame for more than forty years.

4. Discussion: (a) Did it make good sense for the counsel to try to stop the spread of “propaganda” based on a genuine miraculous sign? Why? Or why not? (b) When Peter said, “Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him?” was it right for them to disobey the Jewish council? [Note: Paul later wrote: *Everyone must submit to governing authorities. For all authority comes from God. . . .*” (Romans 13:1)] (c) Why did the council fear they might start a riot if they took severe action against Peter and John?

5. The Believers Pray for Courage

^{Acts 4:23-31} As soon as they were freed, Peter and John returned to the other believers and told them what the leading priests and elders had said. ²⁴ When they heard the report, all the believers lifted their voices together in prayer to God: “O Sovereign Lord, Creator of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them—²⁵ you spoke long ago by the Holy Spirit through our ancestor David, your servant, saying,

‘Why were the nations so angry?

Why did they waste their time with futile plans?

²⁶ The kings of the earth prepared for battle;

the rulers gathered together

against the LORD

and against his Messiah.’^[e]

²⁷ “In fact, this has happened here in this very city! For Herod Antipas, Pontius Pilate the governor, the Gentiles, and the people of Israel were all united against Jesus, your holy servant, whom you anointed. ²⁸ But everything they did was determined beforehand according to your will. ²⁹ And now, O Lord, hear their threats, and give us, your servants, great boldness in preaching your word. ³⁰ Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus.”

³¹ After this prayer, the meeting place shook, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they preached the word of God with boldness.

6. Discussion: (a) How did the believers respond after they received the report of Peter and John concerning the warnings from the council? (b) How do you think they might have responded if their faith had been weak? (c) Carefully look over the prayer of the believers. What subjects did they include? What is surprising about the way they prayed? (d) How do the results of their prayer give evidence that they prayed in harmony with God’s will?

7. The Believers Share Their Possessions

^{Acts 4:32-37} All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. ³³ The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God’s great blessing was upon them all. ³⁴ There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them ³⁵ and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.

³⁶ For instance, there was Joseph, the one the apostles nicknamed Barnabas (which means “Son of Encouragement”). He was from the tribe of Levi and came from the island of Cyprus. ³⁷ He sold a field he owned and brought the money to the apostles.

8. Discussion: (a) Name at least three things that were part of the life style of the early community of believers?