



# THIN RED LINE

Volume 4

**Tracing God's  
Amazing Story  
of Redemption  
Through Scripture**

## “THIN RED LINE” SERIES

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*Thin Red Line, Volume 2*

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# THIN RED LINE

Volume 4

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Through Scripture**

KIMBERLY  
SOWELL



**NEW HOPE  
PUBLISHERS**  
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## DEDICATION

I wish to dedicate the "Thin Red Line" series to my wonderful church family, Second Baptist Church in Lancaster, South Carolina. Thank you for stepping out in faith as a church to experience God's *thin red line* of redemption together for a year of study. I love you all, and I appreciate your firm stand on the Word of God, your fervent love for Jesus Christ, and your heart that beats for missions. May God continue to bless Second Baptist Church as we move forward to bring glory to His name.

And for each church, Bible study group, and individual who will read this book and journey along the *Thin Red Line*, may God enrich your walk with Christ and positively flood your heart and mind with His glorious redeeming love.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Every book has its own birth story. The “Thin Red Line” series was born out of my home church’s desire to understand fully how all the pieces of the Bible come together to paint one breathtaking picture of redemption. I can tell you that through my personal experience of journeying this *thin red line*, my walk with Christ has been taken to a new level because of my strengthened understanding of what God did to save my soul, and I adore Him all the more. I am excited about what God is going to do in your life and in your church because of this journey you are about to take through redemption’s story.

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I’ve tried to go back to the very beginning and retrace the steps of how this book series came into being. I can’t remember if it first happened in my office, or my pastor’s office; perhaps it was in the executive pastor’s office . . . But I remember discussions about the life-changing power of the Word of God. I recall that our hearts were beating rapidly and our voices were escalating with excitement as we began to dream about what could happen if each person in our church began studying together, digging for ourselves to catch the “big picture” of Scripture. We started envisioning the spiritual growth and Bible literacy that God would bring to our people if we started in Genesis and marched through Scripture to thread together the evidence of God’s plan from the very beginning—that God would send a Savior to save sin-wrecked humanity.

This church-wide emphasis coupled with the writing process required many people working together for a common purpose to make the “Thin Red Line” series a reality. Our church body embraced this 52-week journey as we studied together. Our weekly Bible study

groups studied one lesson per week. Our pastor delivered sermons to reinforce and more fully develop where we were in the timeline as we studied redemption's history together. This was no isolated program; this was the theme of our church for an entire year, and we were blown away with how God transformed us through the power of His Word.

**So many people are deserving of thanks:**

Dr. Brian Saxon, pastor: Thank you, Pastor Brian, for being willing to take a risk and do something so "out of the box" for the sake of our church family's spiritual growth. Your desire for each person to know and understand God's plan of redemption ushered us to a deeper appreciation for God's great love for all of us.

Marshall Fagg, executive pastor: Preacher Marshall, thank you for helping to shape the vision and develop a format that made this study effective for everyone. Your doctrinal oversight and words of encouragement each week blessed me every step of the way. Whenever you teach God's Word, I am challenged by how deeply you love Jesus Christ.

Denise Johnston, LifeGroup director: Thank you, Denise, for providing leadership to our LifeGroup leaders and paving the way for an out-of-the-ordinary, yet extraordinary year of study. I appreciate your patience and the hard work you put into this process.

Kristie Taylor, editor: Kristie, I knew I could always count on your keen eye and wordsmithing abilities each week. Thank you not

only for the editorial input but also the spiritual feedback to sharpen each lesson and encourage me as a writer.

Melanie Sanders, Pat Nobles, and Beth Center, administrative assistants: Thank you for your important role in getting the materials into the hands of our people each week, and always leading with a servant's heart. I appreciate your spirit of cooperation and kindness!

Small-Group Bible Study Leaders: To every leader who accepted the challenge to undergo a shift in how our church experienced small-group Bible studies, thank you for your willingness to stretch, grow, and embrace change. I thank God for the love and leadership that you provide each week as you connect with your small group with the heart of an undershepherd.

The Second Baptist Church Family: Writing this series was my distinct honor because I knew God was allowing me to connect with your lives at a very personal level: your love relationship with Jesus Christ. Thank you for your words of encouragement, your weekly study of God's Word, your celebration of biblical discoveries, and your willingness to live life together with everyone in our church family. I love you very much.

And as always, I want to extend a special thank you to New Hope Publishers team: for your firm commitment to provide Bible study materials that allow the Holy Spirit to be the teacher of each man and woman who opens the Scripture with a willing heart. I love your clarity of vision, and I am honored to partner with you.



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# INTRODUCTION

## FOLLOW THE SIGNS THAT LEAD TO THE CROSS

What are the Bible stories you remember from childhood? We all have our favorites. Noah's ark. Moses and the bulrushes, Moses and the burning bush, and Moses parting the Red Sea. David and Goliath. Abraham and Isaac. But which story comes first? What is the chronological order? And who was it that fought the battle of Jericho? Where do the judges fit into the Old Testament? When did the prophets come into the picture, and how do they fit into the rest of the Old Testament? When did Israel become a nation, and why is that even important? And can anyone give a clear explanation of how the Old Testament is linked to the New Testament?

If you are one of the blessed individuals who has had exposure to the Bible for much of your life, you could probably sit down with a blank sheet of paper and write down a long list of Bible stories you've studied in your lifetime. You may even be able to jot down a moral or biblical truth to correlate with each story. But so often our Bible study approach can be piecemeal and disjointed, jumping from one text to the next, that we find ourselves possessing an enormous pile of exquisite threads, appreciating each one for its individual beauty, yet unable to weave them together to see the intricate tapestry that is God's big picture.

The "Thin Red Line" series is an opportunity to start at the beginning in the Garden of Eden and walk chronologically through the Bible, tracing the link of commonality found in every book of the Bible: redemption. From beginning to end, God's Word points us to the Cross. The evidence is striking. The benefits reaped from the "Thin Red Line" series are many:

**You'll be overwhelmed by God's intentionality.** Looking at Scripture passages with one particular focus, God's plan of redemption, will show how He has painstakingly dropped evidence like breadcrumbs through time, leading to the Cross. In fact, throughout this study you'll find that sometimes God left breadcrumbs, but more often He provided large arrows with neon lights pointing people to the promised Savior, His Son, Jesus Christ.

**You'll be overwhelmed by God's love.** As you study God's master plan and the many ways God interacted with people to usher in their salvation, you cannot help but understand more deeply that humanity is completely undeserving of God's grace. From the beginning God has been consistent, and He has been faithful; you'll see in this study that from the beginning humans are consistently inconsistent and tend toward unfaithfulness. Why did God follow through with the plan? Why did God keep His promise by sending His own Son into this fallen world? It must be love.

**You'll grow in Bible literacy.** For those who traverse all 52 weeks, you will find a deeper understanding of how the different books of the Bible fit together and how the stories flow chronologically. I confess to you that as the writer, my Bible knowledge grew leaps and bounds as I sat down to march purposefully through time in studying redemption. The growth I experienced has made me a more passionate teacher of God's Word. Whether I'm teaching my children at home around the kitchen table or sharing God's Word in a more formal setting, I long for God's people to possess a working knowledge of the Bible. The "Thin Red Line" series provides a framework for understanding the overall history of Scripture.

**You'll fall in love with the Old Testament.** It's just a theory, but I believe that many Christians shy away from reading the Old Testament because they don't know the history, they can't figure out the relevance of some of the stories, and they don't see how its

contents can deepen their walk with Christ. Prepare to be amazed! You'll fall in love with the Old Testament when you begin to hear its pages whispering the name of Jesus.

**You'll fall in love with the New Testament.** Follow the "Thin Red Line" series from beginning to end. Your heart is going to sing "glory hallelujah!" when you arrive at the manger, having gained a deeper appreciation for the Babe wrapped in swaddling clothes. When looking through redemption's lens, you'll understand the life of Jesus and the profound nature of every word He said and every act He performed. And how do the Book of Acts and the letters to the churches connect to redemption? Embrace the teachings of *Volume Four* of this series, and experience being a part of God's plan of redemption for all of the peoples of the world.

**You'll go to new levels of friendship with your Bible study group.** The format of the "Thin Red Line" series lends itself to meaningful, on-topic, highly relevant discussions for your study time together. Each lesson is designed to allow participants to walk away with a solid understanding of the Bible passage (you will remember the details of the story for days to come) and also specific applications from God's Word to put into practice in everyday life. The approach is both discussion-based and Bible-centered.

I pray that God will use this study series to enrich your relationship with Jesus and deepen your love for God's Word. May God's people never cease to be amazed at the grace of God, the Author of our redemption through Jesus Christ!

*Kimberly*



# WELCOME TO THE *THIN RED LINE*

Welcome to the *Thin Red Line*. Throughout Scripture, we see a beautiful scarlet thread of God's redemptive plan for humanity. From the beginning, He has implemented a divine strategy to save us from our sins and adopt us as His children. In this study, we will experience powerful life transformation as we understand and embrace how God has revealed Himself and His beautiful redemptive plan from cover to cover in His Holy Word.

Each lesson's small-group leader guide contains some specific components:

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## RED LINE DETAILS

- **Red Line Verse:** the memory verse for the lesson
- **Red Line Statement:** a statement of how the lesson relates to God's redemptive plan for mankind to be saved
- **Red Line Connection:** the theme of the lesson
- **Focal Passages:** the passages covered in the lesson



### **Hear—Listen Attentively to the Lesson**

This section is the telling of the Bible story and its details from Scripture.



### **Search—Investigate the Facts of the Lesson**

This section examines what is happening in the story, allowing each person to thoroughly digest what is being conveyed in the text. *You'll find group-leader discussion statements in italics.*



### **See—Find the Purpose of the Lesson**

This section allows your small group to begin processing what God is teaching about Himself and how they can live for Him. Your group will discuss the significance of God's truths and how they apply to their lives. *You'll find group-leader discussion statements in italics.*



### **Live—Experience the Truth of the Lesson**

This section is a crucial component of the lesson—sharing how God's Word is reshaping your hearts and minds to be strong disciples of Jesus Christ. In this section that closes each lesson, you will have the opportunity as the small-group leader to challenge your group to respond specifically and to implement this lesson in their lives the following week. *See discussion statements in italics.*



## AND SO IT BEGINS

Adam and Eve disobeyed, and sin entered the world. Children had children, and the world grew in population. The people suffered in sin. God spoke through the prophets, offering hope and the promise of a coming Savior. God kept His promise and sent His Son Jesus to live, die, and rise again from the dead. The *thin red line* traveled from the Garden of Eden to the manger, to the Cross, and to an empty tomb. And so, as Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30). God's plan of redemption is complete, and the wrath of God is satisfied. But the story doesn't end there. As Jesus ascended to the Father, we see a new chapter is just beginning. The *thin red line* continues onward, cherished by all believers and lifted high as a banner of love for all the world to see.

### LIFE LESSON 40

#### SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL

- **Red Line Verse:** *"Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified."* (Acts 2:36)
- **Red Line Statement:** After Jesus left the earth, God sent the Holy Spirit to indwell Christians.
- **Red Line Connection:** The Holy Spirit is God's gift to believers. The Holy Spirit empowers us with boldness and the words to share the gospel message.

● **Focal Passage:** Acts 2:1–42



**Listen Attentively to the Lesson**

1. Tell the story of Acts 2:1–42 in your own words.

*Context:* Jesus remained on the earth for 40 days after His resurrection, and then He ascended into heaven (1:3, 9). Acts records Jesus' departure in this way: "Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, 'Which,' He said, 'you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.... You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth'" (1:4–5, 8). The disciples obeyed, and they spent time in prayer with Jesus' female followers and Jesus' mother and brothers (1:14). While they waited, they also selected Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot (1:26). Jesus told His disciples, "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you" (John 16:7). The Day of Pentecost marked a new era in the history of God's plan to offer a relationship to mankind, because now God had placed His Spirit in mankind.

2. Reconstruct Acts 2:1–42 together, including as many details as your small-group remembers.
3. Read the passage aloud together from Scripture, confirming the facts of the story. Amend any details suggested by small-group members that did not accurately represent the Scripture.



### Investigate the Facts of the Lesson

Use these questions to guide small-group members to investigate the facts of this passage.

1. What group of people was first to hear the message of Christ preached in Holy Spirit power on the Day of Pentecost (v. 5)?

*The Jews were there, God's chosen people. Proselytes (God-fearing Gentiles) were also present.*

2. How does what happened in Acts 2:4–11 represent a spiritual reversal of what occurred at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9)?

*God confused the language of the descendants of Noah and the people were scattered. At Pentecost, the Jews from different nations heard God's marvelous works proclaimed in their own languages, and God's people were united.*

3. In Acts 2:22–24, what are some of the points Peter stressed to indicate that Jesus' life, death, and resurrection were completely within God's divine plan? While Christ's death and resurrection was God's plan, how is mankind still guilty in the death of Christ?

*God attested to Jesus as Christ through miracles, signs, and wonders (v. 22), and God raised Him from the dead (v. 24). Jesus was delivered into the hands of the Jews by God's purpose and foreknowledge, though the Jews were still guilty of lawlessness for their part in Jesus' false trial and crucifixion (v. 23).*

4. Peter was the one who stood to preach the sermon, endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit within him. What changes do you see in Peter since the time that Peter first walked with Jesus? Based on what you know of Peter, are you surprised that Peter gave this sermon?

*In times past, Peter appeared to have a courageous though sometimes impetuous nature. On the Day of Pentecost, Peter spoke with authority and a deepened understanding of Jesus the Messiah. He had grown in his faith, and he now had the Holy Spirit within him.*

5. What other details do you see in this passage?

*Allow your small group to share other details that stand out to them and discuss the significance of each point.*



### **Find the purpose of the lesson**

Use these questions to guide small-group members to discover God's purpose for the passage.

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1. The visual of the fiery tongues, the sound of the rushing wind, and the believers hearing foreign languages—as though they were hearing their native tongue—were specific, tangible displays of the arrival of the Holy Spirit (vv. 2–3). How has the Holy Spirit made His presence known to you?

*The Holy Spirit is a He, not an It. He makes His presence known in the life of believers in many ways. Encourage your small group to think of specific ways that the Holy Spirit has revealed Himself to them.*

2. The Day of Pentecost is also known as the day of firstfruits, coming 50 days after Passover. Christians have the firstfruits of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:23). How would you describe the spiritual fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life?

*The Holy Spirit performs many functions in the life of a believer. Allow your small group to share how they sense the Holy Spirit is at work within them. You may choose to discuss the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–23). Talk about what Jesus said (in Acts 1:8) that believers are to do after they receive the Holy Spirit.*

3. Peter began His sermon by speaking on the prophecy of Joel 2:28–32 (vv. 17–21). How do you personally respond to living apparently in “the last days,” in the era of time when these prophecies are to be fulfilled? Do these prophecies described in Acts 2:17–21 give you a sense of joy? Wonder? Fear? How does Acts 2:21 summarize what God is doing in these days?

*Allow everyone to share their feelings. For those who express that they struggle with fear about “the last days” (v. 17), ask the group to discuss what truths we cling to as believers in Christ—truth overcomes fear. The gift of the Holy Spirit gives us courage in these days, as He testifies to the truth and reminds us of the promises of Jesus Christ.*

4. The number of believers was greatly multiplied on the day of Pentecost as 3,000 souls were added to the number of believers (v. 41).

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- a. How did the early Christians begin to live life together (v. 42)?

*They engaged in doctrine (teaching), fellowship, worship, sharing meals, and praying together.*

- b. Do you find their lifestyle of togetherness appealing? How would that type of lifestyle benefit Christians today? Families? Church life?

*As people begin to share, help the group to think about what aspect of the early church’s life that they also enjoy with fellow Christians, and what is different. How closely does your small group resemble the model given in verse 42?*

5. What other truths from this passage stand out to you? What can we learn about God or learn about being a follower of Christ?

*Allow everyone to respond. Share any other points of spiritual growth that the Holy Spirit brings to your attention.*



### Experience the Truth of the Lesson

Use these questions to guide small-group members to allow God's transformational truths to reshape their hearts and minds.

1. In Peter's sermon, he quoted David, who lived and died long before God sent His Son into the world. Read Acts 2:25–28 again, and evaluate the words from the perspective of a man who died believing that the Messiah was coming. Do you also have hope that the Messiah will come again? How is your hope similar to the hope that David expressed?

*We also have our hope in Christ for an eternity in heaven, and our present life in this world can be marked with rejoicing, gladness, and unshakable faith. Allow your small-group members to share how they can relate to David's words, quoted in Acts 2:25–28. Talk about our faith that Jesus will come again.*

2. When the people heard Peter's message, they asked an important question: "What shall we do" (v. 37)? When presented with the truth of their own guilt and sin and Jesus as Christ, they felt the need to respond. Have you ever had an unsaved person approach you to discuss a problem, hoping you would help them know what to do? No matter the problem, Jesus is the answer. How can you use the bold, straightforward response of Peter in verse 38 to shape your advice to those looking for answers?

*The salvation message of verse 38 is straightforward. Our problems are often rooted in sin, and God calls us to repent. When we turn from sin and self and turn to Jesus, God offers us eternal life and abundant life. Jesus is the only answer to our sin problems. Encourage your small group to point people to salvation, whether they are approached by people for help with their finances, marriage issues, relationship struggles, etc.*

3. The disciples had struggled at first to believe that Jesus had been raised from the dead, but now they were willing to stand before the multitudes and proclaim the Resurrection (v. 32). According to Acts 1:8, this was just what Jesus said would happen when His followers received Holy Spirit power. What about you? Are you accessing the Holy Spirit's power as a witness? Are you paying attention to the leadership of the Holy Spirit in your life?

*Encourage your small group not only to realize they should share the good news of Christ, but also that they can share the good news with Holy Spirit power!*

4. Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit was coming, but He didn't come immediately after Jesus ascended to heaven. The disciples had to wait in faith, and God was faithful. Are you also in a season of waiting for the Lord? What have you learned in this lesson about what God will do when we wait upon Him to fulfill His promises? *Allow your small group to respond. Encourage your small group to encourage and pray for one another.*

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Between the Lines: Truth Points

**Day of Pentecost** (v. 1)—Pentecost was also called the feast of weeks (Exodus 34:22; Deuteronomy 16:10, 16; 2 Chronicles 8:13), the feast of harvest (Exodus 23:16), and the day of firstfruits (Numbers 28:26), because it marked when people began to bring the first produce of the harvest, seen as an indicator of a greater harvest to come, in celebration and worship. The term "Pentecost" is fitting because it was celebrated 50 days after Passover (Deuteronomy 16:9). All men who were able went to the sanctuary, and special sacrifices were offered that included food and animals (Leviticus 23:15–21).

**Filled with the Holy Spirit** (v. 4)—The Holy Spirit had been present and active on earth prior to the day of Pentecost (for instance, Luke 1:35; 4:1, 14), but it was on the Day of Pentecost that the Holy Spirit first indwelt Christians, starting with Jewish believers. We are also commanded to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

**Language** (v. 6)—from the Greek word *dialektos*, which refers to a particular dialect or language of a country or region.

**Proselytes** (v. 10)—in Scripture, proselytes are Gentiles who have converted to worship the One True God.

*The preaching of Christ is the whip that flogs the devil. The preaching of Christ is the thunderbolt, the sound of which makes all hell shake.*

CHARLES SPURGEON



## LIFE LESSON 4 1

### THE EARLY CHURCH BEGINS

- **Red Line Verse:** *“For we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.”* (Acts 4:20)
- **Red Line Statement:** The gospel message continued to spread through the miracles and preaching that God empowered the apostles to do.
- **Red Line Connection:** God grew the early church as He worked through the apostles
- **Focal Passage:** Acts 4:1–22



#### Listen Attentively to the Lesson

1. Tell the story of Acts 4:1–22 in your own words.

*Context:* On the Day of Pentecost, 3,000 people accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior. The early believers fellowshiped and worshipped together and had all things in common. They spent time together in the Temple as well as from house to house, and believers were being added every day (Acts 2:41–47). God continued to do miraculous things through the apostles (2:43). One such miracle was through Peter and John, whom God used to heal a beggar who had been lame since birth. The beggar was healed “in the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene” (3:6), and immediately the beggar entered the Temple, leaping and praising God. The people recognized this beggar because he typically sat

at the Beautiful Gate of the Temple to beg, and everyone was astonished. The people rushed toward Peter and John, and Peter took this opportunity to walk the people through the history of the Jews, pointing to Jesus as the Messiah and fulfillment of the prophecies. Peter urged the people, "Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord" (3:19). All of this commotion got the attention of the Temple leaders, who were greatly displeased (3:1–4:1).

2. Reconstruct Acts 4:1–22 together, including as many details as your small group remembers.
3. Read the passage aloud together from Scripture, confirming the facts of the story. Amend any details suggested by small-group members that did not accurately represent the Scripture.



### **Investigate the Facts of the Lesson**

Use these questions to guide small-group members to investigate the facts of this passage.

1. This story began when God used Peter and John to heal a lame man in the name of Jesus (Acts 3). How many people heard the gospel of Jesus Christ because of this miraculous healing?
 

*The priests, temple captain, Sadducees, rulers, elders, scribes, Annas the high priest and his family, the healed man, and the people who were at the Temple heard the gospel.*
2. The Jewish leaders continued to oppose the healing power and the gospel message of Jesus Christ, just as they had done in the days when Jesus walked among them.

- a. What was it that they didn't like about what Peter and John did (v. 2)?

*They didn't like that Peter and John were teaching the people, and they didn't like that they were teaching about resurrection. Sadducees didn't believe that resurrection was possible, which was a point of contention between the Sadducees and Pharisees.*

- b. The next day, what did the leaders question Peter and John about?

*Instead of arguing about resurrection, the leaders asked Peter and John by what power or by what name the lame man had been made well. What or who was their source of power?*

- c. The people at the Temple that day saw the lame man healed and heard Peter share the gospel message (3:11–26), and then they saw Peter and John being arrested. Were the people more impressed by the power of Jesus or by the power of the temple leaders (v. 4)?

*Many people believed in Jesus, despite the threatening actions of the temple leaders. The number of believers was growing rapidly. What they had seen and heard about Jesus overpowered any fear that the temple leaders could provoke. Even today, people around the world are placing their faith in Jesus Christ despite the threats against them.*

3. Who received the honor and glory in this story, and why? Who is the main figure in this story?

*Peter and John made sure that the name of Jesus was lifted up. They did the healing in the name of Jesus and, when questioned about what happened, Peter took the opportunity to preach about Jesus. They never took credit or center stage, nor did they allow the healed man to be the center of attention. God certainly loved the man who was healed, but this miracle was about the salvation of many through Jesus Christ.*

4. What other details do you see in this passage?

*Allow your small group to share other details that stand out to them and discuss the significance of each point.*



**Find the purpose of the lesson**

Use these questions to guide small-group members to discover God's purpose for the passage.

1. The healing of the lame man created astonishment, but on the day of Peter and John's trial, something else caused the temple leaders to be amazed.

- a. According to verse 13, what caused the temple leaders to marvel?

*It was the boldness of Peter and John, despite the fact that Peter and John weren't educated or heavily trained.*

- b. When you think about people speaking boldly before others with the gospel message in a modern context, how do you feel about Christians proclaiming the gospel message, who haven't received specialized training or education? Do you view that as a good thing? Can they be effective? Can you be effective? Is training or education necessary?

*Verse 13 isn't a mandate against religious education or training, because the Bible encourages us to study and grow in our knowledge of the Scriptures and to learn from others who can help sharpen us. However, Peter and John stood in the face of men who were trained and educated in the Scriptures and spoke with boldness because they were standing on the simple yet profound truths of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Ask your small group to think carefully about their mindset on this important issue. Can the "average Christian"*

*share the gospel with an atheist or a Muslim, or should we remain silent and let someone who is professionally trained share? Does God use “average Christians” on the mission field or only the professionally trained? What is the value of training?*

- c. Why do you think Peter and John weren't intimidated by the elders? Read Luke 12:11–12. Why were Peter and John effective in communicating the gospel message?

*Perhaps Peter and John weren't intimidated because they were sure of the truth. When we know we're right, we're more apt to speak boldly. Perhaps they also felt sure of their calling. Peter and John were fully relying on God to guide their every action and word, and Peter was filled with the Holy Spirit (v. 8). The Holy Spirit gave them the words to say.*

- d. Look at Peter's words in Acts 4:9–12. What do you think was the boldest statement that Peter made?

*Allow everyone to share their thoughts. Devote time to discuss the significance of verse 12 to our theology as Christians; what are the implications of believing verse 12? Ask your small group if they're ready to stand firm on the truth of verse 12, even if it means being persecuted. Ask your small group what could happen to Christianity if believers were no longer willing to proclaim that Jesus is the only way to salvation.*

- e. How amazing that the temple leaders concluded that there was no other explanation for such boldness and speech except that these men had been with Jesus (v. 13). What is the evidence in your life that you have been with Jesus? How does Jesus shine forth in your life?

*As Christians, there should be something different about us that distinguishes us from the average “moral” person in society who isn't a follower of Christ. Ask your small group to approach this question not*

*with a fear of bragging on themselves, but instead with a desire to carefully examine how Jesus is being glorified in their lives. You may ask your small group if Jesus shines forth on certain days more than others, and what makes the difference on those days. Perhaps the difference is how much time they spend in Bible study and prayer or how much or little they allow the Holy Spirit to guide them.*

2. The temple leaders were completely confounded by this situation. The evidence of the healed man was plain, and Peter and John were boldly and clearly giving glory to Jesus. Look again at verse 18—despite all of this, the leaders still attempted to exercise authority over the situation! Why is it that sometimes people see the power of God working all around them, yet they still fool themselves into thinking they can have some control over the situation?

*Allow people to share. Encourage everyone to pray that the lost will see God's power at work all around them, and that the lost will respond in faith instead of rebellion.*

3. What other truths from this passage stand out to you? What can we learn about God or learn about being a follower of Christ?

*Allow everyone to respond. Share any other points of spiritual growth that the Holy Spirit brings to your attention.*



### **Experience the Truth of the Lesson**

Use these questions to guide small-group members to allow God's transformational truths to reshape their hearts and minds.

1. Peter and John had the task of proclaiming Jesus to those in authority as well as to common men who lived simple lives. Were Peter and John successful in this story? Why or why not?

*Allow the group to share their thoughts.*

*We are often tempted to measure success by numbers or by popularity, but these are ideas that come from the world. In God's kingdom, success is about obedience and trusting God with the results. We celebrate that such a large crowd of people believed in Jesus Christ (v. 4), but those numbers are not what made Peter and John successful. They were successful because they were obedient. Ask your small group to rethink how they will define success in their own walk with Christ.*

2. Peter and John said, "We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard" (v. 20). What have you seen and heard from God that you can't stop talking about?

*Be prepared to share your own testimony. Encourage everyone to share with at least one person this week about what God is doing in his or her life.*

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Between the Lines: Truth Points

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**Captain of the temple guard** (v. 1)—The captain worked closely with the high priest to maintain order in the Temple. The temple guard had authority to use force.

**Sadducees** (v. 1)—The Sadducees (literally, *righteous ones*) didn't believe in the resurrection of the human body, angels, or spirits (Acts 23:6–8). This religious party was formed during the intertestamental period; they were part of the Jewish Council.

**Annas and Caiaphas** (v. 6)—Caiaphas was the son-in-law of Annas. Both men had held the position of high priest.

**Council** (v. 15)—The Jewish Council, or Sanhedrin, had the charge to preserve the Jewish faith. The Sadducees and Pharisees were both

represented on the council. The high priest presided over the council, and the chief priests played a dominant role in council activity.

*Gospel truth seeks no corners, because it fears no trials.*

MATTHEW HENRY