



## Growth Group Curriculum Week 1 – September 12, 2021 – Acts 2:42-47 and 4:1-13

**Growth groups are one of the best and easiest ways to find community at church. Thank you for loving and caring for each other.**

At the beginning of the book of Acts, we read that the disciples were looking intently into the sky as Jesus was ascending. Then two angels showed up and asked them why they were standing there looking into the sky. Basically, these angels were saying there is “work” to be done, so stop staring into the sky and get busy sharing the message, that Jesus shared with you. Ten days later, on Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descends and the disciples begin to proclaim the saving message of Jesus Christ.

In Acts 2:42-47 we see that the early church was a learning and worshipping community that broke bread together and spent time together. As they did that, God continued to grow the church. We should also remember that the first converts were Jewish. Not until later in Acts does the message of Jesus begin to reach the Gentile community.

As we move into Acts 4:1-13 we discover that there were plenty of people who were not in favor of the message that was being preached, and the healing that was happening. The Sadducees – who were the ruling class of aristocrats and who collaborated with the Roman government, were not happy. They believed that the Messianic age had already happened and they were not looking for a Messiah. They also denied the resurrection of the dead.

After being arrested, Peter and John were brought before the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin consisted of 71 members (more than likely elders from the tribes of Israel, and teachers of the law) and was presided over by the high priest. It is possible the apostle Paul was a part of the Sanhedrin before his conversion experience.

Peter has no problem placing the blame of the death of Jesus on the religious leaders. “The stone you builders rejected, has become the cornerstone.” He then proceeds to declare that salvation can only be found in Jesus. This is a remarkable statement to make not just in front of the Jewish religious leaders, but also within earshot of the leaders of the pluralistic Roman Empire.



Verse 13 reminds us of the reality of Peter and John. They were not the best of the best. They were just ordinary men who had been with Jesus. Jesus himself had no formal education as a rabbi and yet so many people saw him as a great teacher. The disciples had spent time with him and learned from him and now had a faith that was bold and courageous.

## Exploring the Text

Acts 2:42-47

<sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup> Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup> They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. <sup>46</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 4:1-13

<sup>1</sup>The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. <sup>2</sup> They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. <sup>3</sup> They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. <sup>4</sup> But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand. <sup>5</sup> The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. <sup>6</sup> Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. <sup>7</sup> They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?" <sup>8</sup> Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! <sup>9</sup> If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, <sup>10</sup> then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. <sup>11</sup> Jesus is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the cornerstone." <sup>12</sup> Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." <sup>13</sup> When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

## Questions

*If you are answering these questions alone, we would urge you to try journaling. Rather than just pondering the answers, try writing them out along with a prayer to the Lord.*

- 1) What was the highlight of your summer?
- 2) Acts 2:42 talks about how the early believers "devoted" themselves to the apostles teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer. How would you define the word "devoted"? What does it look like to be devoted to God?
- 3) As you read through Acts 2:42-47, what sticks out to you as a "mark or characteristic" of the early church?
- 4) Why do you think the Sadducees and priests felt so threatened by what the apostles were teaching and doing?



- 5) In Acts 4:12 Peter makes it very clear that salvation can only be found in Jesus Christ. Many people find this idea to be too exclusive. They argue that there are many ways or paths to God. How would you respond or have you responded when people question that Jesus is the only way to God? Do you find this statement that Peter makes challenging or encouraging?
- 6) It is obvious the disciples had great boldness and courage. Where do you think this came from?
- 7) Have you ever felt like you have had to defend your faith with family, friends or someone else? How did it make you feel and how did you respond?
- 8) We read in Acts 4:13 that Peter and John had spent time with Jesus. What is one practical step you can take this week to spend time with Jesus?

