21-27 April 2024 How we use our power and influence

# **Acts 4:5-12**

# **New International Version**

**5**The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. **6**Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest’s family. **7**They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: “By what power or what name did you do this?”

**8**Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! **9**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, **10**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. **11**Jesus is

“‘the stone you builders rejected,
    which has become the cornerstone.’[[a](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Acts+4%3A+5-12&version=NIV#fen-NIV-27034a)]

**12**Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved.”

Bible notes

Peter, with John, took a lame man by the right hand ‘and raised him up’ in Jesus’ name (3:1-10), and explained to the crowds at the Temple that ‘this perfect health’ was the work of the risen Jesus, ‘the Author of life’ (3:11-26). ‘The priests, the captain of the Temple, and the Sadducees’ are displeased at this teaching about resurrection, arrest Peter and John, and hold them in custody overnight (4:1-4).

In the morning, the Council gathers to interrogate them. The listing of parties, ‘rulers, elders, and scribes’, and the naming of people, ‘Annas the high-priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander, and all who were of the high-priestly family’, emphasise the political and religious power of those assembled, as well as their networks of personal influence. In contrast, the disciples invoke only ‘the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead’ (v.10). This makes clear the contrast between worldly power, self-serving and death-dealing, and spiritual power that enabled a lame beggar to walk, leap, and praise God.

The apostles noticed a beggar neglected by the authorities, and his new life proclaims the resurrection that so annoyed them. This is the pattern of Psalm 118, quoted here and elsewhere in the New Testament. It is the rejected stone that becomes the cornerstone (Psalm 118:22; Matthew 21:42; 1 Peter 2:7). It is Jesus, ‘humble, and mounted on a donkey’ (Matthew 21:5) who is acclaimed: ‘Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord’ (Psalm 118:26; Matthew 21:8-9; Mark 11:9; Luke 19:38; John 12:13).

Reflection

Spend a few moments thinking about what stands out for you from the Bible reading. This idea may help.

Social media influencers such as Justin Bieber or Ariana Grande, with many millions of followers, wield considerable power when they recommend a particular brand or lifestyle. Indeed, for some it can be a very lucrative career choice. However, while an influencer’s endorsement may affect your consumer choices, when it comes to impacting on your core values and moral behaviour most of us demand a higher standard of authenticity than popularity or media exposure. We justly ask do they model what they advocate? Do they ring true? That’s what drew people to listen to Peter or follow Francis of Assisi. Both pointed away from themselves to Jesus. Faith depends more on modelling than marketing. Is that true of you?

**Questions for reflection**

*You may wish to use these questions and the picture to help you think about or discuss issues arising from this week’s Bible passage.*

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**Questions**

* What circles do you move in? What power and influence do you have?
* Can you think of a time when doing something small has had a big impact?
* What small action could you take this week that might make a positive ripple in your community?

## Prayer

Adapt to your local context.

Spirit of Jesus,
help us to use our power and gifts
to do good things;
good things for each other, for the world and for your kingdom.
**Amen.**

## **A prayer to end the Bible study**

God, our heavenly father,
send us out in the power of your Spirit,
to build on the cornerstone of our faith,
Jesus Christ, your Son, our Lord. **Amen.**

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