

Lesson 5

Peter and John on Trial

Has someone else ever gotten credit for something that you did? Or, have you ever gotten credit for something that someone else did? We all like to receive compliments and we enjoy it when people acknowledge our work. The book of Acts is filled with the work that God did through His believing followers.

In last week's lesson, Peter and John met a crippled man who begged them for money. Instead of money, the man received healing! Peter did not take credit for the healing but gave credit where it was due—to God, who is the only one able to heal. He also used the opportunity to tell the crowd about God's work of salvation through Christ.

God does physical miracles, like healing the crippled man, but He works spiritual miracles too, every time a person receives the salvation He offers. God was at work just as much in Peter's sermon as in the healing, and we see the result of His work in what happened when Peter was done speaking. Five thousand men came to believe in the saving work of Jesus.

The Apostle John

Peter's companion at the temple was a man called John, who also had been a disciple of Jesus.

1. Who was John? In Mark 1:19-20 we read that, like Peter, John was a *fisherman* before he began to follow Jesus.

Peter, James, and John were three disciples who were very close to Jesus. At the Last Supper, John refers to himself as the "disciple whom Jesus loved". While on the cross, Jesus gave John the responsibility of looking after Mary, his mother, and that she was to consider John as her own son. On resurrection morning, John and Peter were the first disciples to reach the empty tomb and saw that the body of Jesus was gone.

John wrote five books in the New Testament: the Gospel of John, I John, II John, III John, and Revelation.

2. When we read the Gospel of John, it is clear that it was important to John that we trust and believe the words he wrote. Read the verses below. What did John say about his testimony in each verse?

[TM note: This is John speaking of himself in the Gospel book he wrote.]

John 19:35 *John was telling the truth about events that he had personally seen so that those who read what he wrote would believe in Jesus.*

John 21:24 *John was there and knows that what he wrote is true.*

Into the Word: Acts 4:5-31

1. In verse 7, what did the Jewish leaders want to know from Peter and John?
They wanted to know how Peter and John had accomplished the miracle of making the lame man walk.
2. From what source did Peter get his answer? v.8
The Holy Spirit gave Peter his answer.
3. Look up Matthew 10:17-20. What had Jesus told His disciples?
 - vv.17-18 *They would have to testify in front of authorities and may be arrested and punished ("when they hand you over")*
 - v.19 *They would not have to worry about what they would say. God would give the disciples the words they were to speak.*
 - v. 20 *The Holy Spirit would speak through them.*
4. When the Jewish leaders asked Peter and John by what power or in what name they had healed a man, what was Peter's answer? Acts 4:10
It was by the name of Jesus that the man was healed; Peter also reminded the Jews that they were the ones who had crucified Jesus and that God had raised Him from the dead.

5. What two things did Peter say about the Jews in verses 10-11?
 - 1: *They crucified Jesus;*
 - 2: *They rejected Him.*
6. What did Peter say about Jesus in verses 11-12?

Jesus was the "stone" which had been rejected by the Jews; salvation comes only through Him.
7. Why were the Jews surprised by Peter's confident and eloquent words? v.13

Because Peter and John were uneducated, untrained fishermen, not the sort of men they would have expected to give such a bold speech.
8. The rulers were stumped. They didn't know what to do with these men. In verse 18, what order did they finally give them?

Stop talking about Jesus--do not speak or teach about Him.
9. God had told the disciples to be witnesses, but the council told them to stop speaking. Whom were they going to obey? In verses 19-20, they boldly answered that they *had* to make known what they had *seen* and *heard*. Could the disciples stop speaking then? Explain why or why not.

They would obey God. They could not stop speaking about the things they had seen and heard regarding Jesus.
10. Peter and John went back to their friends when they were released. When the people heard what had happened, they lifted their voices together confessing God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (vv.24-28). What did they request of God?
 - *Confidence to speak the words God gave them (verse 29)*
 - *That God would continue to let miracles happen through them. (verse 30)*
11. What answer did God immediately provide? v.31

The place where they were gathered was shaken; the people were filled with the Holy Spirit; they began to boldly speak the word of God.

New Ideas: The Jewish Leaders

The Jewish leaders were powerful men, and several different groups are mentioned in the Bible.

Priests: Priests were called by God and were the most influential among all the leaders of the Jewish people. Entrusted with the responsibility of offering sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem, they led the people in worship of God. When they were not serving in the temple, they functioned as teachers of the people. (Exodus 40:13-15, II Chronicles 15:3)

Pharisees: The word "pharisee" comes from a root word that means "to separate." These men, who were not priests, tried to live holy and separate lives by strictly following and enforcing a long list of rules. They believed in the existence of good and evil angels, and in the resurrection of the dead. They were extremely zealous for the law, and often took great pride in their "good works." (Luke 18:11-12, Acts 26:5)

[TM note: The Pharisees were a populist movement and were more accepted among the common Jewish people. Though often membership passed from father to son, men could become a Pharisee by embracing their system of belief.]

Sanhedrin: Also called "the Council" (Acts 22:30). This was the ruling council of the Jews, the Jewish "final authority" (Luke 22:66; 23:50-51). It was made up of the leaders of the Priests, Pharisees, and Sadducees, who came together to make decisions on behalf of the Jewish people. A "ruler of the Jews" (John 3:1) refers to a member of the Sanhedrin.

Sadducees: The Sadducees were opponents of the Pharisees. The Sadducees rejected many of the traditions of Jewish law, they did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, and they denied the existence of angels or spirits.

Some of the priests were also Sadducees. (Matthew 22:23-34; Acts 23:7-8)

[TM note: A Jewish man's ancestry was critical in qualifying for membership with the Sadducees. This group believed they were descendants of a specific high priestly family and were entitled to special positions of power.]

Memory Verse

And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven
that has been given among men by which we must be saved.
Acts 4:12

Extra Memory Challenge

1 John 1:3

*What we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us;
and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.*

Discussion Questions

Each teacher should encourage, as much as time permits, discussion and inquiry on the part of students. Not every aspect of the following questions is addressed here, and students may have thoughts related to but not mentioned in this guide. The obligation of the teacher, then, is to understand as deeply as possible the Scriptures that are being discussed, in order to answer as well as possible any questions a student might have.

1. Read Acts 4:15-18. These are the same rulers who opposed Jesus while He was alive on earth. Peter and John weren't breaking any rules when they healed the crippled man, yet they were thrown into jail. Jesus Said that Christians would face persecution (John 15:19-20). What hostilities might Christians face today?
Discuss persecution of Christians locally and throughout the world.

2. Notice how the believers pray in Acts 4:24-30. What do they acknowledge about God? Why do they pray for boldness? Why should this be our prayer in times of opposition and persecution?

He is the creator; the rulers and peoples of the world would gather together to plot against the Lord. They understood that the rulers and authorities would be opposed to the message of Jesus.

The believers were finding themselves in situations where they had to either boldly stand up for what they knew to be true or cave in to the demands of the authorities. Not to stand up and speak would have been to deny Christ; for the disciples there was no middle ground. They understood that this incident would not be the last, and they would continue to need boldness to defend their faith in Jesus.

In this day and age, we certainly find ourselves in situations where it can be challenging to stand up for the message of Jesus. Have your class list some examples of times when it's hard to stand up for what they know is right. As Christians, we should always want to be bold in sharing our faith, even (or maybe especially) at times when doing so could put us in harm's way.

3. In Acts 4:11 Peter talks about a stone. Read Matthew 21:42 to find out what Jesus said about this stone. I Peter 2:4-8 explains more clearly what this stone is. What is being said about Jesus through all this talk about stones? In Matthew 21:42, Jesus is talking to the chief priests and elders (Mt. 21:23) and quoting Psalm 118. A few verses later, in Mt. 21:45, we see that the Pharisees clearly understood that Jesus was talking about Himself. In I Peter 2, we are told that Jesus, the "cornerstone," is the foundation of God's whole plan for salvation. If we reject Him, we reject God's plan for us. There can be no salvation apart from Jesus. Make sure to discuss with your class the significance of a cornerstone: With a good cornerstone, the walls will be straight and the whole building will be strong.

Daily Devotions

Monday:	I John 1:1-10
Tuesday:	I John 2:1-8
Wednesday:	I John 2:9-17
Thursday:	I John 2:18-29
Friday:	I John 3:1-10
Saturday:	I John 3:11-18
Sunday:	I John 3:19-24

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH AND ITS CONFESSIONS, CREED, AND CATECHISM

* Lesson 5: Augsburg Confession – Article 2 (Original Sin)

The Augsburg Confession is divided into two parts. Articles 1-21 present the Biblical doctrine of the way of salvation and Articles 22-28 the abuses of the church in that day. In the next few lessons, we will focus on some of these articles. Article 2 contains a strong emphasis on the biblical teaching of original sin. The teaching of original sin reminds us that we are born with a sinful nature that is always opposed to God. Because of this, Article 2 also clearly states that we cannot be justified before God by our own strength, merit, or works.

1. What is “original sin”? Why is it important that we understand original sin?

Everyone needs to know that he or she is sinful by nature because of our first parents’ fall into sin. Jesus told Nicodemus that we are born with this sinful nature.

a) It is the sinful nature that is opposed to God. According to Sverdrup’s Explanation original sin is the “inborn wickedness, deep corruption, and evil disposition of the human heart” (Question 104).

b) So that we understand that we cannot save ourselves from sin, death, and the power of the devil. We need God’s work through the Holy Spirit and Word to bring us to faith in Jesus, the Savior.

2. When does a person become sinful? See Psalm 51:5.

At conception.