

# THE GOSPEL SPREADS THROUGH OPPOSITION

YEAR: KNEEL / FOCUS: I AM AN AMBASSADOR  
SERIES: GOD IS THE MESSAGE - I AM THE MESSENGER

## BIG TRUTH: THE GOSPEL SPREADS THROUGH OPPOSITION

1 Peter 4:12-14; Matthew 21:15-16; Luke 5:30-32; 6:22; Matthew 5:44; 2 Corinthians 12:10

### BIBLE VERSE: ACTS 4:1-4

*“And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead. And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.”*

### BIG IDEAS

- Opposition to the gospel is normal.
- Opposition is an opportunity to make Jesus known.
- Opposition reveals our hope.

### BIBLE PASSAGE: ACTS 4:1-22

### KNEEL - I AM AN AMBASSADOR

The Kneel Year is an exploration of what it means to worship God with our all (Luke 10:26-28). Worship is not something that is limited to a service once a week, but instead occurs every day, in all of life. We are unceasing worshipers. Worship never stops, it only changes directions. In order to worship God with all of our heart, soul, strength, and mind, we must embrace our identity as image bearers. It is out of that identity that we can begin to live for God’s glory in all of life (Colossians 3:17).

### SERIES AIMS



#### Every student should know that...

- The gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ that brings salvation to sinners.
- Salvation comes by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone.
- Jesus followers have been trusted with the gospel in order to share it with others.



#### Every student should strive to...

- Share the gospel each month with at least one person who does not know Jesus.
- Practice sharing the gospel using multiple different tools or methods.



#### Every student should feel...

- Humbled that as believers we have been entrusted with the glorious gospel of our Savior.
- Satisfied in Jesus as the only true Savior



#### Every student should want...

- To grow in awareness of the false saviors they are tempted to put their hope in.
- To have a softened heart and love for people who are lost
- To take advantage of opportunities to share the gospel with people in their lives who need Christ

### GUIDES AND WORKOUTS

The Guide provides a commentary page on each week’s Bible verse and on each Big Idea that unpacks the Big Truth. Each week also includes a Student Workout as a resource to help the student pursue spiritual disciplines on their own. Additionally, each week has a Family Workout that helps equip parents and guardians to have spiritual conversations with their student.



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## BIBLE VERSE: ACTS 4:1-4

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### Proclamation of the Gospel causes opposition.

*“And as they were speaking to the people, the priests and the captain of the temple and the Sadducees came upon them, greatly annoyed because they were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection from the dead.”*

- Peter and John faced great opposition when they proclaimed Jesus and taught people that Jesus died and rose again. Even those who were supposed to be the religious among them were greatly annoyed at Peter and John’s message. The Gospel causes opposition. It is offensive to those who do not yet believe it and it angers them.
- Telling others about Jesus will lead to opposition to it. People will try to stop the advancement of the Gospel and they will try to impede believers living out the Gospel.

### Opposition to the Gospel can lead to persecution of believers.

*“And they arrested them and put them in custody until the next day, for it was already evening.”*

- As Peter and John faced opposition to the Gospel, they began to experience persecution. Because they were boldly proclaiming the truth about Jesus, they were arrested and placed in jail. Though they had committed no crime, they were confined to jail because those opposing them hoped to stop the message of the cross going out.
- When we face opposition to the Gospel, we can also experience persecution. We may be ridiculed, mistreated, or in some places in the world, imprisoned. Persecution usually follows opposition to the Gospel.

### The Gospel spreads when there is opposition and persecution.

*“But many of those who had heard the word believed, and the number of the men came to about five thousand.”*

- God uses the opposition to the Gospel and the persecution of His people to spread the Gospel. Even though Peter and John faced opposition, the Gospel still spread in people’s hearts. Five thousand people believed the Gospel because of Peter and John.
- When we face opposition and persecution for the sake of the Gospel, God uses our trial to draw people to Him. The Gospel goes out into the far ends of the world when opposition comes.

# THE GOSPEL SPREADS THROUGH OPPOSITION

## BIG IDEA #1: OPPOSITION TO THE GOSPEL IS NORMAL.<sup>1</sup>

### [ THIS ]

Acts 4 gives us the story of Peter and John, two disciples of Jesus. They had previously healed a man who was lame and because of their miracle, many people were interested in their message. Peter and John boldly proclaimed the Gospel and were teaching people about Jesus, telling them about His death and resurrection. They boldly told people that Jesus died for their sin and that salvation was available to them. Because of their boldness and people's response to it, they faced opposition. The Sadducees, priests, and other religious people became angry at Peter and John. They were annoyed that the disciples were telling people about Jesus and the one true way to know God. They arrested Peter and John, attempting to stop the spread of the Gospel. Opposition to Jesus is normal.

### [ THEREFORE ]

**Consider the opposition that Peter and John faced. Why do people oppose the message of the gospel? What are some ways that people oppose the gospel message?**

Matthew 21:15 and Luke 5:30 both show us that Jesus faced opposition in this world. People oppose the gospel because it reveals their sinfulness and it hurts their pride. Opposition to the Gospel is normal and this knowledge should encourage us to stand for Christ in the face of it. Peter and John faced opposition and even persecution, yet they continued to tell others about Jesus.

### [ THIS ]

The cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, or to those who do not believe it according to 1 Corinthians 1:18. Our sinful flesh doesn't want to humble itself to seek forgiveness. Our minds are darkened and we become callous to the truth. Because of this, we should expect opposition to the Gospel message. Satan and his demons are always at work to stop the spread of the Gospel in the world. There will be persecution and spiritual warfare when we seek to tell others about Jesus. We should not only expect it, but accept it as part of what it looks like to follow Christ in this world. We should not be surprised when people oppose us or we face challenges to telling others about Jesus. We should see it as normal and count it as a blessing because it means we are about Christ's business.

### [ THEREFORE ]

**How have you let fear of opposition to the faith keep you from sharing the Gospel?**

It is tempting to view opposition to the Gospel as a sign to stop telling others about Jesus, but opposition is to be expected. 1 Peter 4:12-14 is a good reminder to not give up when we face obstacles to sharing the Gospel or people stand against us. When we do face opposition, we should see this as a good sign that we are on mission for God and we should push forward.

**How have you faced opposition to the Gospel as you've sought to share it in your life?**

Luke 6:22 is a good reminder of the opposition we may face when we seek to share the Gospel. Our friends may exclude us or reject us. We may feel like an outsider or even be ridiculed for our faith. These are all normal things that oppose the Gospel and ways that Satan uses to stop us from telling others the truth about Jesus.

1. Matthew 5:10-12: God's people will experience hardship because of the Gospel in this life. It is to be expected.

# THE GOSPEL SPREADS THROUGH OPPOSITION

## BIG IDEA #2: OPPOSITION IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE JESUS KNOWN.<sup>2</sup>

### [ THIS ]

In Acts 4:1-22, Peter and John do not back down from proclaiming the Gospel. Even though they are arrested, jailed overnight, and told not to share about Jesus, they do not stop. Instead, they used the opposition they faced as an opportunity to spread the Gospel. They continued to preach Christ crucified and to tell people about His resurrection from the dead. God's Spirit uses the persecution and opposition of His people to bring lost people to Himself. He draws unbelievers to Himself through the persecution and steadfastness of His followers. Persecution causes people to respond one of two ways: they become firmer in their faith and more steadfast or they fall away. When unbelieving people see believers remaining firm and steadfast in the midst of great opposition, it reveals the truth of the Gospel to them. The opposition also serves as a catalyst to those being persecuted to share the Gospel boldly.

### [ THEREFORE ]

**If you were to encounter opposition to the gospel, how do you think you would respond? How can opposition to sharing the gospel help build boldness and confidence in your heart and mind?**

Matthew 5:44 gives us the best response to any opposition or persecution we face for the sake of the Gospel. When we choose to see opposition as normal and we pray for those opposing us, we are growing in our faith and steadfastness. 2 Corinthians 12:10 shows us that Paul delighted in the opposition he faced because he understood how it served to spread the Gospel. We use the opposition we face as an opportunity to stand firmly for Christ and show the world that He is the one true Savior.

### [ THIS ]

When Peter and John faced opposition to the Gospel, it didn't stop them. When we face opposition, we can use it as an opportunity to make Christ known through our faithfulness and willingness to suffer for Christ. As we remain steadfast in the midst of struggle, we make our faith real and show the people around us that we really do believe what we say we believe. God also uses opposition to send out His people. In the early church years, when His people face opposition, they would go to the next town to share the Gospel. This movement served to spread the Gospel throughout and resulted in many churches being planted. The same happens today when we willingly face opposition and whenever we are driven out of one area, it causes us to go to another. If one group rejects Christ and our message, then we move on to another.

### [ THEREFORE ]

**Can you think of a way the Gospel has spread because of opposition? How does God use the struggles of His people to make Himself known?**

In Acts 4:1-22, five thousand people became believers because of the opposition that Peter and John faced. Throughout early church history, many people heard the Gospel because the disciples faced persecution and were forced to leave a town or city. Today, when people face persecution, the Gospel continues to spread. In countries where people might die for believing the Gospel and they persevere in their faith, the Gospel spreads because others see the authenticity and boldness of their faith and believe.

2. Acts 4:4: Five thousand people believed the Gospel because of Peter and John. Even though they faced opposition, their willingness to continue sharing the truth revealed their faith and God used their faith to draw people to Himself.

# THE GOSPEL SPREADS THROUGH OPPOSITION

## BIG IDEA #3: OPPOSITION REVEALS OUR HOPE.<sup>3</sup>

### [ THIS ]

Acts 4:19-20 reveals something about the hearts of Peter and John. Both men had walked with Jesus during His earthly ministry. They both believed He was the Messiah and Savior of the world. They had given their lives to making Him known in the world. Their hope was in Christ alone. They did not hope in one another, their government, or any other thing. They did not regard their life on earth as more valuable than making Jesus known. They trust in Jesus so completely that when their faith was tested, they remained steadfast and faithful to their calling. Our hope should be in Christ alone because without Him, we are hopeless.

### [ THEREFORE ]

**In what earthly things do you often seek hope? How do they fail you and fall short?**

1 John 2:15-17 teaches us that earthly things do not bring us hope. When we love the earth and all that is in it, we cannot truly love God and then we are hopeless. Matthew 16:26 reminds us that our only hope is in Christ because only He can give eternal life. It's tempting to trust in the tangible things we can see, but they all lead to hopelessness in the end.

### [ THIS ]

When Peter and John faced opposition to the Gospel, they didn't give up. Their persistence in proclaiming the Gospel revealed their hope. They really believed that salvation is possible only through Christ. If we really believe this truth, we will persist in sharing the Gospel with others. When hard times come, we won't stop telling others about Jesus, revealing that He really is our only hope. If we don't really hope in Jesus, opposition will stop us from telling others about Him. When we persevere, we prove our faith to be true and solid. We prove we are trusting in Jesus and His salvation and not in anything this world has to offer. We also show that Jesus is a solid rock upon which our lives can be built and that He alone leads to eternal life.

### [ THEREFORE ]

**What is an example of a time in your life when you have been eager to share the good news about Jesus with others? Why is seeing people coming to faith in Jesus worth the obstacles and opposition we will face?**

In Romans 5:41, the disciples suffer for the sake of the Gospel and they rejoice that they are counted worthy to do so for the name of Jesus. When our hope is in Jesus and we suffer for it, our response will be an eagerness to tell others about Him. When we truly believe that Jesus is the only hope for anyone, it won't matter the opposition we face. No obstacle, persecution, or struggle will keep us from sharing the only good news there is to tell.

**How can you strive to be more like Peter and John this week?**

In 2 Corinthians 12:10, Paul is content in his struggles. When we seek to focus on Christ and His purpose for our lives, our perspective on obstacles and hardship will change. We will see opposition as a good thing that God uses for His glory and our good as He sanctifies us through it. Colossians 1:11 reminds us that we receive our strength through the power of the Holy Spirit living inside of us. Just as the disciples were able to face opposition boldly because of the Spirit, we can face it when we submit to His leading and use His power and not our own.

3. Acts 4: 19-20: Peter and John could only speak of the truth even though the religious people wanted them to be silent. They could not choose to not share Jesus and the Gospel spread because of their great hope.