

CALLED OUT To Stand Up

Matt Garvin

The world is in greater peril from those who tolerate or encourage evil than from those who actually commit it.

~ Albert Einstein

Acts 4:23-31 NIV

On their release, Peter and John went back to their own people and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said to them. When they heard this, they raised their voices together in prayer to God. "Sovereign Lord," they said, "you made the heavens and the earth and the sea, and everything in them. You spoke by the Holy Spirit through the mouth of your servant, our father David: "Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth rise up and the rulers band together against the Lord and against his anointed one.' Indeed Herod and Pontius Pilate met together with the Gentiles and the people of Israel in this city to conspire against your holy servant Jesus, whom you anointed. They did what your power and will had decided beforehand should happen. Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly.

The Christian vision of God working through earthly rulers makes the sense it makes only if the church embraces the vocation to remind the rulers of their task, to speak the truth to power, and to call authorities to account. ~ N.T. Wright

The early church ENGAGED...

- ♦ with Society
- ♦ with the Economy
- ♦ with Religion

CALLED OUT

a journey through the book of ACTS

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What does it mean to engage with powers that are not loyal to Jesus?

But the church, even when faced with overtly pagan and hostile rulers, must continue to believe that Jesus is the Lord before whom they will bow and whose final sovereign judgment they are called to anticipate. Thus the church, in its biblical commitment to "doing God in public," is called to learn how to collaborate without compromise ... and to criticize without dualism. ~ N.T. Wright

- ♦ Collaborate without _____
- ♦ Criticize without _____

Whatever the power of the Spirit means, bullying force isn't part of it... The power of God is always exercised in personal ways, creating and saving and blessing. It is never an impersonal application of force from without. ~ Eugene Peterson

So how do we do that?

1. Understand the _____ at play.

Then Paul, knowing that some of them were Sadducees and the others Pharisees, called out in the Sanhedrin, "My brothers, I am a Pharisee, descended from Pharisees. I stand on trial because of the hope of the resurrection of the dead." When he said this, a dispute broke out between the Pharisees and the Sadducees, and the assembly was divided. (The Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, and that there are neither angels nor spirits, but the Pharisees believe all these things.) Acts 23:6-8 NIV

2. Engage the powers of the world with a _____ of the kingdom that is relevant.

In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days, and they will prophesy. Acts 2:17-18 NIV

3. Let your _____ be what speaks.

For while there are occasions when it is proper for the church, through its synods and hierarchies, to make pronouncements on public issues, it is much more important that all its lay members be prepared and equipped to think out the relationship of their faith to their secular work. Here is where the real missionary encounter takes place. ~ Leslie Newbigin

4. **Engage the world in _____ . Find a Kingdom Cell.**

While they were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.

Acts 13:2-3 NIV

5. **Be willing to _____ truth to power.**

Several days later Felix came with his wife Drusilla, who was Jewish. He sent for Paul and listened to him as he spoke about faith in Christ Jesus. As Paul talked about righteousness, self-control and the judgment to come, Felix was afraid and said, "That's enough for now! You may leave. When I find it convenient, I will send for you." Acts 24:24-25 NIV

6. **Realize that Jesus gives the _____.**

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. Acts 4:13 NIV

7. **Understand that engagement requires a _____.**

Then they returned to Lystra, Iconium and Antioch, strengthening the disciples and encouraging them to remain true to the faith. "We must go through many hardships to enter the kingdom of God," they said Acts 14:21-22 NIV

Because Jesus bore the cross uniquely for us, we do not have to purchase forgiveness again; its been done. But because, as he himself said, following him involves taking up the cross, we should expect, as the New Testament tells us repeatedly, that to build on his foundation will be to find the cross etched into the pattern of our life and work over and over again. ~ N.T. Wright

**The outcome of faithful engagement is
_____ greater than the powers of the world.**

**Authority is given to someone
by people who choose to follow them.
~ Max Weber**

SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

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1. Take some time to discuss your experience at the Prayer Summit. Was there anything about the Prayer Summit that you found particularly meaningful or helpful for you in your prayer journey? We are discussing engaging a Prayer Summit in this way once every couple of months. What are your thoughts on this?
2. Pastor Matt framed the book of Acts as a clash between two power structures - that of this world and that of the Kingdom of God. Where in your life do you see the power of this world most clearly in conflict with the Kingdom of God?
3. With this comparison in mind, read through Acts 4:1-31 and discuss the contrast between the two power structures in the story (one represented by the religious leaders and the other by Peter and John). How do the disciples make sense of the clash?
4. We are called to Collaborate without Compromise. Where have you most successfully collaborated with political, economic or religious powers? Where have you compromised or been tempted to compromise?
5. We are called to Criticize without Dualism. Have you had to criticize someone in a position of power? Share the story. Have there been times when you have fallen into the trap of seeing them as "the enemy"?
6. Pastor Matt said that part of our task in challenging the powers is to have a clear vision of the Kingdom of God as it relates to a specific area of life. Is there a vision you have? Share it.
7. Pastor Matt introduced the idea of "Kingdom Cells" - mission fellowships focussed on bringing kingdom realities into focus in the world. Do you have fellowship with other apprentices of Jesus who are wrestling in the same arena as you? What can you do to find that kind of fellowship?
8. Read Acts 14:21-22. How do you react to Paul's statement here? What about N.T. Wrights assertion that:

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9. Pastor Matt told the story of Mother Teresa having the moral authority to look the most powerful person in the world in the eyes and tell him he was wrong. Talk about the people you have met who have moral authority. Where did that authority come from? How is that different to political, economic or religious power? Share, if you are willing, the level of moral authority you believe you have in your workplace or other group you are part of. What does that tell you about you?