

Responding to Threats

As we journey through our lives, from time to time, we experience threats. They come in all forms – financial threats, health-related threats, relational threats, etc. When such threats are encountered, how do we respond? How SHOULD we respond? In our passage today, we are told how Peter, John and their fellow believers responded to the threat they faced at the hands of the powerful religious leaders. We may never face the threat of imprisonment for being followers of Jesus, but we prepare for such a potential threat by responding to actual threats we do experience in the way that they see them respond in this passage. Their response is a model for us.

Opening Discussion: What if any threat are you facing right now?

Read Acts 4:23-31

1. In the first part of Acts 4, Peter and John are arrested (v. 3) and then commanded to not speak or teach about Jesus (v. 18). Once released, they return to their friends to report what happened. What strikes you about how the community prayed in response?
2. Sometimes prayer isn't our first response to threats, right? What are some of your "go to" responses when you feel threatened other than turning to God in prayer?
3. One core thing we see in their response is that they knew their God. Look closely at verses 24–28. What aspects of God do they focus upon?

Steve said:

The better we know God, the better we'll pray. The better we know God, the better we'll know WHAT to pray (specifically what to ask). This is true whether you're praying in response to some threat you're facing or praying about a decision or praying about a relationship. The better you know God, the better you'll know what to pray.

4. Do you agree with this? Why or why not?

5. As they pray, they quote from Psalm 2, a prophetic psalm referring to the coming kingship of Christ. Turn to Psalm 2. How are the events recounted in Psalm 2 similar to what they were now experiencing?

6. What is the main request in their prayer?

Steve said:

First, **Pray for boldness**: “. . . grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness. . .” Even though we have incredible freedom in this country to talk about our faith openly, at times we may feel threatened or intimidated when it comes to speaking about Jesus. But I’d encourage you to begin praying like they prayed in Acts 4. “God, give me the grace to be transparent about my faith. Fill me with your Spirit so I can live out my calling to be a witness for Jesus. You are sovereign over everything, so I trust you!”

7. Do you feel the need to pray for such boldness? Explain.

Steve said:

Consider the biggest threat you face. Ask two questions: What is true about God that is relevant to this threat? How should I pray accordingly?

8. As you think about a threat that you might be facing, what IS true of God related to that threat? And how might you pray accordingly?