

## The Life Project: Acts

### Candice Roberts

When my oldest Jaden was baptized we bought him the book, Jesus Freaks, which is a compilation of stories about real martyrs, ancient and modern-day, who have been persecuted and often killed for the cause of Christ. We wanted Jaden to understand that following Jesus does not mean following Him to a church service on Sunday mornings at 11. Following Jesus sometimes means following Him to the cross. A faith this radical is what true Christianity is about, and there is no book in the Bible that exemplifies true Christianity more than the book of Acts. The Christians in the book of Acts and the Christians referenced in Jesus Freaks, have more than a few things in common. The most striking trait about both of these groups is their boldness. And in 21<sup>st</sup> Century America, I see boldness as one trait that Christians are lacking. We are not a bold people. And I believe God would like to see that changed.

I think there are three keys that the church in Acts had that gave them great boldness. First they knew the Truth. Secondly, they had a sense of urgency. And finally, they knew their Source of power.

First century Christians knew the Truth. Many of them had walked with Jesus. They saw Him perform miracles. They heard Him teach. They heard Jesus proclaim that He was the way, the TRUTH, and the life and that NO ONE could come to the Father except through Him. Many of these early believers saw Jesus crucified. Some of them even got to witness the empty tomb. In the first century world, Christians KNEW the truth and so they could proclaim it boldly. I fear today that we are anti-truth. Our society says that there is no true way, just the way that is right for you. Sadly many in the church have bought into this lie. When I

discard absolute truth, I also have to discard boldness. Why would I tell you about Jesus, about the salvation available through Him, if we both believe you can get your salvation another way? If we do not believe in absolute truth, we will certainly not have the boldness to proclaim our Savior as the only way. But just because we don't believe in absolute truth, does not make it less true. Just because you believe the moon will save you, or the stars, or being good, or attending church; doesn't mean it is true. The only thing that saves is Jesus Christ. Until we are convinced of this truth, we will never have boldness.

Once we know the truth, we must also have an urgency to proclaim it. The early church used to greet each other by saying, "Maranatha", which means the Lord is coming. First century Christians lived with the idea that Christ would return any moment. They knew their time was short. The longest anyone had to spread the Gospel of Christ was their life span. They might even have less time than that. They had the real hope that Christ would return at any moment and they wanted to be ready. The Christian martyrs in the Jesus Freak book had a sense of urgency to their faith as well. They lived in a time and/or place that was hostile to Christians. They understood the ramifications of being a Christian. They understood they were in a Spiritual war and the enemy was gaining ground. Living and dying for Christ is not something that can be put off. The enemy won't wait. The time is now.

But in America.....we are, in a word, complacent. We have been lulled to sleep by a very crafty enemy. In the famous Screwtape Letters by CS Lewis, we find this poignant quote.

"Indeed the safest road to Hell is the gradual one- the gentle slope, soft underfoot, without sudden turnings, without milestones, without signposts." And the Church for too long, has been happy to

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help people down this gentle slope to Hell. We don't want to be too bold. We don't really think Christ could come back any day. We have lost the urgency of the Gospel. No urgency = no boldness.

If we can regain our sense of urgency, and realize that the Bible tells us we are living in the last days; If we can arm ourselves the truth that Jesus is the only way to heaven; then we are closer than ever to obtaining the boldness of our ancient Christian brothers and sisters. The final key to boldness, is to know the Source of power. This Source of course, is the Holy Spirit. Acts chapter 1 tells us that the Holy Spirit was given so that the Christians could be witnesses to the ends of the earth. This implies that witnessing is not something that can be done in our own strength.

“Renounce your Jesus, or we will kill you!” they threatened. Roy was terribly frightened. Though trembling, he answered, “I am a soldier of Christ!” At this, one of the Muslim attackers swung a sword at his stomach. The sword hit the Bible Roy held, and ripped into it, knocking it out of his hand. The man's next swing sliced open Roy's stomach. His last word was “Jesus.” From Jesus Freaks, by DC Talk

This is the story of a 15 year old boy in Indonesia who was murdered for his faith. It happened in 1999. Roy knew the Source of his power. Roy knew Jesus. He had been filled with the Holy Spirit. Like the Christians in the book of Acts, Roy has now heard, “Well done, my good and faithful servant.” As a Christian, these are the greatest words we can ever hope to hear- to hear our Lord telling us well done.

Our mission is clear. Matthew 28:19, “Go therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.” Have we done this with boldness? My prayer for our church this week is that we would understand boldness, that we would adopt it as a character trait that defines us. I pray that we will be armed with the truth, with a sense of urgency and with the Spirit’s power to be witnesses for our Savior.