

Adult Teaching Resources

April 28, 2019



Lenten Season (March 10-April 14)

Purposeful Love

John 12:1-8 – “The Scent of Love”

Luke 23:1-49 – “Of Passion and Pain”

Easter Season (April 21-June 2)

John 20:1-8 – “Best. News. Ever.”

Resurrection Realities

Acts 5:27-32 – “First Allegiance”

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First Allegiance

Acts 5:27-32

FIT Teaching Guide

by David Woody

This adult teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

Bible Background

“But Peter and the apostles answered, ‘We must obey God rather than any human authority.’”
Acts 5:29

As people of faith we are fortunate to live in a time and a place where we are free to practice our faith without fear of Retribution.

Today we explore the passage of the early Believers and their faith in God in spite of the law.

Opening

Ask everyone to form small groups of 3-4 in a group. Once the groups have been created, ask them just think through and discuss this situation:

What if you were the government, and in your land, practicing Christianity was against the law. As Leaders of your land, what would your punishment be? How would you enforce them? How strict would you be and enforcing the law?

Get each small group time to share with each other, then open the floor for larger discussion.

Reading the Bible

Where did they bring Peter? (To stand before the council.)

What did the high priest say? (We gave you strict orders not to teach in his name yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and you are determined to bring it this man’s blood on us.)

What did Peter say about obeying God? (We must obey God rather than human authority.)

What did Peter accuse the high priest of doing? (Killed Jesus by hanging him on a tree.)

What did God do for Jesus? (Exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior.)

What are Peter and the Holy Spirit? (Witnesses to these things.)

Making Connections

Have you ever challenged the legal authorities, more than speeding or parking? What did you do? Why? What ultimately happened?

What is the boldest thing you have done in the name of Christ?

How often do you proclaim the gospel? How often do you tell others about your church? What would motivate you to do more of both?

Is there ever a reason to obey human authority instead of God's Authority? What would the reason be? When should we solely follow human authority? When should we solely follow God's Authority?

Our lesson writer asks, "Why should the disciples listen to a power-hungry cartel of religious authoritarians when they could listen to God? Why should they obey a group of men so insecure that they would kill Jesus, when they could obey the very God who raised Jesus from the dead? For Peter and the other apostles, the answer was simple: 'We must obey God rather than any human authority.'" What gets in your way of totally obeying God?

Who do you know who needs an invitation to repent and accept Jesus as Savior? What are you doing about it??

So What?

Ask everyone to find their small group from the beginning of the lesson. Share these words from our lesson writer:

"The apostles had not only witnessed those things, but they were determined to *be* witnesses in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ. The presence of the Holy Spirit continued to witness of God's presence and to inspire their continued boldness in preaching."

Ask each small group to consider these questions:

What does it mean to be a witness to the gospel?

What does it mean to proclaim the gospel?

How does a contemporary Christian combine the two?

How do we obey God first, regardless of what the world, or law, says?

Ask each group to share among themselves, then open the conversation to the larger group.

The Challenge

This week, find one way to obey God first and put God first in your life.

Prayer

Loving God, help us to put you first in all that we do and with all that we say and with all that we are. It is so easy to let other things get in the way of following you. Give us the courage to stand up for you no matter what, and no matter when. Amen. Thank you for the gift of your son who came to live and die on the cross, who gave his life and conquered death so that we might have life eternal.

Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartlege

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

A little background—The first few chapters of Acts describe the tumultuous, roller-coaster ride of the early church in the first few months after Jesus’ resurrection. The disciples were convinced of Jesus’ resurrection and amazed by his ascension to heaven (chapter 1), but still uncertain about their own futures until the surprising outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. That provided the power and the vision needed for the church to begin a period of rapid growth, while the bold preaching and compassionate ministry of Peter and John provided strong leadership for the expanding fellowship of believers (chapters 2-3).

The Jewish leaders were dismayed at these developments, as Luke describes it. They had thought their careful engineering of Jesus’ death would end the emerging threat to their authority, but the new believers were even more intense in their devotion to the Galilean, and many believed that he had actually risen from the dead, proving himself to be one with God. The leaders of the Sanhedrin, a powerful council of priests and elders, tried to squelch the movement by arresting its leaders and charging them to preach no more (chapter 4), but Peter and John responded with calm assurance. “Whether it is right in God’s sight to listen to you rather than to God, you must judge; for we cannot keep from speaking about what we have seen and heard” (4:19-20).

The authorities threatened the stubborn apostles and released them, whereupon they prayed for even more boldness in proclaiming the gospel (4:23-31). The apostles continued to preach and the number of believers continued to grow. Peter’s reputation for having miraculous powers increased to the point that sick people lined up along his customary path in hopes that his shadow would fall over them and bring healing (5:12-16).

When the apostles were arrested once again but set free from prison by an angel, the stage was set for a public showdown with the temple authorities (5:17-26).

The name of Jesus—F. F. Bruce noted in his commentary on Acts that there was curious reluctance in Jewish orthodoxy to pronounce the name of Jesus, and that it continues in some circles (*The Book of Acts*, New International Commentary on the New Testament [Grand Rapids: Eerdmann’s, 1979], 121). In the previous chapter, members of the council described the growing Jesus movement without using his name, arguing that they had to “keep it from spreading further among the people.” Still avoiding the Jesus’ name, they decided to order the disciples not to speak “to anyone in this name” (4:17). Luke explains in the following verse that the disciples were ordered “not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus” (4:18).

Digging Deeper *continued*

Fear—The temple authorities were concerned about the growth of the new Jesus movement, not just because their own power and influence might diminish, but because they feared for their lives. When the temple police went to arrest the disciples, they were careful to do so quietly and “without violence, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people” (5:26).

What’s in a word?—Some commentators have argued that *archēgos* should be translated with a word like “prince” that suggests an office, but the best translation may be something like “founder.” The word occurs only four times in the New Testament. In Acts 3:15, the NRSV translates it as “author.” When it occurs in Hebrews 2:10 and 12:2, the NRSV translates “pioneer.”

Jesus was the one who went before, the founder of the new religious movement that the apostles now led and the authorities hoped to stop. The disciples, convinced that Jesus had come from God, insisted that they intended to obey the highest authority – one far higher than the Sanhedrin.

The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartlege

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartlege, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

How would this story sound if Dr. Seuss had written it?

I know this is a question that would hardly occur to readers, but it once occurred to me as I sought a creative way to tell the story and liven up a sermon. There is an almost comic aspect to the temple authorities' fruitless attempts to control the disciples, shuttling them back and forth to prison (where they can't keep them), and ordering them not to speak with no effect whatsoever.

I re-imagined Luke, who was known as a physician, as "Dr. Leuss," and told the story of "The Men in the Pen," set in the same irregular iambic tetrameter as "The Cat in the Hat" and narrated by John. Parents who have read "The Cat in the Hat" to their children will recognize some intentional shifts in the meter, and hear the scolding voice of the goldfish in the words of the priests.

Teachers may consider reading the "Dr. Leuss" version to the class, or having a volunteer read it, as a fun way of getting at the text. I should acknowledge that "The Men in the Pen" was first published in a collection of creative sermons I called *Telling Stories: Tall Tales and Deep Truths* (Smyth & Helwys, 2008), 145-150.

The Hardest Question *continued*

The Men in the Pen

The sun did not shine in our jail cell that day,
The walls were all cold and damp and gray.

I sat there with Peter. We sat there, we two.
With our heads stuck in stocks, there was little to do.

So all we could do was to sit, sit, sit, sit!
And we did not like it down there in the pit.

All we had done was to preach the good news
and to heal a few people, both Gentiles and Jews,

But the high priest was angry – the Sadducees were mad!
So they put us in prison for what we had said.

It was late in the night and we'd been there all day
when Peter suggested that we ought to pray.

So we prayed through the evening and into the night,
In hopes that our God would show us some light . . .

And then something went "Bump!"
How that bump made us jump!

We looked! And we saw him step in with a nod,
We looked! And we saw him – the angel of God!
And he said to us, "Why are you looking so odd?"

"I know it seems bleak while you're here in the lurch,
but God isn't finished with you or his church!

"So I've come with a message that's plain and that's simple –
God says to go back and to preach at the temple!"

And Peter and I did not know what to say,
but we knew it was better for us to obey.

So the angel reached down and he unstuck our stocks,
then he turned to the door and he unlocked the locks.

While all of the guards and the prisoners slept
we snuck out of that place where the crooks were kept.

We went back to the temple in the dark of the night,
then we started to preach at the morning's first light.

We said "*Look at us! Look at us! Look at us now!*
We're back out of jail! Do you want to know how?"

"Our God came to save us! He helped us! It's true!
And I'll bet if you open your heart he'll save *you!*"

"God has a plan for your days full of strife –
Jesus has come to give you new life!

"The same one you saw die his death on a hill –
He rose up again and he's living still!"

And many there were who believed us that day,
but soon the armed guards came to take us away.

The priest said "No! No! Tell those Christians to quit!"
For they did not like us, not one little bit.

So they dragged us to court and gave orders to us,
Said "We told you to stop and we told you to hush!"

"Your preaching is planned to make us look bad
and blame us because your Jesus is dead!"

But Peter just said "We don't care what you say!
It's not other people, but *God* we obey!"

"It's true that you killed our teacher and Lord,
but God raised him up and God gave us this word!"

"You cursed him and nailed him to your ugly tree,
But God will forgive even your cruelty.

"We know what we're talking about don't you see?
He's already forgiven my friend John and me."

Still the high priest called out all the Sadducees
and they wanted to kill both Peter and me,

but a Pharisee stood, named Gamaliel,
a man who had lots of respect, you could tell.

He said "If these men are just spreading a lie,
then leave them alone and their movement will die . . ."

"But if they are truthful, although it sounds odd,
Do you want to find yourselves fighting with God?"

So they beat us and told us to preach no more
unless we liked that jailhouse floor,

but Jesus had called us to tell the good news,
so we left there and did what he told us to do.

Now, what would *you* do if your Master told you?