



theme: Community – Acts 4 – Witness and Persecution

materials: Bibles, stuff to trade

The theme for this month's cell talks is community. We will be looking at the early Christian community in the book of Acts to shed light on what it means to be a Kingdom of God community now.

welcome

Take out whatever you have in your pockets or bags. Now start trying to make trades. Maybe trade a stick of gum for a comb, or a pencil for bus ticket. Try and make sure that everyone makes at least one trade. If someone has nothing to trade, trade a song, or a smile.

Name one thing that you'd have a hard time sharing.

interact

The Christian community in Acts were involved in each other's lives. When one suffered, all suffered. When one rejoiced, all rejoiced. Everyone shared what they had with one another.

Is anyone in your group suffering? Share that suffering with the group, and allow the group to walk alongside you in that suffering, and to praise the Lord in the midst of it.

Is anyone rejoicing? Share the rejoicing, and praise the Lord in the midst of it.

Does anyone have any needs? Share them, and see if others in the cell can meet those needs together, and praise the Lord in the midst of it.

read

Read Acts 4 together.

Why do the authorities get so mad at Peter and John here? What have they done wrong?

What do the authorities want Peter and John to stop doing? If you were ordered by law to stop using the name of Jesus, what would you do? Would you have a community to support you in your decision?

How does Peter and John's community react to their predicament?

How would you react to someone you love being threatened by the authorities? What would you want your loved ones to do in the face of persecution?

How would you want your community to react when you are facing tough times?

Why does this chapter conclude with a reminder of how the believers shared everything?

This is an intense level of sharing, including selling houses and sharing the money. What would happen if you suggested this course of action at your church?

think

Write some letters to some Christians in prison for their faith. Check out <http://www.persecution.com/> (the prisoners list) and then write a group letter to one of the prisoners, telling them the passage you studied this week and that you will be praying for them. Make sure you send it off.



live & pray

Is there anyone in your cell or your church that you haven't seen in a long time? Make a point of going to visit that person this week, and sharing friendship with them.

useful resources

- Movie: *Witness* – Harrison Ford in an Amish Community.
TV Show: *Lost* -- an excellent show (especially the first season) about how community works, and also ways to destroy community.
Book: *A Prisoner, and yet...* by Corrie ten Boom

leader's guide

The authorities were angry because Peter and John are preaching about Jesus and the resurrection, and because a miraculous healing is making it impossible for them to say they are wrong. They try to threaten and bully them into not using the name of Jesus anymore, but the disciples would not be cowed. They determined to continue speaking truthfully about what they had seen and what they knew to be true. When they are released, Peter and John's community react not with relief that they were unharmed (although surely they felt that) but with praise that God was sovereign. This is important, that the community understood it existed for God, not for itself. Their responsibility was to praise the Lord and obey him, and to die if necessary. Christian communities don't exist just for their own sake – if they do, they are not really Christian. They exist because of and for the sake of Christ and His witness.

The chapter ends with sharing again. This is a reminder of what it means to be the community of Christ – there can be no favouritism, no greed. It must reflect the character and nature of Christ, if it is to witness in the name of Christ, which has proven to be so powerful.