



Leader's Guide

Week of April 30

The Big Idea

The Early Church drew people to Christ through their sacrificial living and endurance despite persecution.

Getting Started

1. What does it mean to be a "cultural" Christian?
***Leader's Note:** In some cultures, throughout the past 2,000 years, there have been advantages to claiming to be a Christian. The USA, for nearly all its history, has been one of these cultures. There have been certain political, social, and even

economic advantages that come with identification as a Christian. Therefore, a good working definition of a "cultural" Christian is someone who claims the name of Christ not for love of Christ, but to claim these advantages. In American society today, this is clearly disappearing because it is becoming increasingly less advantageous to identify as a Christian.

2. Reflect on this quote by Rob Dreher: "American Christians are going to have to come to terms with the brute fact that we live in a culture, one in which our beliefs make increasingly little sense. We speak a language that the world more and more either cannot hear or finds offensive to its ears." What are the negatives? What are the positives?

Digging In

1. Read **Acts 5:12-16**. Why were people attracted to the early church?
***Leader's Note:** People held the early church in 'high esteem' because they were loving others (especially the poor) and attending to their physical needs! They were doing whatever it took to attend to people's physical needs. This may be instructive for us today.

Spring 2017

2. Read **Acts 5:17-18**. Where have the “religious leaders” gone wrong? What led them to make these decisions?

***Leader’s Note:** An obvious answer is that they’ve rejected Christ. But they also appear to be jealous that the apostles are being successful in their healing and caring for the poor.

3. Read **Acts 5:19-32**. What sorts of discomforts and/or dangers did people face in this passage for the sake of Christ? Think through physical, emotional, mental, etc. How does this compare to discomforts/dangers that you’ve faced?

4. Read **Acts 5:33-42**. What is encouraging about this passage?

***Leader’s Note:** One thing that’s encouraging is that according to Gamaliel’s criteria, the Church of Jesus Christ is truly from God, because it is still around today, unlike numerous other movements throughout history. The other encouraging thing is how the early church rejoiced through suffering.

especially the poor is a clear answer to this. It’s not unlike the early church’s situation.

2. If it ever came to it, are you willing to bleed so you might bless your neighborhoods and the nations?

Pray

Perhaps, in light of this passage, we all need to pray for boldness. You can also spend time praying for the persecuted Church in the majority of the world outside the US.

Looking Around

1. What are some ways the Church in America can be held in ‘high esteem’ by the American public?

***Leader’s Note:** Helping and loving others,