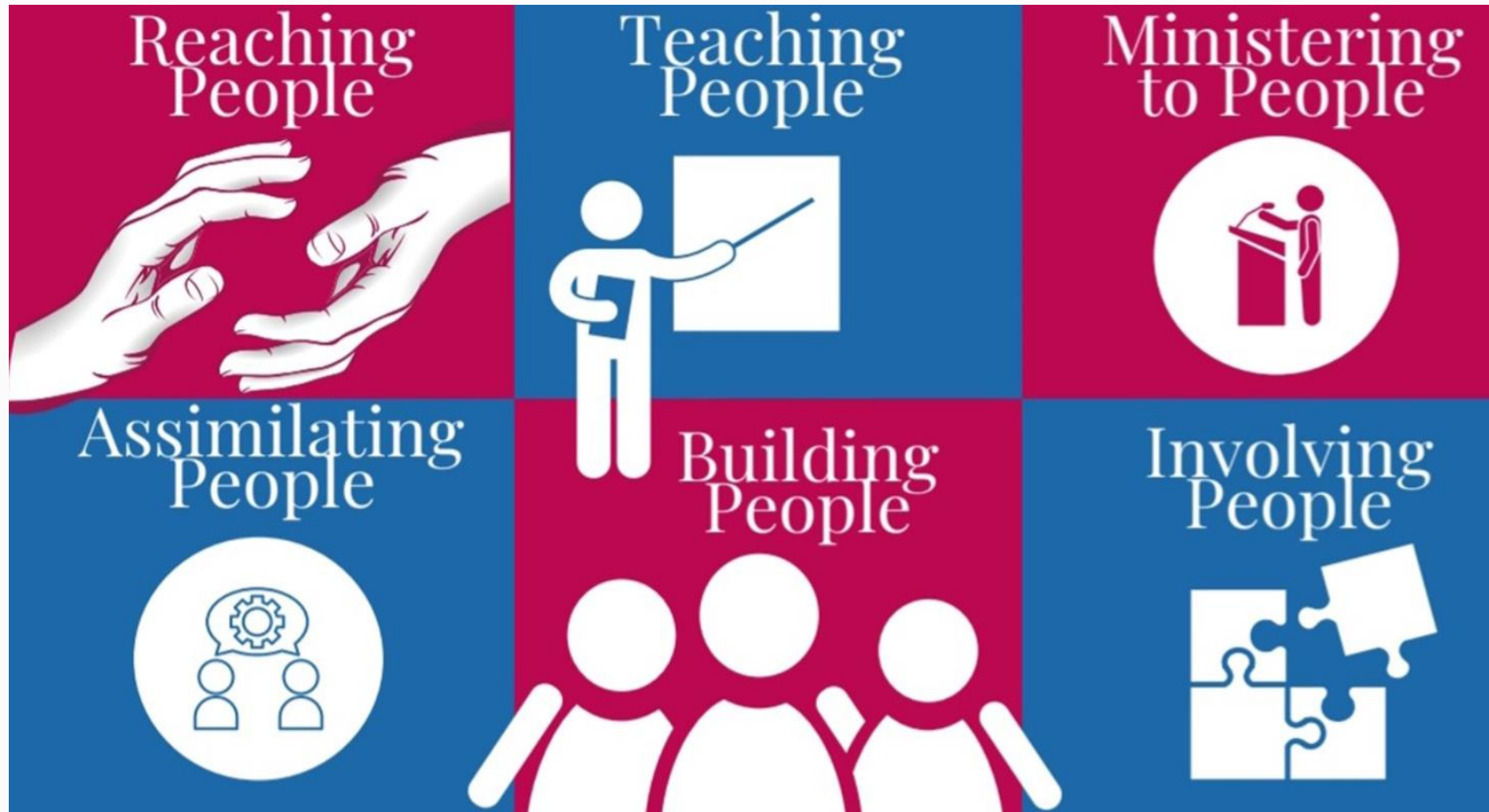




Faith and Love C.O.G.I.C
Sunday School

Lesson 3 September 21, 2025
WITNESSING TO THE
TRUTH

SUNDAY SCHOOL CORE VALUES



SUNDAY SCHOOL RESPONSIVE READING

Superintendent/Teacher: Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity. **Psalm 133:1**

School/Class: But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. **Hebrews 13:16**

Superintendent/Teacher: All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. **2 Timothy 3:16**

School/Class: Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. **Psalm 119:105**

SUNDAY SCHOOL RESPONSIVE READING

Superintendent/Teacher: Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others. **Philippians 2:4**

School/Class: He who has a generous eye will be blessed, for he gives of his bread to the poor. **Proverbs 22:9**

Superintendent/Teacher: Therefore he says: “When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.” **Ephesians 4:8**

School/Class: As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. **1 Peter 4:10**

SUNDAY SCHOOL RESPONSIVE READING

Superintendent/Teacher: For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. **1 Corinthians 12:12**

School/Class: For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function. **Romans 12:4**

Superintendent/Teacher: By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another. **John 13:35**

School/Class: For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. **Gal. 5:13**

SUNDAY SCHOOL RESPONSIVE READING

ALL:

But grow in the grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen. **2 Peter 3:18**

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WITNESSING TO THE TRUTH



- Bible Basis: Acts 5:27-29, 33-42
- Bible Truth: The apostles knew that they were obeying God's calling, even when the authorities tried to stop them.
- Memory Verse: VERSE: "Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).
- Lesson Aim: By the end of the lesson, we will: EXAMINE the apostles' proclamation of Jesus as the Messiah despite being ordered not to do so by the Sanhedrin; ASSESS our commitment to witnessing and proclaiming the name of Jesus; and IDENTIFY and overcome barriers to evangelism efforts within and without the church community.
- Background Scriptures: Acts 5:12-42 & Revelation - Read and incorporate the insights gained from the Background Scriptures into your study of the lesson.

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Acts 5:27-29, 33-42, KJV

27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council: and the high priest asked them,

28 Saying, Did not we straitly command you that ye should not teach in this name? and, behold, ye have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this man's blood upon us.

29 Then Peter and the other apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

5:33 When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them.

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Acts 5:27-29, 33-42, KJV

34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space;

35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men.

36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought.

37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed.

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Acts 5:27-29, 33-42, KJV

38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought:

39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

The council. This refers to the Sanhedrin, the highest Jewish council.

Comprised of the high priest, elders, scribes, and members of prominent families, the Sanhedrin presided over civil, criminal, and religious matters. Both Pharisees and Sadducees were represented in the council.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Apostles. This word comes from the Greek apostolos, which means "sent ones." These were the twelve men that Jesus chose from among His wider group of disciples to be with Him and to teach. This title was conferred upon them by Jesus Himself in Luke 6:13. Paul is also considered an apostle, though he was not one of the Twelve. He was personally commissioned by Jesus to be an apostle.

LIFE NEED FOR TODAY'S LESSON:

AIM: Students will know that some people are so dedicated to a cause that they will go to any lengths, even enduring pain and suffering, to achieve their goals.

INTRODUCTION

Teaching in Difficult Times

The fifth chapter of Acts gives an account of the powerful ministry of the apostles. The apostles had been commissioned by Jesus Himself to teach and be witnesses in Matthew 28:19-20. Following the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the apostles taught powerfully, and their teaching was accompanied by signs and wonders. The high priest and the Sadducees were filled with jealousy and had Peter and John arrested. However, an angel appeared to them during the night, freed them, and instructed them to teach the Word of Life, the words of salvation and eternal life. At this time, Christianity was called "The Way" and "The Life" (Acts 9:2).

BIBLE LEARNING

AIM: Students will learn that believers can develop a stronger commitment to God and a willingness to follow Christ.

I. CHOOSING TO OBEY GOD

Acts 5:25-29

The Sanhedrin forbid Peter and John from teaching in the name of Jesus (Acts 4:18). However, Jesus had given them a mandate to teach. An angel had further instructed them the previous night. Knowing that it could result in persecution, the apostles continue to "fill Jerusalem" with their teaching and perform signs and wonders. The apostles have already been imprisoned and seen the treatment Jesus received for going against the religious establishment. The apostles are very aware of the danger of spreading their message. Staring into the face of persecution and possibly death, the apostles consciously choose to obey God, even at personal cost to themselves.

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I. CHOOSING TO OBEY GOD

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The disciples had been arrested and imprisoned the night before. They were now apprehended again in the morning. Having placed the disciples before the Sanhedrin, the high priest brings a threefold charge against them.

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First, the apostles are accused of violating the previous injunction given to them not to preach in the name of Jesus. The phrase translated here as "straitly command" in Greek is paraggelia paraggello (pah-ron-ghe-LEE-ah pah-ron-GHEL-loh) or "to command a command." Use of a verb with its cognate dative like this can emphasize the idea of the verb. So rather than just being "commanded," they were "straitly commanded." The apostles were violating the authority of the high priest, who was the de facto ruler over the Jewish nation.

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Second, it is a grievous accusation that the apostles had "filled" (Gk. pleroo, play-ROW-oh) Jerusalem with their doctrine. This word means to fill up full or completely. The apostles had filled Jerusalem with the teaching of Christ's death and resurrection. In just a short time, all Jerusalem knew of Christ's resurrection.

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WITNESSING TO THE TRUTH



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Lastly, the Sanhedrin claims the apostles mean to blame the council for Jesus' death. The Sanhedrin might say this intending to insinuate the disciples were inciting the populace to sedition, but more clearly they are revealing their own guilty consciences,

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Obedience to God

The disciples refuse to be intimidated. Without any denial or hesitation, Peter provides a powerful rejoinder that obedience to God takes priority over the conflicting orders of the Sanhedrin. The word for "obey" (Gk. *peitharcheo*, pay-thar-KHEH-oh) here specifically means to obey a ruler or superior. For Peter, obedience to God is non-negotiable and takes precedence over the commandments of men.

II. WORDS OF CAUTION

Act 5:33-39

The Sanhedrin is in a difficult situation. On one hand, they are furious with the apostles for teaching and healing in Jesus' name and even more so for defying their orders. On the other hand, they fear the people and do not want to upset them. The Sanhedrin wants to kill the apostles, but Gamaliel, the most prominent rabbi of their time, cautions them not to act on their wishes (vv. 34-36).

II. WORDS OF CAUTION

Act 5:33-39

Gamaliel urges the council to proceed with caution. Theudas and Judas had come and caused the people to revolt, but when they were killed, their followers scattered.

Unfortunately, Gamaliel put Jesus in the same category as the impostors. He felt that, given enough time, Jesus' followers would also disband. Gamaliel also acknowledges the possibility that the apostles were sent from God. He understands that if, indeed, the apostles are from God, the Sanhedrin will not be able to stop them.

II. WORDS OF CAUTION

Act 5:33-39

33 When they heard that, they were cut to the heart, and took counsel to slay them. 34 Then stood there up one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the apostles forth a little space; 35 And said unto them, Ye men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what ye intend to do as touching these men. 36 For before these days rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves: who was slain; and all, as many as obeyed him, were scattered, and brought to nought. 37 After this man rose up Judas of Galilee in the days of the taxing, and drew away much people after him: he also perished; and all, even as many as obeyed him, were dispersed. 38 And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: 39 But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.

II. WORDS OF CAUTION

Act 5:33-39

When the members of the Sanhedrin hear Peter's response (vv. 29-32), they are cut to the heart or "enraged" (RSV). The Greek verb diaprio (dee-ah-PREE-oh) translated here as "cut to the heart" has the root meaning of being "sawn through." It is found only here and in verse 7:54. It means that they were violently enraged, indicating a state of very sharp vexation resulting in inward rage. It is a situation where personal rage dethrones reason. Like wounded and cornered beasts, the only recourse is to destroy their pursuers. So they resolve to kill the disciples.

II. WORDS OF CAUTION

Act 5:33-39

When the Sanhedrin seemed likely to resort to violent measures against the apostles, Gamaliel, a Pharisee among them, intervenes. He was a kindly man who was loved and respected, and, obviously, was more tolerant than his fellows. Had the Sanhedrin not been restrained by Gamaliel's cool and wise advice, they probably would have ordered the stoning of the disciples as they later did Stephen. Three important things are to be noted of Gamaliel: he was a Pharisee, a doctor of the law, and had a reputation among all the people.

II. WORDS OF CAUTION

Act 5:33-39

Hence he was best qualified and suited to defend the apostles. He was the teacher of Saul, who became Paul the apostle (Acts 22:3), and he was the grandson of Hillel, and the most influential rabbi of his time. Ancient Jewish scholars wrote of him that, "Since Rabban Gamaliel the elder died there has been no more reverence for the law; and purity and abstinence died out at the same time." Like his grandfather Hillel, he was noted for his liberal attitude.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Gamaliel, the Defender

Gamaliel's advice is to stand away from these men and let them alone. He warns the court to exercise caution lest they find themselves going against God. If the counsel or work is of men- literally "out of men," that is "of human origin"- it would come to nothing and be overthrown. To bolster his argument, he cites two examples that were probably well known to the members of the court. First he cites Theudas. In those days Palestine had a quick succession of firebrand leaders who set themselves up as the deliverers of their country and sometimes even as the Messiah. Among them was a man named Theudas, who led a band of people out to the Jordan with the promise that he could divide the waters and that they would walk over in dry land, and whose rising was swiftly dealt with.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Gamaliel, the Defender

Gamaliel's second example is Judas. He had rebelled at the time of the census taken by the governor Quirinius in A.D. 6 in order to arrange taxation. Judas took up the position that God was the King of Israel, and to Him alone tribute was due; all other taxation was impious and to pay it was a blasphemy. He attempted to raise a revolution but failed.

III. PERSECUTION AND JOY

Act 5:40-42

Bearing Gamaliel's warning in mind, the Sanhedrin calls the apostles in once again. They repeat their orders not to teach in the name of Jesus. Because they disobeyed the Sanhedrin's initial orders, the apostles are punished according to Jewish law, which called for thirty-nine lashes on bare skin with a leather whip. The beating not only gave vent to the Sanhedrin's fury but was intended to deter and shame the apostles. By bringing shame on the apostles, they hoped to also bring shame on those listening to their teaching.

III. PERSECUTION AND JOY

Act 5:40-42

Rather than being frightened or embittered, the apostles go away rejoicing. They are honored to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus. Christ had warned them that persecution would come: "God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in Heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way" (Matthew 5:11-12, NLT). Not only do the apostles rejoice, they redouble their efforts. Every day they teach about Jesus (v. 42), whether in the Temple or in people's homes. The apostles joyfully follow Jesus' instructions knowing that they put themselves in danger by doing so.

III. PERSECUTION AND JOY

Acts 5:40-42

40 And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

The Sanhedrin listens to Gamaliel and once again, after threatening the apostles, lets them go, but this time with a flogging. The exact word for "beaten" (Gk. *dero*, DEH-ro) was originally used for flaying and skinning. It is also a general word for violent whipping. In other words, the apostles received a beating that left wounds on the skin. Flogging was the customary punishment used as a warning not to persist in an offense. It consisted of thirty-nine lashes, often referred to as the forty less one (cf. 2 Corinthians 11:24), based on Deuteronomy 25:3. It was still a cruel punishment. With bared chest and in a kneeling position, one was beaten with a tripled strap of calf hide across both chest and back, two on the back for each stripe across the chest. Men were known to have died from the ordeal. As before, the apostles are warned not to continue their witness in Jesus' name. This time the warning is reinforced with somewhat stronger persuasion.

III. PERSECUTION AND JOY

Acts 5:40-42

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The apostles remain undeterred. They are determined to face whatever dangers threaten. They are not cowed by the council's threats and commands. The apostles continue to obey God rather than men. In fact, they rejoice at having suffered for Jesus' name. This word "suffer shame" (Gk. *atimazo*, ah-ti-MAHD-zo) means to suffer dishonor and disgrace. This psychological suffering serves as a counterpoint to the physical beating they received. And the witness to the name continues-publicly in the Temple and privately in Christians' homes. They rejoice in persecution for two reasons. First, it is an opportunity to demonstrate their loyalty to Christ. Second, it is a real opportunity to share in the experience of Christ. Those who share in the cross-bearing will share in the crown-wearing.

LIGHT ON THE WORD

Proclaiming the Gospel

The apostles' witness, their proclamation of the Gospel, is their primary task and occupation. Spence-Jones sums up these verses beautifully: "The spirit and conduct of the apostles here recorded is a precious example to their successors. To glory in the cross, to count shame endured for Christ's sake the highest for Christ's sake the highest honor, and to be unwearied and undaunted in teaching and preaching Jesus Christ through good report and through evil report, is the true character and work of every bishop of souls."

BIBLE APPLICATION

AIM: Students will understand the importance of developing a stronger commitment to God and a willingness to follow Christ.

BIBLE APPLICATION

Many Christians in the United States are not willing to sacrifice their comfort, let alone their lives, for God. Around the world, Christians are persecuted, tortured, and killed for preaching Jesus. Christians are persecuted in over fifty countries, including imprisonment, torture, and martyrdom. The five countries that have the most severe persecution are North Korea, Somalia, Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan. Still, the church is growing in these hostile nations. They follow the example of the apostles, most of whom paid for their obedience with their lives. The apostles were willing to do whatever it took to obey God. Are you?

STUDENT RESPONSES

AIM: Students will learn that in spite of difficult times, they can depend on the Lord.

STUDENT RESPONSES

Like the apostles, we are to continue to proclaim the name of Jesus even in difficult circumstances. They never stopped proclaiming the Good News of Christ even in the face of imprisonment and beatings. Even amid persecution, the apostles rejoiced because they valued their obedience to Jesus more than their safety or lives. They were determined to make Christ known even at great personal cost, and felt privileged to suffer for the name of Christ.

STUDENT RESPONSES

While we have relative freedom to share the Gospel in the United States, many do not have the same opportunity. Research different organizations that aid those in other countries who are persecuted, such as Voice of the Martyrs (<http://www.persecution.com>) or Open Doors USA (<http://www.opendoorsusa.org>). Look for opportunities to write to those who are suffering persecution for their faith in other countries.

Prayer

Dear Lord,

Bless us to stand up with courage and conviction for knowing and believing in You and Your Word. Our determination to witness to others about who You are is a reflection of Your strength and life.

In Jesus' Name we pray.

Amen.

Next Sunday
September 28, 2025

Lesson 4

Remembering God's Faithfulness
Acts 7:2-4, 8-10, 17, 33-34, 45-47, 53