

Acts 4:32–35

Ps. 133

1 John 1:1–2:2

John 20:19–31

As Any Have Need

Goal for the Session

Tweens will consider how early Christians used money and personal possessions, and commit to generously sharing their own resources.

■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

Focus on Acts 4:32–35

WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Samuel E. Balentine

There is the stress of earning a living, now made acute by the addition to Jerusalem’s population of persons from “every nation under heaven,” including “both Jews and proselytes” (2:5, 10). Acts 4:32–35, along with 2:42–47 and 6:1–7, provides insight into how the church responded to this economic challenge by describing its practice of sharing possessions so that “there was not a needy person among them” (4:34). These three texts as “acts of the apostles” suggest the church’s mission “in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth” is rooted in and grows out of the fundamental imperative to care for one another.

WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Alan G. Padgett

In the Nicene Creed we confess belief in one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church. Luke lays out some similar theological values for the Christian community. There is little doubt that our author paints a rather idyllic scene, but there is some grounding in historical reality. Luke notes that the small community is unified: “one heart and soul.” This ideal of unity is not of the bureaucratic kind, but of purpose, mission, and values. The power of the Holy Spirit and the powerful witness of the resurrection of our Lord gave them a unity that was part of their mission and witness to the world (v. 33).

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Cynthia M. Campbell

In verse 33, Luke makes it clear that the source of this extraordinary behavior is the resurrection of Jesus: “With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all.” The resurrection is the demonstration of the power of God over all the powers of sin, death, and destruction in the world. It is also the power to transform the lives of those who believe. Does the resurrection of Jesus still have power to transform? In the contemporary post-Easter season, perhaps our efforts should be to help people see concrete glimpses into the power of God’s transforming presence in this world.

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” George Bryant Wirth

We are in a time of painful transitions and harmful divisions among congregations and denominations, within our country, and between the United States and other nations. As Christians who claim Jesus as Lord and Savior, we cannot allow our behavior to contradict his call and command to be “peacemakers” (Matt. 5:9) and to “love one another, just as I have loved you” (John 13:34). The clear and compelling message to share about unity in the midst of diversity is that the Lord calls us in humility to confess our sins, and to identify and reconcile ourselves not only with other Christians, but also with all of God’s human family on earth.

FOCUS SCRIPTURE

Acts 4:32–35

YOU WILL NEED

- white cloth
- gold or yellow streamers or ribbons
- Christ candle, matches
- Color Pack 12, 13, 30, 33
- Monopoly® board game
- Bibles
- sticky notes
- pens
- Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021; CD player

For Responding

- option 1: copies of Resource Sheet 1, fine-tipped markers or colored pencils, calculators
- option 2: copies of Resource Sheet 2; Internet-connected device (optional)
- option 3: newsprint or markerboard, markers

Alleluia! Allelu!

Alleluia! Allelu! Jesus has been raised!
Alleluia! Allelu! Let his name be praised!
The angel at the break of day
Rolled the giant stone away.
Alleluia! Allelu! Jesus has been raised!

Focus on Your Teaching

Tweens are beginning to develop a keener awareness of economic realities and resource inequity. They may know classmates or friends who are experiencing economic hardship and those who enjoy a higher standard of living. Their schools may sponsor charitable collections—canned goods, clothes, cash—to benefit people in need. They may be paying closer attention to parents or guardians when they mention household finances. Some tweens aren't insulated from financial stress; others do not appreciate what they have. Today's text offers a much-needed chance for tweens to discuss the disparities they observe and to ponder how Christians can address this.

God of abundance, help me to model the generous sharing to which the risen Christ calls all who follow him. Amen.

LEADING THE SESSION

GATHERING

Before the session, if your classroom Bibles are not all the same version, make a copy of Acts 4:32–35 from one version for each learner. Set up a Monopoly® board game for three or four players. Bring information about the ways your church shares resources with people in need. If you are using option 2 in Responding, gather information about church agencies that address material needs in the world, such as Church World Service or your denomination's relief agencies. If you are using option 3, check with your church office about any church guidelines regarding rummage sales.

Greet tweens as they arrive. Ask volunteers to spread the white cloth in the center of your meeting space, arrange some gold or yellow streamers or ribbons on it, and place the Christ candle on it. Gather around the Christ candle and light it. Announce that this is the second Sunday of the Easter season. Sing "Alleluia! Allelu!" (Color Pack; 33; track 1 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021).

Review the "All" response, and then lead the following litany:

Leader: Jesus Christ was dead, but he now lives forever and ever!

All: Christ is risen indeed!

Leader: Because Jesus lives, we also will live abundantly and eternally!

All: Christ is risen indeed!

Leader: Come, Lord Jesus, and guide our lives.

All: Christ is risen indeed!

Extinguish the candle.

Display Color Pack 12. Invite learners to name one thing they had when they were young that they didn't want to share with anyone else. Start with your own response. Say that today's Bible story is about sharing.

Tell learners that headings in a Bible are added by editors and not actually part of the biblical text. Still, they can be helpful as quick summaries or reminders of content. Some people like to write their own heading after they study a passage.

EXPLORING

Recruit three or four learners to play Monopoly while the other learners watch. As they play, talk about how people sometimes set “house rules” for games—rules that are not officially in the game’s instructions. Announce one new “house rule” for this game: When receiving money for any reason, a player must give half of the money received to the player on his or her left. After a few moments, stop the game. Discuss:

- ✂ How will this new “house rule” change the game?
- ✂ Do you imagine Jesus would have enjoyed playing Monopoly? Why or why not?

Tell learners that while the early church obviously didn’t play Monopoly, it did observe certain “house rules” regarding money and possessions.

Distribute Bibles and have learners turn to Acts 1. Explain that Acts tells the story of Jesus’ first followers after Jesus’ resurrection and ascension to heaven. Invite learners to skim the headings in the first four chapters, calling out what they notice as significant incidents or details.

If necessary, distribute copies of Acts 4:32–35. Invite learners to join you in reading the passage aloud in unison. Designate two points at opposite sides of your learning space, one representing “realistic” and the other representing “unrealistic.” Have learners stand along this “line” to indicate how realistic or unrealistic they consider this text’s view of life among Christians to be. Ask volunteers to explain their opinions. Discuss:

- ✂ How is the early church’s approach to money and possessions unlike the approach of the game of Monopoly?
- ✂ How do you think the early church’s way of handling material goods supported the mission of telling others about Jesus’ resurrection?
- ✂ Would you have liked to be a member of this church? Why or why not?

Read aloud Acts 4:36–37. Ask:

- ✂ How does Barnabas’s action illustrate why the apostles called him “son of encouragement” (v. 36)?

Acknowledge that few churches in North America today practice communal ownership, but that sharing resources with those in need remains a priority for Jesus’ followers. Work with learners to list the ways your congregation shares what it has with others, both within and beyond its own membership. Ask:

- ✂ How do you or how would you like to participate in our congregation’s ministries of sharing with others?

RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. Money Matters** Tweens will be encouraged to think about how much money they have and how much they share. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Money Matters) and colored pencils or fine-tipped markers. Have learners spread out in your space. Tell

EASY
PREP

learners they will not be asked to show these sheets to anyone else. Go through the sheet step by step, pausing for tweens to record their information. Provide calculators to those who need them. After all have finished, have tweens fold their sheets and put them in a pocket or bag to take home. Discuss as a group: How do you feel about the percentages on your sheet? What, if anything, could you do to increase the percentage of money used to help meet the needs of others? (Remind learners to not say any specific dollar amounts.)

Option: View “The Miniature Earth” video at: www.miniature-earth.com. (Scroll down on page to find video.)

- 2. The Miniature Earth** Help tweens appreciate the unequal distribution of resources among the world’s people and the ways the church addresses the material needs of those who do not have what they need to survive and thrive. Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (A 100-Person World). Explain the mathematical premise of the information: These figures for a village of 100 people keep the same percentages of demographic information as exist in the population of 7 billion. For example, 26 percent of the world’s population is children; this translates to 26 people in a village of 100. Invite learners to respond to the information. Wonder together how the church can help the world’s people “as any [have] need” (Acts 4:35). Present the information you have about church organizations that work to supply material needs. Encourage each learner to choose a specific organization and learn more about it.
- 3. Sell to Share** Inspired by the early church’s example, tweens will plan a sale to raise funds to help people in need. Work together to list ministries or organizations in your community or church that help people with material needs (food, clothing, shelter, water). Choose one for the group to support financially. Ask learners to name aloud possessions they would be willing to sell to raise money; begin this discussion modeling your own commitment and willingness. List each person’s planned contribution, making clear the list is tentative. Emphasize that they must have parental permission to sell anything. Decide whether learners will sell items individually or will organize a rummage sale. Assign follow-up responsibilities and set dates for when the work will be done.

If you decide to hold a rummage sale to raise the funds, invite other members of the church to contribute items to sell.

**I’m Gonna Live
So God Can Use Me**

*I’m gonna live so God can
use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!*
*I’m gonna live so God can
use me
anywhere, Lord, anytime!*

*I’m gonna work so God can
use me . . .*

*I’m gonna share so God can
use me . . .*

*I’m gonna care so God can
use me . . .*

CLOSING

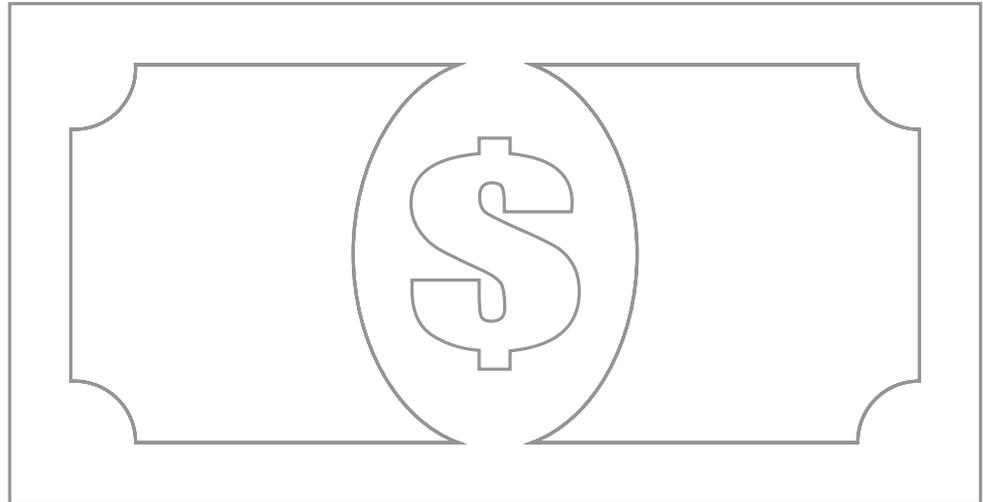
Gather with learners around the Christ candle and light it. Display Color Pack 13, explaining that it shows one artist’s idea of what the apostle Peter looked like. Remind learners of how early Christians placed their money and material possessions at the apostles’ feet. This ritual symbolized their acknowledgment of Jesus’ authority over them and their possessions.

Distribute sticky notes and pens. Invite learners to write or sketch how they will use their possessions this week in a way that honors Jesus. Have learners stick their notes near Peter’s feet.

Sing “I’m Gonna Live So God Can Use Me” (Color Pack 30; track 9 on *Singing the Feast*, 2020–2021). Invite learners to exchange gestures and words of peace with one another.

Money Matters

About how much money do you get in a year? Include money you receive from allowance, doing chores, paper routes and other jobs, and holiday gifts. Write the amount here: \$_____



Color this graphic to show how you use your money each year. Fill in the blanks below. Make sure the total dollars equals the amount you named above. Make sure the percentages add up to 100. Choose four colors and fill in the boxes to record your color code. Use these colors to illustrate your percentages on the graphic.

color

- I save about this much: \$_____ or about ____%
- I spend about this much on personal necessities: \$_____ or about ____%
- I spend about this much on fun things that aren't essential: \$_____ or about ____%
- I give about this much to help people in need or charities: \$_____ or about ____%

Dear God, thank you for the many good things in my life. Help me to use these gifts wisely and generously. Amen.

A 100-Person World



Pretend the world's entire population—currently about 7 billion—were a village of just 100 people. Who would these villagers be?

-  There are 50 males and 50 females.
-  84 of the people know how to read and write.
-  8 of the people have Internet access.
-  24 of the people have no electricity.
-  Most of the other 76 people use electricity only for light at night.
-  20 of the people have no permanent home or shelter.
-  33 people do not have access to a safe supply of drinking water.
-  50 people are malnourished.
-  1 person is starving to death.
-  48 people live on less than \$2 per day.
-  20 people live on less than \$1 per day.

Adapted from: "If the World Were a Village of 100 People" (based on the work of Donella H. Meadows and David Smith), Family Care Foundation, www.familycare.org/special-interest/if-the-world-were-a-village-of-100-people/.