

4Ws Share & Share Alike | Acts 4:32-37

WORSHIP

Consider reading **Psalm 135** together, taking turns reading a verse a time, or reading responsively with the leader reading a verse and the group responding with the next verse

Consider singing some of the songs on the sheets that were included in your packet if you have someone in the group that plays the guitar or can lead music and/or play the guitar.

WELCOME

Questions.

If you could choose your own nickname – what other people would call you, what would that nickname be? Why did you choose that as the nickname you want? Tell us the story.

WORD

Discussion Questions.

1. When persecution comes to the church it could lead to division, but that did not happen in the first century church. How can persecution cause division and why didn't division happen when the first century church was persecuted?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read Acts 4:32.) The first century church faced the threat of persecution as early as the fourth chapter. The Sanhedrin was threatening to make the church pay dearly if the believers continued to speak and live in the Name of Jesus. We might have expected that division would be the result of the imminent persecution because people in the church might have been divided as to what was the appropriate response to persecution. There could have been some people who thought that the best response to the looming persecution would be to continue to speak boldly in the Name of Jesus, and by that to obey God instead of men. Other people might have thought that the best response to the danger would have been to just lay low and do what the Sanhedrin said to do. They may have argued that the church was causing waves and if they just stopped pushing the boat through the water, the waves would die down and the Sanhedrin might begin to look the other way. All this could have started as division and led to the breakup of the church. But, that did not happen to the first century church.

They were people who were led by the Spirit of God (verse 31) and the Spirit of God always leads us to unity. They were of one heart and one mind and in full agreement that it was better to obey God than to obey men. They allowed the Spirit of God to control them and to control their responses and that's why the church was not divided.

2. The early church allowed the Spirit of God to control them. This prevented division, but it also prompted at least two other things. What two other things were the immediate result of the Spirit's filling? How does that impact our lives today?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read Acts 4:33-35.) The church avoided division as they allowed the Spirit of God to control them, but there were more results of the Spirit's filling than simple unity. One result of the Spirit's filling is something that we have seen before: The followers of Jesus powerfully witnessed to others as the Apostles (and no doubt others) powerfully testified to Jesus' resurrection from the dead. We have seen this elsewhere in the Book of Acts as the Spirit's filling (the Spirit's control in their lives) has empowered the believers to speak not only boldly, but powerfully as they witnessed for Jesus. The second result of the Spirit's filling was that the followers of Jesus began to take care of one another. This care for one another was so wide-spread that there were no needy people among the followers of Jesus; there was no one who was living in poverty. The Spirit leads us to witness powerfully and to care for one another. People who are led by the Spirit will find that these two things (and others) will become more and more true in their lives.

3. Church is not a spectator sport. Why do we believe this and what difference should believing this make in our lives?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read Acts 4:34 again.) There are many people in churches today who have lost sight of WHY we gather as a church. They seem to think that Sundays are primarily a time when entertainment of some sort will be offered in a central location where all the believers gather. They expect to be entertained at church, or at least to be amused by some good worship time and an interesting message. People like that show up on Sunday and give the impression that all of this church stuff is very important to them, but the truth is, they are sitting on the sidelines and are not in the game. We have to come to the place in our lives where we see and understand how important it is for us to get into the game. We have to become people who are not content to sit back and allow others to do all the work and thus receive all the rewards. There must be a holy discontent about us when it comes to Sunday mornings and we have to learn to go to church, not for what we can get out of it, but for how we can serve and meet the needs of others. In other words, we have to be people who understand and live out the reality that we should not GO to church, we should BE the church.

4. Sitting on the sidelines while pretending to be in the game is exhausting, but it is much more than exhausting, it is also dangerous. Why is it dangerous to pretend to be in the game while we are actually sitting on the sidelines? How should this truth impact our lives?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read Acts 14:21-23.) If we are sitting on the sidelines and we make it clear that, for now, that is what we are choosing to do, there is only very limited danger in that. We are in danger of losing the reward that God would have given to us if we had been more involved in strengthening the church and growing the Kingdom. But, it is a very different matter when we sit on the sidelines but work hard to give people the impression that we are in the game. This is about to become very, very clear among the first followers in the first century church. They are facing the threat of persecution and will soon find that there is a very high price to pay for being followers of Jesus. The people who are sitting on the sidelines and not in the game are going to begin to fall away, and by the time we are halfway through the next chapter there will be no 'sideline sitters' left in the church. Encourage the group that deciding to follow Jesus will always lead to loss and hardship. Loss and hardship are built into following Christ, but the loss that comes into our lives when we decide NOT to follow Christ is always more devastating. We can choose to lose because we are following Christ and ultimately receive the reward that He has planned for us, or we can choose to lose because we don't want to follow Christ, but the loss that will come our way will be devastating. Help the group to think this through and make a wise choice.

5. What people call us does not come from who we PRETEND to be, it comes from WHO WE REALLY ARE. From where does this idea come and what does it mean for our lives today?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read Acts 4:36-37.) In the first century church, among the first followers there was a man named Joseph who was a Levite from Cyprus. He sold a field that he owned and brought the money from the sale to the Apostles so that the Apostles could give those funds to people who were in need. The believers began to refer to Joseph by a nickname of sorts. They called him 'Barnabas', which means 'The Son of Encouragement'. Barnabas is a man who will play a very important role in the chapters of Acts that lie ahead of us, and he will play that same important role in one form or another for the rest of his life. He was a man who was so encouraged, that encouragement flowed from him. As the son of encouragement, he was as intimately tied to encouragement as a son is to his father, and that's how the early church saw him. This encouragement was not the result of who Barnabas PRETENDED to be, it was the result of who Barnabas TRULY WAS. The same is true of us. Ask the group to think this through. If the believers around you and the people at church were to come up with a nickname for you, what would your nickname be? Would your nickname reflect the good way that God is working in and through your life, or would it reflect a darker side of you? Ask the group to think through what nickname they would LIKE to have. Then, challenge them to ask God to make them into the person that He has dreamed they will become, for God's glory and the good of those around them.

WORK

This week our time in the Word has been about how the church responded to life as a result of the Spirit's leadership (filling) in their lives. The church responded to the Spirit's filling by becoming even more powerful in their witness and by taking care of one another. This Work time is a time that we set aside for thinking through WHO needs to hear the good news about Jesus. This would be a good week for all of us – as we approach Easter – to get off the sidelines and get in the game. Let's make a point of speaking up and telling others about Jesus as we anticipate the reward He is planning for those who speak up and speak out to tell others about Him.

Ask them to discuss this and then ask them to think through the list of people you have been praying for each week. Discuss how we can be more aggressively involved in sharing the good news with these folks for whom God has burdened us. We will pray for these people tonight and each night we're together until they come to Small Group, or come to Christ through some other means. Have each couple/individual share the name of one couple/person to pray for and then ask one of the other people in the group to pray for them.

Close your time together in prayer.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Repentance and Salvation

III. Church

- That CCF Singapore Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Core, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Singapore Facilities

- CCF Singapore Center
- Equipments

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends