

**Acts 4:32–35**

**Ps. 133**

**1 John 1:1–2:2**

**John 20:19–31**

# Community Transformed

**Goal for  
the Session**

*Tweens will investigate the early Christian church and imagine how the resurrection of Jesus might transform their own community of faith.*

## ■ PREPARING FOR THE SESSION

### Focus on Acts 4:32–35

#### WHAT is important to know?

— From “Exegetical Perspective,” Samuel E. Balentine

Verses 32 and 34–35 provide the literary frame for the reading. Verse 33, which stands at the center, provides its gospel. The resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the “great power” behind the signs and wonders that the community has witnessed. It is this power that births the church and defines its mission. The imperative of this mission is not only to *proclaim* the resurrection gospel but also to *embody* its truth by caring for one another in ways that secure the fullness of life God intends.

#### WHERE is God in these words?

— From “Theological Perspective,” Alan G. Padgett

The holiness of this small sect is clearly displayed in their sharing of possessions, so that “there was not a needy person among them” (v. 34). The root concept of holiness is that of being set apart for God’s use. Here the holiness of the church is made manifest in their attitudes toward the goods of this world. In their use of the goods of this world, the early disciples display the lordship of Christ and provide further witness to his resurrection. By giving Christ lordship over their wealth, early disciples are providing yet one more living sermon to the world.

#### SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

— From “Pastoral Perspective,” Cynthia M. Campbell

Even leaving aside the remarkable willingness to give up private ownership and share with others in need, the vision of a faith community being “of one heart and soul” (v. 32) stretches our credulity beyond the breaking point. It would be all too easy to dismiss a passage such as this, or even to use it to critique the tendency to romanticize a bygone era, rather than deal with the hard realities of our contemporary situation. But doing so would be to overlook the potential of this text to make us think deeply about the effects Jesus’ resurrection might actually have on our lives.

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

— From “Homiletical Perspective,” George Bryant Wirth

At the beginning of Acts 4 we read that the community of believers had grown to about five thousand members. Yet, those people were of “one heart and soul” (v. 32). How else could that have happened except through the unifying power and reconciling peace of the Holy Spirit? And that is what we need in the Christian church today—to receive God’s gift of unity in the midst of our diversity. The Lord calls us to identify and reconcile ourselves not only with other Christians, but also with all of God’s human family on earth. United we stand—divided we fall.

**FOCUS SCRIPTURE**

**Acts 4:32–35**

## Focus on Your Teaching

Integrity is important to tweens, and they are quick to spot any discrepancies between the words in the Bible and the actions of those in the church. When they read the description of the early church, they may wonder why their church community does not resemble the one described in the passage. They might also have some ideas of what the church could or should be doing differently. As you prepare for this session, consider how you might equip them to share their thoughts with the whole community.

*God of new life, open my heart to the exciting possibility of transformation.  
Keep my mind open to the ideas the learners may offer as they talk about  
our faith community. Amen.*

**YOU WILL NEED**

- ☐ white cloth
- ☐ gold or yellow streamers or ribbons
- ☐ large white battery-powered candle
- ☐ marigold seeds
- ☐ potting soil
- ☐ scoops or spoons
- ☐ peat pots
- ☐ copies of Resource Sheets 1, 2
- ☐ wooden spoon
- ☐ Bibles
- ☐ Color Pack 13, 33
- ☐ dried beans
- ☐ bowl of water
- ☐ *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024; CD player

**For Responding**

- ☐ option 1: construction-paper triangles, pens, glue, poster board
- ☐ option 2: cardboard boxes, newsprint, markers, paper, pens
- ☐ option 3: small flowerpots, permanent markers

## ■ LEADING THE SESSION

### GATHERING

*Before the session*, if you will be using option 2 in Responding, contact a local shelter or food pantry and ask for a list of items they need.

As tweens arrive, greet each by name, saying, “(Name), the Lord is risen!” As needed, prompt learners to respond, “Christ is risen indeed!”

Gather the group and work together to arrange the white cloth in the center of your meeting space. Place the candle on it and arrange gold or yellow streamers in a festive design. As you light the candle, say: “The light of the risen Christ is with us!” Pass the candle from person to person, inviting tweens, as they hold the candle, to tell about a high point or low point in their week. Then offer this prayer:

*God of new life, send your Spirit to help us grow in understanding how  
the new life Jesus brings can transform our community. Let all God’s  
people say . . . Amen.*

Distribute peat pots and ask tweens to plant three marigold seeds in their pots, following package instructions. Discuss:

- ✂ How will the seeds change? (*Show the picture on the seed packet.*)
- ✂ How might the growing plants change the pots?
- ✂ What will be the first signs that change is taking place?

Comment that the Bible passage for today is about some people whose lives were changing.

## EXPLORING

Have tweens find Acts 4:32–35 in their Bibles. Ask a volunteer to read aloud the passage.

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 1 (Interview with Members of the Early Church) and invite tweens to imagine they are members of the early church. Wave a wooden-spoon “microphone” and introduce yourself as a reporter for the television show “Jerusalem News.” Read aloud the questions on the resource sheet, inviting volunteers to respond using the answers provided. Continue in character as a reporter, asking tweens:

- ✂ Why do you think your community is growing even though some officials are making things difficult for you?
- ✂ What’s it like to live in a community where everyone shares what they have? Do you like it? Why or why not?

From time to time, review how to find Bible passages using the table of contents, chapter numbers, and verse numbers. This rhyme may help some learners: “Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. Acts and Romans carry on.”

Invite tweens to play a game of “Contact Points.” The object of the game is for the group to cross from one point in your meeting space to another with as few “contact points” as possible. If you have a large class, form groups of four or five. Every member of the group must be touching one another in some way as the group moves. A “contact point” is any part of a body that touches the floor. For example, each foot is one contact point, as is each hand or each knee. (Two players standing on the floor would be four contact points.) Start by trying to move with 1.5 points per person; 8 players, for example, would be allowed 12 points. If the group is successful, try again, seeing how few contact points the group can use. Afterward, observe that in this game, groups had to be of one mind (come to a collective agreement) and one body (work together as one) in order to cross the space successfully.

Ask:

- ✂ What do you think it means for a church community to be “of one heart and soul”?

Distribute copies of Resource Sheet 2 (Transformation). Invite tweens to work in pairs or small groups to look up each passage and answer the questions in the chart. (*Answer:* Jesus’ resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit.)

Lay Color Pack 13 on the white cloth, and invite comments about the transformation pictured there. Together, look at the “Ponder This” questions at the bottom of Resource Sheet 2. As learners respond to each question, place one dried bean on Color Pack 13. Invite tweens to look at the seeds on the picture and imagine what would happen if all their ideas took root and began to transform your community. After a moment for silent thought, invite volunteers to tell about their dreams and imaginings.

EASY  
PREP

Tweens may be captivated by the church as described in Acts and be quite critical of their own. While honest conversation is important, encourage tweens to think about what they might do to help bring about the changes they desire.

## RESPONDING

Mark the activities you will use:

- 1. Community Picture** The early church was transformed by the power of the Spirit. As a group, list things that might indicate a church is a thriving Christian community. Discuss the ways in which your faith community reflects some of these qualities. Talk about what your church could do to become stronger. Distribute construction-paper triangles and have tweens write something they like about their church on one triangle and something they would like to change about their church on another. Mix up the triangles and then read aloud each one. Have tweens work together to glue the shapes to a piece of poster board, with the words showing, in a design that represents community. Display your work for others in the church to see. Option: Invite an adult group to join this discussion and add their ideas to the poster.
- 2. Serving Project** The description of the life of the early church challenges tweens to find out what it takes to make sure that no one is in need in their community. Tell tweens about the group you contacted and the list of items this group needs. Form three work groups. One group will decorate collection boxes. One group will make copies of the list to distribute to church members. One group will make posters encouraging others to donate to this group, telling where and when to bring items. Display the posters, give out the lists to other church school groups, and put out the collection boxes. Plan a way for tweens to help deliver what is collected.
- 3. Flowerpots** Images of transformation can help tweens consider the dynamics of change in their own lives. Have tweens use colorful permanent markers to decorate small plastic or clay flowerpots with Easter symbols, such as butterflies, flowers, the empty tomb, eggs, and the rising sun. Print these words around the rim: *Everything has changed—Jesus is alive!* Place the peat pots planted during Gathering inside the flowerpots. Encourage tweens to take them home, place them in a sunny spot, keep them watered, and watch the transformation. Discuss: What brings change to these seeds? What can bring change to our lives as disciples?

### 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!

2. *work*

3. *share*

4. *care*

## CLOSING

Gather the group and light the candle. Place a bowl of water on the white cloth. Dip your hand in the water, letting water splash back into the bowl, as you say: "In baptism, we are called by Christ Jesus into a new and changed life." Invite tweens to take turns dipping a hand in the water as they name one thing they have learned or thought about today that will help them live as members of the church.

Sing "I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me" (Color Pack 33; track 11 on *Singing the Feast*, 2023–2024). Then extinguish the candle.

As tweens leave, tell them you are glad they are part of your community of faith.

## Interview with Members of the Early Church



**Reporter:** How does your church—the church of Acts—fit into the story of Jesus?



**Member of Early Church:** Our church was formed during the first few months after the death and resurrection of Jesus.



**Reporter:** What were the early days like for your church?

**Member of Early Church:** Our group grew very quickly as word about Jesus Christ spread. First there were only about a hundred of us. But then thousands of people started following Jesus in the months after the Spirit was poured out on the disciples at Pentecost.



**Reporter:** What is so special about your community?

**Member of Early Church:** I think it is the way we live. We share our belongings with each other, so that no one goes without what is needed for life. Some have sold their homes and donated the money from the sale to the community. Miracles have been commonplace. People are being healed every day.



**Reporter:** What kinds of things do you do in your church?

**Member of Early Church:** Every day we meet to worship God. Afterward, we go to each other's homes to eat, learn, and pray together.



**Reporter:** What have your church leaders been doing?

**Member of Early Church:** They are busy telling the story and teachings of Jesus. They travel all around Jerusalem, teaching and healing just as Jesus did.



**Reporter:** That sounds pretty amazing. But I've heard that things are starting to get difficult for your church. Is that true?



**Member of Early Church:** Yes, the leaders in Jerusalem who had arranged for Jesus to be killed have started to cause trouble for us. They thought they had gotten rid of Jesus, and they definitely do not want his story or teachings to continue, so from time to time they arrest some of us and even have us beaten.



## Transformation

Before	During	After
Read John 20:19: What are the disciples doing? Why? When did this story take place within the overall story of Jesus?	Who or what helped with the disciple's transformation? Cross out the first letter (T) and then every other letter in the following text to find an answer to this question:	Read Acts 4:33: Now what are the disciples doing?
Read Luke 22:54–57: What is Peter doing? Why? When did this story take place within the overall story of Jesus?	TJlesszuws'xrdebsquorrrg edcitlikovnxatnpdstkhcefc mozmyihnrgeojfltfhdesH moclhyeSfpbiyroirt	Read Acts 4:7–12: Now what is Peter doing?
Read Luke 22:24: What are the disciples doing? When did this story take place within the overall story of Jesus?	Why do you think these two things made such a difference?	Read Acts 4:32: Now what are the disciples doing? What things changed for Jesus' followers after the resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit?

### Ponder This:

- ✠ What can Christians today learn from the followers of Jesus in the early church?
- ✠ What things might Jesus' followers do each day to bring change to the church and to the world?

**DREAM BIG!** God's love can do amazing things!