

July 12, 2026 – Leader's Guide

Standing in the Name

Acts 5:17-34, 40-42

This Sunday we continued a sermon series entitled "*Empowered to Bear Witness to Jesus' Kingdom.*" This series focuses on how the risen and ascended Jesus empowers his disciples for mission through the gift of the outpoured Holy Spirit.

Small Group Questions with Leader Guide

1. **Read the whole passage through together (Acts 5:17-43, 40-42). What stands out to you most about the different responses of the characters to the name of Jesus?**

Leader Notes:

Encourage observation before interpretation. If they don't do so on their own, help your group notice:

- The different characters in the story
- How they respond: actions, emotions, discussions
 - The high priest and Sadducees are jealous and threatened (vv.17–18).
 - The angel commands the apostles to continue speaking publicly about Jesus (vv.19–20).
 - The apostles obey immediately (vv.21, 29).
 - The guards are afraid (v.26)
 - The council is furious (v.33).
 - The apostles rejoice after suffering because they were counted worthy to suffer "for the Name" (v.41).

Help the group notice that **the issue is not merely a message or philosophy or acts of mercy—it is the person and name of Jesus.** Throughout Acts, "the Name" represents Jesus' authority, identity, saving power, and living presence (cf. Acts 3:6; 4:12).

A helpful question to ask:

"Why do you think the authorities were so threatened by the name of Jesus?"

2. **In response to the council's warning not to speak in the name of Jesus, the apostles say, "We must obey God rather than men" (v.29). What do you think gave them the courage to say this?**

Leader Notes:

The courage of the apostles isn't rooted in themselves, their ability, or personality.

It comes from several convictions centered on Jesus:

- Jesus is risen (vv.30–31).
- Jesus has been exalted as Prince and Saviour.
- God himself has acted in Christ.
- They are witnesses empowered by the Holy Spirit (v.32).

Their courage flows from knowing **who Jesus is**, not from confidence in themselves.

You could point out that only weeks earlier many of these same disciples had fled in fear during Jesus' arrest. Something dramatic has changed. The source of their courage and strength has been relocated and rooted in Jesus.

You might use this question as a prompt to dig deeper if needed:

"What changes when someone becomes convinced that Jesus really is Lord?"

3. **Verse 41 says they rejoiced because they were counted worthy to suffer dishonour "for the Name." Why do you think they responded with joy instead of discouragement after being beaten?**

Leader Notes:

The apostles are not celebrating the pain itself. Rather, suffering confirms that they belong to Jesus and are sharing in his mission. Their identity is found in Christ more than in comfort, reputation, or acceptance.

Further prompt: What does this show about what they value most?

Other connections to this idea in the New Testament:

- Matthew 5:11–12
- Philippians 3:10
- 1 Peter 4:12–16

4. **While many Christians do face persecution and imprisonment in the world, our context in Toronto is a little different. Most of us won't face imprisonment for our faith, and yet pressure to compromise are ever-present. What pressures do we face today that tempt us to stay silent or compromise when it comes to bearing witness to Jesus? Where do you most feel pressure to make Jesus less visible in your life?**

Leader Notes:

It might be helpful to remind your group that bearing witness to Jesus, as we've discovered in this series, includes both word and deed. The community of the early church had a message about

Jesus resurrection and lordship that radically changed how they lived and shaped their life together in generous counter cultural ways that led to flourishing.

As you consider pressures, steer the conversation in a practical direction. Some ideas include:

- Fear of offending friends or family.
- Workplace pressure.
- Fear of being labelled intolerant.
- The temptation of people-pleasing.
- Desire to fit in.
- Keeping faith only private.
- Avoiding difficult conversations.
- Moral compromise.
- Social media pressure.
- Fear of missing opportunities or being excluded.

Help the group navigate the tension between courage and love. The goal isn't to seek conflict but to remain faithful when following Jesus becomes costly.

5. What would it practically look like for you to stand in the name of Jesus this week?

Leader Notes:

You might leave space for reflection before inviting people to share. Encourage the group to consider their own unique calling, contexts, and giftings. Courage and Faithfulness often looks like ordinary obedience to Jesus repeated day after day.

Closing Prayer

Close in a time of prayer that focuses on an ancient prayer called the *epiclesis*: “Come Holy Spirit”.

This prayer does not suggest that the Holy Spirit is not already present but rather opens us to the awareness of His presence and welcomes Him to come in a fresh way into our lives, the church, and our world.

You might pray specifically for items shared in question #5. You might also ask the Spirit to give wisdom to know what Jesus is calling you to do and the courage to do it.