

MinistryPlace.net

The Early Church , Sharing Everything: A Gospel-Centered Community

Scripture: Acts 2:42-47, 4:32-37

Theme: The church is a family that loves and serves together through radical generosity

High School (Ages 15-18)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

This lesson explores how the early church's radical generosity reflected their transformed lives through Christ, challenging teens to examine how their faith influences their relationships and possessions today. It connects this to modern persecution in North Korea and invites prayer for the most persecuted Christians on earth while deepening their understanding of gospel community and ownership of their faith. Optional reflection: children can draw a picture of Jesus helping their friends, then share one way they can help someone else this week. This extra activity supports the lesson's theme and gives teachers a simple, lowprep option for extending the discussion.

Bible Story

After Jesus' resurrection, His disciples gathered with the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-4), and when the day of Pentecost arrived, they began speaking in tongues and healing. The crowd was amazed and asked, 'What does this mean?' (v. 6). Peter explained that this was the fulfillment of prophecy, and 3,000 people believed on the spot (v. 41). The early church was a living, breathing community where love and unity were central. They met in homes, shared meals, and listened to the apostles teach (Acts 2:42).

The Bible describes their lifestyle in vivid detail. They sold their possessions and 'had everything in common' (Acts 2:44), a phrase that sounds radical today but was a beautiful expression of trust and dependence on God. They gave generously to those in need, including widows and foreigners, ensuring no one went without. When the church grew, they still met in homes, and the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit (v. 43).

Later, the church faced persecution. When the apostles were arrested (Acts 4:3-22), they refused to stop preaching. They responded, 'We must obey God rather than men' (v. 19), showing that their unity wasn't about avoiding conflict

but about prioritizing God's will. Their radical generosity and courage in the face of opposition became a model for how believers should live. This wasn't about wealth or status, it was about love, trust, and a deep understanding that Jesus had changed their hearts.

The early church's example challenges us to ask: How does my faith shape how I share my time, talents, and treasures? Their story isn't just about the past, it's a call to consider how we, too, can live as a family of God, where no one is left out, and where our generosity reflects the love of Christ.

Key Verse

Acts 2:44-45 , 'All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need.'

For high schoolers, this verse is a challenge to rethink how we handle possessions. The early believers didn't hoard; they trusted God and used their resources to meet others' needs because they knew Jesus had already met their own needs through His sacrifice. The cross changed them, it broke down walls between people and made sharing a natural part of their faith. Today, it's not about how much we have, but how we use what we have to reflect God's heart of love and generosity.

Activities

Activity 1: Gospel Community Jar

A small group activity where teens brainstorm ways their church or community could better reflect the early church's generosity. Each teen writes down one practical way they can share their time, talents, or treasures this week. The group discusses and shares their ideas in a supportive way.

Supplies needed:

- Paper and pens/markers
- Small jar or envelope

1. Step 1: Divide into small groups of 3-5. Give each group a piece of paper and pen.
2. Step 2: Ask each teen to write down one way they can share something, time, talents, or treasures, this week to meet someone's need. This could be a small act like sharing food with a neighbor or donating clothes to a shelter.
3. Step 3: After 5 minutes, groups share their ideas with the whole class. Discuss: How does sharing reflect what we learned about the early church? How does Jesus' death change how we think about possessions?
4. Step 4: Collect the notes in the jar for future prayer or discussion.

Activity 2: Persecution & Generosity Debate

A thought-provoking discussion where teens explore how persecution can deepen generosity. Using examples from North Korea, teens argue why the early church's generosity might be especially powerful in dangerous situations (e.g., sharing food or the gospel with fear of death).

Supplies needed:

- Whiteboard or poster paper
- Markers

1. Step 1: Explain the missions focus, underground Christians in North Korea risk everything to share the gospel. Ask: What if the early church's radical generosity was the same in persecution?
2. Step 2: Divide into pairs. Give each pair a prompt: If you were a Christian in North Korea, how would you share the gospel and meet needs while facing persecution? They write down 2-3 ideas.
3. Step 3: Pairs share their answers with the group. Discuss: Why might sharing be more powerful when there's no safety net? How does Jesus' sacrifice give them the courage to live boldly?

Discussion Questions

- The early church sold possessions and gave to those in need. If you could give away one thing you own right now, what would it be and why? How does that relate to what you've learned about Jesus?
- How does the idea of 'having everything in common' challenge you? What might it look like in your life or your church community to practice this today?
- Persecution in North Korea forces Christians to share everything at great risk. What does this tell us about the power of gospel generosity? How can we pray for the church there?
- Why do you think the early church's generosity was so radical? What does it say about their understanding of God's heart for people? How does this change how you think about sharing your time or resources?
- Is the early church model of sharing a command or an example? How do you know?

Prayer Focus

Pray for the persecuted church in North Korea, where underground believers share food, shelter, and the gospel at great risk. Pray for their courage, their unity, and that God would open doors to share the hope found in Jesus. Ask God to give this group of teens a heart to pray for these brothers and sisters, trusting Him to use their prayers to strengthen the church in places where freedom is scarce. Pray also for your own church to live out radical generosity in small, tangible ways this week.

>> Missions Spotlight

In North Korea, underground Christians are forced to live as 'outsiders' in a society that rejects them. They risk everything, family, jobs, and even life, to share the gospel and meet needs. The early church's radical generosity is their reality: sharing food, shelter, and the truth of Jesus, even when facing death. This is the most persecuted church in the world, and their faith is a testament to the power of gospel love.

-> To the Cross

The early church shared everything because the cross broke down barriers between people. When Jesus died for us, He didn't just save us from sin, He gave us a new identity: children of God who belong to each other. This changes everything. Instead of hoarding, we're called to give freely because we know Jesus has already given His life for us. The cross doesn't just change us, it transforms how we live, making generosity and love the natural response of a community built on trust.