

cell outlines
MARCH 2019

These Cell Outlines are written by Youth and Children's Ministries. They are available every month from our web site. For more information and other Cell resources, visit salvationarmy.org.uk/children-and-youth-resources

UNPACKING THE LIFE OF THE EARLY CHURCH...

WELCOME

Play Charades using cards you have made or an online generator. Put the word 'church' in at some point in the game. Refer back to what the actor did to communicate 'church' to the group when exploring the important elements of church.

WORD

 **Read Acts 2:42-47**






⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Activity

Ask your group to identify the key aspects of Church outlined in the passage – ie, teaching, fellowship, eating, prayer – and ask them where they see these things. Help them to identify where they are in the life of the corps or other activities they're involved in (eg, this group!) and explore what is lacking/missing.

Alternatively, another way to phrase this is to ask your group to think about similarities and differences about their corps and the Early Church as described in the passage. You can use a large piece of paper and place a picture or draw something that would represent the corps/building in the middle and get the group to write the ideas coming out of the picture/drawing.

Discussion questions:

-  Do you think teaching, fellowship, eating and prayer are present in your corps?
-  Do you feel that all of these have equal importance in Church?
-  Are there any other areas of your life where this is present?
-  Are there any of these areas in which your church is lacking?
-  Do you think something needs to be done about this?

WORSHIP

Dream church

With background music playing, spend time planning your dream church. Provide materials so that the group can be as creative as they want to be.

Feed back to each other about what you have all included, and then compare it to the Bible reading from the beginning of the session to look for similarities and differences.

SESSION
ONE

PRAYER

Spend some time praying for your church by looking at the picture with the key elements of Church from the activity section on it and how you have related that to your church. Pray for the people in our church, about the things that already happen and the thing that are lacking or missing.

Or

Alternatively, if you want a more personal focus, ask the question: What part of church do you find most important/valuable to you? Which do you find the least important/valuable to you? Spend some time reflecting and asking God how you can experience Church in its fullness, perhaps by seeking to engage in some elements of Church that you don't find important.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR TODAY?

WELCOME

Create a timeline of technology over the years by printing out the grid below and cutting out each square. Get the group to spend some time seeing if they can match up the technology with the year of its creation.



1901	Vacuum Cleaner
1907	Helicopter
1937	Jet engine
1946	Microwave oven
1951	Nuclear power reactor
1963	Computer mouse
1968	Video game console
1972	Email
1983	Camcorder
1989	World wide web (internet)
2007	iPhone

WORD

 Read Acts 4:32-37

³² All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. ³³ With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God’s grace was so powerfully at work in them all ³⁴ that there were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned land or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales ³⁵ and put it at the apostles’ feet, and it was distributed to anyone who had need.

³⁶ Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means ‘son of encouragement’), ³⁷ sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet.

-  What differences can you see in this passage from the Early Church to the church now?
-  Do we still help each other, or has that element of the Church been lost over time?

- How do you think changing culture and the change in technology has impacted how the Church reaches out to the poor? Do you think this is a good or bad thing? Why or why not?
- Do you think there is something more that the Church could do to reach out to people that is culturally relevant?

Activity

Look back at the technology timeline you have all created in the 'Welcome' section and think about how the Church might have changed from Bible times until now. Some points to consider while thinking about this:

- * The sort of places where people meet
- * How people are welcomed
- * How the Church looks depending on where its buildings are situated

Move the discussion on to thinking about technological shifts over the years and what impact that might have had on the Church. As a starting point, get the group to look at the printing press and what that meant for people in terms of having their own copy of the Bible. Are there other examples that people can think of or find?

Split your group into two smaller groups and get each group to come up with a list of things that they have seen change within their own church over the years.

Alternate between the groups and get a volunteer from each to take it in turn to try and act out something on their list for the other team to guess.

What impact have these technological shifts had?

RESPONSE/PRAYER

In this session we have been thinking about how things change and how the world is very different today from what it was at the time of the Bible story from Acts 4:32-37, how there are shifts in the way things look and the way that we are able to do things, reach people and communicate the message of God.

Challenge the group to think about how they can live with 'everything in common', to really focus on the principles demonstrated in the Early Church. What would that look like in our church today? Make a list of ideas of little ways in which you can make that happen in your world.

Spend the closing moments of your time together praying about this.

SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE: CONFESSION

WELCOME

Play the card game Cheat. Deal out all the cards in a deck. Players take turns placing a card face down on to the pile and stating what the card is without other players knowing. The player can choose to lie about what the card is or to tell the truth. The rule is that the card discarded from your hand must be either one card higher or one card lower than the previous player stated. If another player thinks that you have lied about the value of your card, they can call you out. If you have cheated, you must take all the discarded cards and add them to your hand. If the caller is wrong and you haven't lied, the caller must take all discarded cards and add them to their hand. The aim of the game is to get rid of all your cards.

This game can link in with the story about lying if helpful.

WORD

Read Acts 5:1-11

1 Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. **2** With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet.

3 Then Peter said, 'Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? **4** Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied just to human beings but to God.'

5 When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. **6** Then some young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him.

7 About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. **8** Peter asked her, 'Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?'

'Yes,' she said, 'that is the price.'



9 Peter said to her, 'How could you conspire to test the Spirit of the Lord? Listen! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also.'

10 At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. **11** Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

Say: When we live as Church we don't always get along – because of sin, the Church is not always perfect. Even in the Early Church people lied and things did not end well. Whilst God will probably not strike down and kill those who lie or mess up in our church, when there is sin around church life it makes it not all it could be. It is important for us to confess our sins both to God and to each other so that we can live together in harmony.

*Note for leaders: there may be some questions that arise from this particular story about why Ananias and Sapphira died. It might be worth reading around this a little in case the group dip into the topic.

Discussion questions

-  Things might have looked different if Ananias and Sapphira did not hide what they had done but confessed to God and others... Do you think your church would look different if people admitted their mistakes?
-  If we were to be completely honest, even about our mistakes and when we hurt people, do you think things would be different? Would it make things better or worse?

🗣 Sometimes we need other people to help us when we are not doing what God wants. Is there someone who helps you see where you are going wrong so you can make things right?

Activity

Ask the group if any of them have heard of the spiritual discipline of confession. Explain and discuss with your group the following information and quotes which are taken from the Canadian Salvation Army Spiritual Life website:

“ Confession draws us into the divine mystery of redemption.

“ ‘At the heart of God is the desire to give and forgive.’

Richard J. Foster

“ ‘A man who confesses his sins in the presence of a brother knows that he is no longer alone with himself; he experiences the presence of God in the reality of the other person.’

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

‘Confession is good for the soul!’

We know that confession is good for the soul, but it can be very hard to do. After all, we can put a great deal of energy into appearing good when something is wrong with us. But, as Adele Ahlberg Calhoun reminds us in her *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook*, ‘This very appearance of goodness can be a way we defend ourselves against our sin. For when we can’t see our sin, we have nothing to confess.’ And so we need some counsel in the giving of a confession.

In *Celebration of Discipline: The Path to Spiritual Growth*, Richard Foster provides a three-point plan for developing the discipline of confession in our lives:

- 1. An Examination of Conscience:** This is a practice during which the soul comes ‘under the gaze of God’. In this experience we are inviting God to show us areas of our lives that need his forgiving and healing touch. We are invited to pray as the Psalmist did: ‘Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting’ (Psalm 139:23-24 *NIV*).
- 2. Sorrow:** Sorrow is necessary to a good confession. In the discipline of confession, sorrow is not an emotion; rather, it is disgust at having committed the sin. Sorrow is a deep regret for offending the heart of God. This kind of sorrow, Foster says, is an issue of the will before it is an issue of the emotions. Sorrow demonstrates penitence and is a way of taking the confession seriously.
- 3. A Determination to Avoid Sin:** In the discipline of confession, we ask God to give us a hunger for holy living. John Wesley once said, ‘Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin and desire nothing but God... such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of heaven on earth.’ The determination to avoid sin is really the desire to ‘seek first’ and be ruled by God (see Matthew 6:33).

After spending some time as a group discussing what this all actually means and why it could be helpful in our relationship with God, take a few minutes in quiet reflection coming up with your own individual action plan.

Plan of action

1. Are there things I am doing, self-centred habits and broken relationships, that are causing sin in my life?
2. In light of what the Bible teaches, confess those sins.
3. Seek God’s grace to change going forward.

Adapted from - <https://salvationist.ca/spiritual-life/spiritual-disciplines/english-resources/confession>

RESPONSE/PRAAYER

Give out the ‘In this church’ poem. Read over it for yourself and ask God if there’s anything you need to be convicted of. Do you need to ask God to forgive you for something? Do you need to make things right with someone else? Do it!

ACTS INTO ACTION: OPEN-HANDED LIFE OF THE EARLY CHURCH

WELCOME

Hide puzzle pieces around the room. Set a timer and get the young people to hunt for the pieces and complete the puzzle before the alarm goes off.

WORD

Remind the group of the Bible reading from week one:

Read Acts 2:42-47

⁴² They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. ⁴³ Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. ⁴⁴ All the believers were together and had everything in common. ⁴⁵ They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. ⁴⁶ Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, ⁴⁷ praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

WORSHIP AND WITNESS

The rest of this session is going to be dedicated to bringing to life some of the things mentioned in Acts 2:42-47 and in the further discussions that you had in Weeks One and Two.

If you have a slightly younger group you might want to try and bring a slightly fun, creative element to the rest of the session. Pretend that you are in a high-flying business meeting and that you are all working to develop an idea that would help you demonstrate something from the Bible reading, eg, pulling together a prayer or praise meeting/event, planning a meal for the local community, giving to anyone who has need, etc. You could really go to town with making a PowerPoint presentation, providing meeting snacks, acting as a minute taker etc.

Or if you feel your group would work better in a less structured environment, make the space as relaxing and informal as possible and get the young people to choose an area such as teaching, fellowship, eating, prayer, praise etc, and to think about how they can do something within their church that explores this. Maybe it is leading the teaching in a meeting, or organising a social gathering, or preparing a meal, or helping out with one that already happens, or organising a prayer meeting. The world is your oyster; no idea is off limits, however big or small.

You could do this as a big group or individually, but then come together to discuss further. If you do decide to start individually, it would be good to come back together and think about things that you might want to do as a bigger group too.

Closing

Spend the final part of your session praying over all of the discussion, plans and ideas!

'In this church' poem:

IN THIS CHURCH...

we do REAL

we do MISTAKES

we do SORRY

we do FORGIVENESS

we do PRAYER

WE DO WORSHIP

we do GOD'S WORD

we do hugs

we do SECOND CHANCES

we do FAMILY

WE DO LOVE