

CALVARY CHAPEL COSTA MESA

– COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE –

Studies in the Book of Acts

“The Sovereign Lord & The Threats of Men” – Acts 4:13-31

FELLOWSHIP

Just over a week ago major news outlets were reporting new aggressions in China against Christians and their churches. The current president, Xi Jinping, has been hailed by foreign countries as a economic bridge builder and global partner against terror. Some are even calling him the most powerful leader since Mao. But as this praise pours in, the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) has begun a campaign to transform believers of Christ into believers of the party via threats and persecution. Told to take down crosses, pictures of Jesus, or displays of Biblical passages; they are instead to hang posters of President Xi Jinping. Reports have begun to trickle in from the poorest of regions that the CPC has told locals that their poverty is as a result of their religion and that government assistance would only be available if they complied with the conversion of symbols and pictures to CPC posters. Other regulations set to go into affect in February 2018 include prohibitions of printing Christian materials, accepting tithes, or renting space for church meetings. Already this last year, Christians in the Zhejiang providence were told to not allow their teens to attend summer camps or to put their children in Sunday school. Just last month, in the Hubei providence, Christians and their children who dared to worship in a public park were arrested. In March, homes were raided and South Korean missionaries were expelled from the Jilin providence where many North Korean refugees have settled. The Chinese President has been quoted that religious groups should, “Dig deep into doctrines and canons that are in line with social harmony and progress...and interpret religious doctrines in a way that is conducive to modern China's progress and in line with our excellent traditional culture.” How familiar sounding are the actions of the ruling council in Jerusalem towards Peter and John in Acts 4 when they deliberated and decreed, “But so that it spreads no further among the people, let us severely threaten them, that from now on they speak to no man in this name. So they called them and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus.”

READ & DISCUSS

Read out loud together as a group Acts 4:13-31. Discuss those areas that can be applied to our lives today, especially the apostles' response to the council:

Acts 4:19-20 “*Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*”

- *How did the apostles view of God affect their responses while being threatened? What stories about God in the Old Testament may have shaped their convictions? What experiences with Jesus may have given them confidence? What truths about God had they been rehearsing? How is God personally inserting Himself into this story? What applications can the believer be making in light of this story?*
- Resistance and confrontation with the Gospel can come in many forms, but Scripture reveals that the heart of any attack is a spiritual one. **Read Ephesians 6:10-20.** *Why is prayer so important in light of opposition to the Gospel? Why is boldness so important? What was Peter like before and after the giving of the Holy Spirit regarding boldness? What might be some wrong or right ways to seek boldness?*
- Threats abound and their forms depend on your geography. *How can subtle threats be as dangerous to believers as physical harm? Where do you feel bullied, manipulated, or intimidated in your faith? What are some of the moral, cultural or social areas that we need boldness in? What should the Gospel look like in the marketplace, in the neighborhood, in the home, or in one's private life?*

PRAY As you pray, in light of this topic, what about God's nature could you be in the routine of confessing? What areas could we ask for boldness in? Who is God placing on your mind for sharing Christ with?



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Based on Pastor Brian Brodersen's message from November 26, 2017.

Watch: <https://cccm.com/teaching/the-spirit-the-church-and-the-world/video/the-sovereign-lord-and-the-threats-of-men/>