

INTRO

- If you could be a professional athlete in any sport what would it be and why?

READ

Acts 4:1-22

REFLECT & RESPOND

After a great start to early church life, Acts 4 marks a turn towards opposition, hostility and persecution towards the church. For our discussion today, we focus on the relationship between facing opposition and following Jesus.

Qu: Read John 15:20. If we are to follow Jesus, what does this verse tell us to expect?

Opposition and Context

Opposition varies depending on the context. Here in Canada, we enjoy the freedom of religion, but our culture is increasingly indifferent or intolerant of historical christian beliefs.

Qu: have you experienced opposition specifically because of your faith? Tell us about it.

Opposition and Growth

For the early church, intense opposition occurred alongside continued growth and favour (v4, 21). When it comes to opposition to faith, we should be concerned if we experience either *no* opposition or *only* opposition. Jesus both attracted & repelled people throughout his ministry.

Qu: why are the extremes of no opposition or only opposition problematic? What might they indicate?

Opposition and Civil Disobedience

Read v18-20. Biblical Civil Disobedience is the intentional refusal to obey certain laws in a non-violent way, motivated by obedience to God over obedience to man. This is a legitimate course of

action in certain cases and our brothers & sisters in restricted nations will attest to its high cost.

Qu: Do you believe our government's restrictions on churches gathering in-person during the pandemic warrants biblical civil disobedience? Why or why not?

Opposition and Our Response

In summary, as we faithfully follow and practice the way of Jesus in our culture, we can expect levels of opposition to our beliefs, values and practices. In fact, opposition can be a healthy sign of your faithfulness to Jesus. So, how should we treat those who ridicule, oppose or persecute us because of it?

Qu: what does a christ-like response to those who may oppose or persecute you look like?

RESPOND & PRAY

- Pray for one another to continue to bear fruit as we remain faithful to follow Jesus
- Pray for those who are experiencing opposition or persecution for their faith