



# STUDY GUIDE

## EMPOWERED

03.13.2016

*Empowered to obey. Fearlessly.*

### [set up]

Would you tell a story about an embarrassing moment you can now laugh about?  
Other than the passing of time, what has helped you overcome the shame of that moment?

Ask your LifeGroup members to share a story about a time when they were *applauded* by those outside the faith because of being a Christ-follower OR to share a story about a time when they were *ridiculed, mocked, rejected, slandered, or ostracized* by those outside the faith because of being a Christ-follower.

### [digging deeper]

Reread the story in Acts 5:27-32 about Peter and John defying human authority to obey God's authority. What principles about civil disobedience can you learn from this example? (Write the principles down on a large Post-it for everyone to see.)

Read Romans 13:1-7 and 1 Peter 2:13-17. Discuss what these passages teach us about the reasons God has established civil government.

Discuss the attitude that the governing authorities had toward Christians when these NT passages were written. When it comes to human government, do you think we have it better or worse than early Christians?

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-3 and Titus 3:1-2. What is the typical, habitual response believers are supposed to have toward the government? Is this easy or difficult for you?

Although the general posture of believers toward the government is submission to authority, there are times that it is just and right to disobey. Explore other stories in the Bible about civil disobedience:

- The Hebrew midwives oppose Egyptian law (Exodus 1:17-21)
- Moses opposes Pharaoh (Exodus 1-14)
- Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego oppose Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 3:18)
- Daniel opposes Darius (Daniel 6:10ff)
- Esther breaks Ahasuerus' law (Esther 4:12)
- The wise men oppose Herod (Matthew 2:8-12)
- Jesus defies the temple authorities (John 2:13-17)

What are some other principles about civil disobedience you can learn from these examples? (Add these additional principles to the large Post-it for everyone to see.)

As a group, think about our current laws and cultural climate in America. Brainstorm the scenarios in which a believer or Christian leader should "obey God rather than man." What changes need to take place in your life so that you can be empowered to obey Christ even if it means that you disobey the governing authorities?

Spend some time discussing our brothers and sisters in Christ who are experiencing persecution around the world. What can they teach us about being empowered to obey God rather than man?

## **[living it out]**

Read Hebrews 13:3. As a LifeGroup leader, before your meeting, go to the Voice of the Martyrs website [www.persecution.com](http://www.persecution.com) or to the Open Doors website [www.opendoorsusa.org](http://www.opendoorsusa.org) and find one story about someone in our world who is currently suffering persecution. Print out the story and share the basics with your group. Ask, "How does this story impact you?" Ask someone in the group to pray for our persecuted brother or sister.

About Acts 5:42, Pastor John Piper wrote, "I am still learning - sometimes I think, just beginning to learn - how to embrace this shame. I mean really embrace, not just tolerate, the unpleasant feeling of being shamed. Until I learn this more fully, I will never be the kind of witness among unbelievers that God calls me to be." What is your reaction to Pastor John's honest confession about his struggle?

In this week's message, we were encouraged to 1) Obey God fearlessly (Acts 5:29), 2) Share Christ boldly (Acts 5:30-32), 3) Suffer shame joyously (Acts 5:41), and 4) Share Christ ceaselessly (Acts 4:42). Which of these actions is a strength for you? In which area do you need to grow the most?

What is your most significant next step in light of this study? Who can help you? What accountability question do you want the group to ask you the next time we meet?

Break up into groups of 2 or 3 and have each person share their experiences in seeking to live out the following 3 habits: 1) The Beloved Child/Self-feeder habit - Did I read my Bible and pray daily? 2) The Servant/Investor habit- Did I bless 2 people - one in the faith and one not in the faith - this week? 3) The Discipler/Missionary habit - Did I eat with 2 people - one in the faith and one not in the faith - this week?

Lead your LifeGroup in silent prayer. 1) Lead them to praise Jesus for not playing it safe so they could be saved. 2) Lead them to ask for forgiveness for those times they have played it safe. 3) Lead them to ask the Lord to show them something He wants them to do for Him.

As you close, ask members of your LifeGroup to share what the risky/radical/revolutionary/sacrificial thing was that He asked them to do. Write down what the members of your group say and let them know you will be making this a matter of prayer for them.