**Study Series: More Than a Carpenter**

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**Lesson Title: “Who Would Die for a Lie?” (pp. 45-55)**

March 28, 2021 Session 04

To the Leader: To facilitate the reading of the many passages suggested in this teaching plan, **write** the references on slips of paper and **distribute** as adults arrive, **asking** they be prepared to read that passage when called upon.

Before the Session

**Write on a board**: I love you to …; I was scared to …; You’re working/worrying yourself to …; I am bored to …; I am thrilled to … (Step 1)

During the Session

**Step 1. Create Interest / Jumpstart Discussion**

**Draw attention** to the phrases on the board and ask what one word might complete those phrases.

**Ask:** Why do we use the phrase “to death” to express something to its extreme degree?

**Declare:** There is little else more extreme to us than death. As we continue taking a logical, reasonable look at the claims of Christianity, we will see that the disciples’ lives following the resurrection provide resounding evidence of its reality. They were willing to take their belief in, and proclamation of, the gospel of Jesus to the most extreme level—to death.

**Read** this session’s title question.

**Step 2. Day One – Convinced to Death**

**Ask:**

1. Do you believe George Washington lived?
2. How about Alexander the Great?
3. How can we be certain any historical figure really existed?

**State** we learn of past historical figures through others’ testimonies and from the effect that person had on the world.

**Declare** we can be certain Jesus lived, died, and rose again because of the reliable testimonies about Him, and because of His effect on the world. This session specifically examines the effect Jesus had on those who were closest to Him.

**Explain** Scripture only relates the death of two of the twelve apostles —Judas, who hanged himself after betraying Jesus (Matt. 27:5), and James, the son of Zebedee.

**Invite a volunteer to read** Acts 12:1-3.

**Ask:**

1. How might the apostles felt after James’s execution?
2. What might have been a logical thing for them to do in regard to preaching the gospel?

**Declare** they continued to proclaim the good news of Jesus and paid for it with their lives.

**State** from Day One (p. 46) what tradition says about their deaths.

**Discuss** Day One, activity 2 (p. 46). (Many believe John lived to an old age, not because he was cowardly about preaching the gospel, but because he took seriously Jesus’ commission to care for His mother—John 19:25-27.)

**Invite a volunteer to read** the Day One margin/pull quote (p. 46).

**Invite responses** to Day One, activity 1 (p. 45).

**Ask:** What would it take for us to be the someone whose testimony about Jesus others trusted?

**Declare** we would need to be convinced to death, like the apostles, of the reality of the resurrection.

**Step 3. Day Two – 1. They Were Eyewitnesses**

**Declare** these apostles were eyewitnesses to all of Jesus’ ministry, including His death, so it took some convincing to confirm to them the reality of the resurrection.

**Invite a volunteer to read** Luke 24:1-12.

**Discuss** Day Two, activity 2 (p. 47).

**Relate** Thomas’s initial unbelief in the resurrection (John 20:24-29) and his later martyrdom because of his changed belief.

**Invite a volunteer to read** Mark 14:66-72.

Then **read** Acts 4:13-20.

**Determine** what could have made such a radical transformation in Peter in such a short time.

**Read** from the last Day Two paragraph (p. 48), beginning with “What could have turned this terrified ….”

**Step 4. Day Three – 2. They Had to Be Convinced**

**Discuss** Day Three, activity 1 (p. 48).

**Analyze** reasons Jesus’ earthly siblings might have had a hard time believing in Him.

**Request** adults consult Acts 1:14 in their Bibles and identify what Jesus’ earthly family was doing just a few weeks after His death and resurrection.

**Note** James became a leader of the church in Jerusalem.

**Read** from the third Day Three paragraph (p. 49), beginning “What could have changed James ….”

**Invite responses** to Day Three, activity 2 (p. 49).

**Spend** **some time guiding the group** to marvel at Jesus’ compassion and forgiveness in appearing to people who had deserted, denied, and disbelieved Him.

**Step 5. Day Four – 3. They Became Courageous, Part 1**

**Discuss** Day Four, activity 1 (p. 50).

**Ask:**

1. What can explain the almost instantaneous and radical Before and After pictures of these apostles?
2. If the resurrection was a hoax perpetrated by the apostles, what are the odds all eleven men would have continued promoting that lie despite torture and death?

**Step 6. Day Five – 3. They Became Courageous, Part 2**

**Discuss** Day Five, activity 1 (p. 53).

**Read and discuss** the questions posed by the scholars quoted in Day Five, including:

1. “How do we explain the fact that this movement spread like wildfire … even though Jesus had been crucified?” (p. 53)
2. “Are these men, who helped transform the moral structure of society, consummate liars or deluded madmen?” (p. 53)
3. “Don’t you think that it’s reasonable that one historian, one eyewitness, one antagonist would record for all time that he had seen Christ’s body?” (p. 54)

**Step 7. Practical Application - Live Out the Lesson**

**Urge adults** to privately consider Day Five, activity 2 (p. 55).

**Encourage** those who want to be transformed by the resurrected Jesus to talk with you after the session.

**Close in prayer.**