

So you are the Zealots!

Key information to read and discuss:

The Zealots

The Zealots (Greek *zelotes*, 'zealot') was a general term for a person who was zealous for a cause, in particular for the religious group he belonged to. One of [Jesus](#)' twelve disciples was a **Simon** who bore this nickname.

Later the name Zealots came to refer to a rebel organization which supported armed resistance to Rome. This group only became a united, recognizable party just before the [Jewish War](#).

From:

<http://www.helsinki.fi/teol/pro/merenlah/oppimateriaalit/text/english/judaism.htm#The%20Qumran%20Discoveries>

Zealots - one of several different "revolutionary" groups in the 1st century CE who opposed the Roman occupation of Israel.

- "Zealots" were probably not an organized group at first, but any Jews "zealous" for God's law (Num 25:13; 1 Kings 19:10; Acts 22:3; Gal 1:14).
- Just before and during the First Jewish War against Rome, "Zealots" were a nationalistic revolutionary party opposed to the Romans.
- One of Jesus' apostles (not the same as Simon Peter) is called "Simon the Zealot" in Luke 6:15 and Acts 1:13 (but "Simon the Cananaean" in Mark 3:18 & Matt 10:4).
- He may have belonged to a revolutionary group before joining Jesus, but more likely was "zealous" in the older sense.

From: http://catholic-resources.org/Bible/Jewish_Groups.htm

Zealots (Luke 6:15)

The Scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees all hated Roman occupation, but were fairly passive towards the Romans themselves. The Zealots, however, hated the Romans. Their idea was that the only way towards freedom was rebellion. They believed that God would protect them through their quest. Some Jews even believed that the Messiah would be a military leader who would lead His people in their fight for freedom. The Zealots were in conflict with the Pharisees and Sadducees, because of their rebellious attitude. Simon, a disciple, was formerly a Zealot. Zealots aren't mentioned much in the Gospel. There is only one mention, saying that Simon was a Zealot. (Luke 6:12-16)

From: <https://firstcenturypalestinejl.weebly.com/religious-and-social-groups.html>

The *Zealot* movement took the revolutionary option. It advocated outward violence, even armed rebellion, to rid Israel of Roman oppression. Nothing else, they figured, would bring final liberation to the Jewish people. Depending on the point of view, Zealots were looked upon as freedom-fighters or terrorists. One thinks of the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka or activities of the Irish Republican Army during the 'troubles' in Northern Ireland. Certainly Jesus had zealots among his followers, for example 'Simon the Zealot'. Moreover, Jesus came into conflict with both the Jewish temple and the

Roman state. Finally, he was executed as a zealot revolutionary. However, few would argue that Jesus was a violent revolutionary. Like other non-violent figures in history, such as Mahatma Gandhi, Jesus posed a more radical threat to the established order than any armed person might do.

From: <https://resource.acu.edu.au/gehall/XTOLOGY2.htm>

Questions to discuss:

Name a group you've heard of in our world today who may be similar to the Zealots.

What kind of fire and energy would your meetings have all the time?

What makes you believe that your way is the right way?

Why does this Jesus man, with his talk of peaceful resolutions, pose such a threat to you?

Why might Jesus choose a Zealot to be part of his 12 disciples? What strengths would Simon bring to discipleship because he was a Zealot? What challenges would discipleship of Jesus hold for a Zealot?

Interesting things your group could highlight:

Your group of Zealots needs to be the loudest group present today, calling people to immediate action. You could have a leader interject the Zealot presenting information to the whole group by shouting: What do we want? (All other Zealots stand and cry: War!) Leader: When do we want it? (All other Zealots stand and cry: Now! Repeat twice for effect.) One loud Zealot could finish by calling out something about bringing down the Roman Government NOW! Finish presentation for effect!

Point out what you have in common with the Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees, but highlight your belief that being passive towards the Roman occupation is not going to help their cause. You know that the only way to be rid of the Roman occupation that you hate with a passion is all out war. Sock it to the Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees and try to convince them to join the Zealots.

Persuade them how dangerous it is to follow Jesus, with his mamby-pamby peace loving talk – as if that is going to get us anywhere!

Finally, highlight that the one good thing Jesus did was to include a Zealot in the people he chose to change the world. (Then use Mark's passage to show that Simon in fact was also known as Peter, who just happened to become the first official leader of the church community. See, Zealots were born to rule the world!)

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Luke+6%3A10-18&version=NABRE>

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Mark.3.16&version=NABRE>