



1. Review Acts 5:12-17. Why do you think the high priest and his Sadducee supporters were so jealous and upset with the apostles? From Genesis 4:4-7, discuss God's advice to Cain.
2. Compare and contrast the circumstances leading up to this arrest with the one in Acts 4:1-3, 13. Who performed the deeds leading to each imprisonment, and who was arrested?
3. The Holy Spirit overruled the high priest in 5:19-21a. What was accomplished by sending the apostles to the temple only to be arrested again? What are the "words of the Life"?
4. Discuss the scene in the council chamber (Acts 5:21b-24), and compare it to meetings you have attended where there is an unexpected delay and/or an unforeseen event. Why do you think the Holy Spirit choreographed the events this way?
5. In 5:25-26 the captain of the temple guard and officers went to arrest the apostles at the temple. What do think was their reaction when the apostles willingly complied? Why did the apostles leave the relative safety of the temple and its many witnesses and go with the officials? Have you ever knowingly walked into danger? What motivated you to do so?
6. In 5:27-28 the high priest accuses them of two points - one involved **action** and the other **intent**. What did the apostles **fail to do**, and **what did they intend** that so angered him? Discuss the impact of this in light of the high priest's authority and stature in Jewish society.
7. In 5:29 Peter answers, "**We must obey God rather than men.**" In general, what are the consequences of taking this stand? Discuss when this is an appropriate course of action. Have you experienced instances where this verse was misapplied to a situation? Discuss.
8. As a group, isolate and discuss the parts of Peter's response from 5:29-32. What are the sticking points for the high priest? (**See Luke 22:69-71.**) Why is 5:32 a fitting conclusion to the introduction of 5:29? What does it imply about the high priest and council?
9. Why do we see a vastly different response in 5:33 to 4:13-14, given they have the same speakers, same message, and same audience? What do we see by looking ahead to Acts 6:7 that indicates a difference of opinion may be emerging in the council? In 5:34-39 Gamaliel, a Pharisee, warns and reasons with all to "take care what you are about to do" and to "keep away from these men" and "let them alone." To what extent is his counsel obeyed? Why do you think it wasn't fully obeyed?
10. In 5:40-42 the apostles had a strange reaction to being beaten. Why do you think they rejoiced in their pain and dishonor? Who among the apostles do you think may have rejoiced the most? How do you think you might react in a situation like this?



## Leader Notes for Acts 5:17-42

The fourth public defense of the gospel and the second before the Jewish council followed **signs and wonders** that now drew people from nearby towns and villages. The prior threats from the first council meeting accomplished nothing. Instead of containing the gospel, it was now spreading outside of Jerusalem. Now the Christians were held in high esteem, even by those who did not dare to join them. The Jewish leaders felt marginalized. Something needed to be done, and it needed to be done quickly.

The high priest was jealous of the apostles' influence and despised **the Name** to whom they rallied. With the support of ranking Sadducees, the high priest arrested the apostles. The names of the arrested are not recorded, other than Peter. The incarcerated group seems to be a larger group than before. The arrests were likely arranged when the apostles were not in public, perhaps under cover of night, so as to avoid a confrontation. The plan had been carefully laid, but **the Holy Spirit executed contrary plans**. In the night an angel released the apostles and instructed them to resume teaching "**the words of the Life**" the next day. Bright and early, they began preaching and teaching the next morning.

The council convened in the morning. It was likely an expanded group as the Holy Spirit guided Luke to include the phrase, "...all the senate of the people of Israel..." in describing the council. The convocation did not begin on schedule. As the delay stretched on, the participants observed temple officials whispering into the ear of the high priest, who raised his brow. The captain of the temple guard also betrayed surprise with a quizzical look on his face. Suddenly, a messenger burst into the room announcing the "**prisoners**" were at that very moment teaching in the temple.

To their dismay the captain and the officers were dispatched to round-up the "prisoners." Fearing for their own lives they appealed to the apostles to come with them. To their great relief, the apostles failed to exercise their tactical advantage (the temple crowd) and **came willingly**. *What fools?*

The chief priest began the questioning with a two-point accusation of deliberate disobedience and malicious intent. The apostles taught in **His** name, and they blamed the council for **His** death. Peter proclaimed, "**We must obey God rather than men.**" God sent Jesus as a Leader (Prince) to guide Israel to repentance and forgiveness of sins. And yes, YOU crucified Him. This Savior is now exalted at the right hand (honor, power and authority) of God. We are witnesses to this, as is the Holy Spirit who is given **to those who obey Him**. *Ouch! By inference who lacked the Holy Spirit and who was disobedient?*

The response was predictable. Indignant and enraged with the brazen and fearless apostles, they purposed to execute them. The resurrection and the claims of Jesus' exalted status in heaven were too much. In contempt, the council members may have recalled Jesus' claim at His trial when he said, "But from now on the Son of Man shall be seated at the right hand of the power of God." (Lk 22:69). That was their basis for executing Jesus, and so it would be in this case. Impudent Galileans!

At that moment, Gamaliel cautioned, "Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men." Citing past Zealots and rebels whose movements came to nothing, he reasoned if this movement is man-made, it too will fail. However, if it is of God, **they** would fail and may be directly opposing God. Gamaliel's advice to keep away from these men and let them alone won out... sort of... They were still beaten and charged once again not to speak in the name of Jesus. Released, they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for **the Name**. **Who would you imagine rejoiced more than anyone?** This second encounter with the council ratcheted up the heat on the young church. But to the council's dismay it did nothing to dissuade the apostles from preaching and teaching that the Christ (Messiah) is Jesus.