

## Acts 5-6

### Learning

#### Engaging Acts 5:12-6:7 (some content you can use to prep and/or use as a group)

- **Recap:** Continue the first section of Acts (1:1-6:7) where **the Church is established in Jerusalem**
- **Scripture** - Prayer for Guidance, then read Acts 5:12-6:7 (4 minutes)
- **Context:** Chapter 5 takes us up through the mix of narratives and summary statements that reflect the life of this new church family in its earliest days and weeks. Aside from Annanias and Sapphira, which is more a matter of conflict with God (the Holy Spirit), chapter 6 introduces the first real community conflict the church needs to face.
- **Interesting Words:** The phrase “wait on tables” (6:2) could refer to simply distributing food, but it is equally likely that this phrase is referring to economic tables and the distribution of money (which up until now it seems like the apostles had been administrating).
- **Culture:** In antiquity the shadow of a person was often believed to be an extension of the person’s soul, in some instances even a manifestation of the life force of a person. When we are told 5:40 that the apostles were “flogged” this typically meant being whipped 39 times (// Jesus), far more than roughing them up it was a brutal punishment that often resulted in death. Lastly, in a culture where women depended on men for their financial support it makes sense that most to many of the needy would be single women. In Jerusalem there was an explicit cultural bias of superiority in being a palestinian Jew instead of a Hellenistic Jew who grew up in the diaspora community speaking Greek instead of Aramaic. Lastly, all 7 leaders named are Greek names, interesting to think about the implications of this.
- **Themes:** The activities, signs and wonders move outward from this radical community.
- **Quote for expanding the discussion:** None

#### Dialogue Questions (some example questions for this content above)

- How does the summary statement (v. 12-16) differ from the previous two summaries Luke has given about the life of the community in Ch. 2 and 4?
- We have another story about the authorities' attempt to silence the Apostles, specifically Peter. Now there is no mere warning, but more of a trial with severe punishment. Once again what do you notice and learn from their example? What does Luke seem to be highlighting about the growth of the church through these accounts?
- What stands out in the story of conflict between the Hebrew and Hellenistic believers?

#### Implication Questions (some example questions/challenges that engage real life now)

- *Reflect:* What has been your experience with miracles and your faith in Jesus. Living in a culture that is more naturalistic (believing in a closed universe) what might a faithful witness to pray for miracles look like?
- *Reflect:* Does it encourage or discourage you that almost from it’s start there has been conflict right alongside blessings in the Church?
- *Reflect:* What can you name and learn from the way the early church leaders navigated the conflict between two diverse cultures present within one community?
- *Respond:* Is there a miracle you can actively pray for this week? Is there a conflict you can humbly engage in this week?
- **During the Week:** Be reading Acts 6:8-9:31

## Scriptures

### Many Signs and Wonders Done

[Act 5:12](#) The apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon's Colonnade.

[Act 5:13](#) No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people.

[Act 5:14](#) Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number.

[Act 5:15](#) As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by.

[Act 5:16](#) Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by impure spirits, and all of them were healed.

### The Apostles Arrested and Freed

[Act 5:17](#) Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy.

[Act 5:18](#) They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail.

[Act 5:19](#) But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out.

[Act 5:20](#) "Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people all about this new life."

[Act 5:21](#) At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people. When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles.

[Act 5:22](#) But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported,

[Act 5:23](#) "We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside."

[Act 5:24](#) On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss, wondering what this might lead to.

[Act 5:25](#) Then someone came and said, "Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people."

[Act 5:26](#) At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.

[Act 5:27](#) The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest.

[Act 5:28](#) "We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name," he said. "Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood!"

[Act 5:29](#) Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than human beings!"

[Act 5:30](#) The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross.

[Act 5:31](#) God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins.

[Act 5:32](#) We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

[Act 5:33](#) When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death.

[Act 5:34](#) But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while.

[Act 5:35](#) Then he addressed the Sanhedrin: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men.

[Act 5:36](#) Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing.

[Act 5:37](#) After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered.

[Act 5:38](#) Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail.

[Act 5:39](#) But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God."

[Act 5:40](#) His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go.

[Act 5:41](#) The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

[Act 5:42](#) Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Messiah.

[Act 6:1](#) In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

[Act 6:2](#) So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.

[Act 6:3](#) Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them

[Act 6:4](#) and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

[Act 6:5](#) This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.

[Act 6:6](#) They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

[Act 6:7](#) So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.