

REFLECTION GUIDE

ACTS 5:12-42 - THE HERO OF THE CHURCH

KEY TERMS

An angel of the Lord - Greek *angelos kyriou* ("a messenger of the Lord"); although the word *angelos* simply means "messenger," in the New Testament the term *angelos kyriou* always refers to angels, not merely human messengers.

Gamaliel - A prominent Pharisee who was a member of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish ruling counsel in Jerusalem); Paul was a student of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3).

Theudas and Judas the Galilean - Two men who led political uprisings in Jerusalem in the 1st century. Nothing further is known about them and their movements ended after their deaths.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Council mentioned in verse 27 is from the Greek word *sunedrion*, which is where we get the word Sanhedrin. The Council was made up of 71 Jewish leaders. Located in Jerusalem, it was made up of both Sadducees and Pharisees. They saw themselves predominantly as leaders of a well-ordered Jewish society.

BACKGROUND

As the book of Acts continues to unfold, *many signs and wonders* continue to be done and *more than ever believers were added to the Lord* (v. 12-14). The Church is *held in high esteem* and people from outside of Jerusalem now begin to come to the city to seek healing and to hear the apostles teaching; however, others are afraid to join the Church, likely due to the threat of arrest (v. 13-16). And, in verse 17, those fears are realized as the apostles are arrested. Unlike Peter and John's previous arrest (Acts 4:1-22), the apostles aren't initially given the opportunity to plead their case before the leaders because *during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out* (v. 19). The angel commands the apostles to *go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life* (v. 20), connecting the message of Jesus (called the Author of Life in Acts 3:15) with new life in God (see also Acts 11:18). The apostles are eventually brought before the leaders and the scene unfolds very similarly to Acts 4:1-22; however, this time the story ends with Gamaliel urging the rest of the Jewish leaders to ignore the apostles and, if their message isn't from God, *it will fail*, but if their message is from God *nobody will be able to overthrow them* (v. 38-39). The apostles are released with a beating and a warning but *they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus* (v. 40-42).

GOING DEEPER

Read Romans 5:1-5, Romans 8:12-25, and 1 Peter 4:12-19. What do these verses teach you about suffering and the Christian life? Read Hebrews 4:14-16. What do these verses teach you about Jesus? How can a biblical understanding of suffering help you prepare for suffering, endure suffering, and walk with others who are experiencing suffering?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

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LEARNING THE WORD

1. Read Acts 5:12-42. Where do you see God at work in these verses? Can you identify 5-10 ways?
2. How would you describe the growth strategy of the church in Acts? What do we learn about church vitality and health from their example?
3. What three different responses are present among those who hear the gospel message and see the gospel care of the disciples? How do we see similar responses in our day?
4. In verses 41-42, how does the early church respond to suffering, especially to persecution? Where do you think the disciples learned this?

LIVING THE WORD

5. Would you like to see our church grow as "more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women" (vs. 14)? Why or why not?
6. What excuses do you give for why you do not engage people with spiritual conversations, share your testimony, or invite others to church?
7. What are the key ingredients to gaining confidence in sharing about Jesus in your everyday life?
8. Spend several minutes praying together for boldness, for opportunities to share your faith, and for obedience to take initiative in the months ahead. Pray expectantly for God to provide opportunities and for eyes to see them when they occur. Ask for the Spirit's help.