

# Dealing With Persecution

Acts 5:17-42

**Icebreaker**—*What is the most opposition you have ever faced about your beliefs?*

## Acts 5:17-18

Just as Satan tried to discourage the church by tempting Ananias and Sapphira, he will try to discourage the church by threatening its leaders.

*It says they were jealous of the apostles, where does jealousy usually come from?*

- A focus on self and an unwillingness for anyone else to get what you want. In this case, attention.

## Acts 5:19-26

With the jail still locked up tight and guards still at the doors, the guards find the apostles out teaching and preaching in the temple courts! Remember these same officials who are now persecuting the apostles were some of the same people who had a hand in the death of Jesus for making these same claims—that Jesus is the son of God.

*What would your reaction have been to what the angel said after you had just been arrested and told not to do that?*

- It might make you a little nervous to go right back out there but you would also know that it was God's will for you to do that.

*What do most prisoners do when they break out of prison?*

- They hide and try not to get caught immediately.

*How did the apostles respond to the persecution of imprisonment?*

- They went out the very next morning preaching and teaching, risking more punishment.

Dealing with persecution requires a great trust in God and a boldness that we are living for him.

## Acts 5:27-32

Peter and the other apostles appeal to a higher authority. *Whose authority do they appeal to?*

- God's.

*When was a time in your life you were faced with a decision to please men or to please God?*

*How tempting would it have been for Peter have agreed with them and just asked for forgiveness later?*

- That might have been really tempting but that was not God's will.

The early church faced the question of what to do with people who denied Jesus in order to save their life from persecution only later to ask for forgiveness. While we don't face that kind of persecution in America, we still have a daily decision of how public we are about our faith and how we act around believers and unbelievers.

*If the apostles were called to stand up for their faith in the midst of persecutions and threats of death how much more are we called to talk about Jesus when we do not face the same level of persecution?*

*What is the most your belief in Christ has ever cost you?/How did you get through that situation?*

*What does persecution look like today and how can that be discouraging?*

When dealing with persecution it is important to make sure our focus is on God and not on gaining glory or attention for ourselves—the martyr complex.

### **Acts 5:38-42**

Unlike the trial in chapter 4, this trial does result in some punishment. *Why is it a challenge to see flogging as a blessing? Why were the apostles able to see it as a blessing?*

- They had learned much from Jesus.
- They could have easily been on trial with Jesus and suffered his same fate.

*If you were in the Sanhedrin, what would you think about these men who rejoiced even in suffering?*

- You may feel like you were losing—even though punished these men rejoice.
- It may anger you.

Just like with Ananias and Sapphira, what was intended to do harm turned into something good. *What good did this punishment result in?*

- Rejoicing
- More teaching and preaching
- Solidarity of the Christians.

Dealing with persecution means we realize there is a bigger picture of victory and that helps us rejoice

### **Application**

*What do you want to remember the next time you are challenged or hurt for your faith in Christ?*

*How does this story inspire us to have more boldness in dealing with the world?*

*How can we better put God first no matter what in our own lives?*

*How does this story inspire us to help support each other in tough times?*