

## Community Group Discussion Questions

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### “Suffering in the Church”

#### Acts 5:17-42

**Sermon Series Title:** “Church Beginnings”

**Sermon Series Summary:** From now until around Easter, we will be in the book of Acts, covering chapters 1-12. After the Ascension of Jesus Christ, we see the NT church being born by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through this series, we see the church being built, the kingdom going forth, and the gospel being proclaimed.

**Setting:** The book of Acts is a transitional book between the resurrection of Jesus and the established local churches of the epistles. With Jesus’ call to the church in Acts 1, we see how the gospel spreads to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the end of the earth.

**Summary:** After seeing signs, wonders, and growth in the church, the Jewish leaders imprison the apostles out of jealousy. However, an angel helps them to escape to continue to preach Christ, but they are arrested and tried again. The Jewish leaders tell them not to proclaim Jesus and beat them after hearing Gamaliel’s reasoning. This shows us that opposition continues to occur after faithful witness, but we can rejoice because of Christ.

#### **Sermon Points:**

1. The Confinement
2. The Conviction
3. The Reasoning
4. The Rejoicing

**Main Idea:** *“We can suffer for Christ, because Christ suffered the ultimate suffering for us on the cross.”*

#### **Before you read the passage...**

1. If God is good and all-powerful, why do we suffer? How do we handle suffering ourselves?

*(Answers may vary.)*

**After seeing the church grow and the apostles perform signs and wonders, we see suffering in the church again through persecution and also their response.**

## Community Group Discussion Questions

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### **Read Acts 5:17-42**

2. What does this passage show us about jealousy and the offense of the gospel?  
In what ways are we jealous or offended by the gospel?

*(In our passage, we see that the high priests and the Sadducees are jealous, so they arrest and imprison the apostles. The apostles were receiving the attention, fame, respect, and following that the Jewish leaders wanted for themselves. Not only that, we see that they are offended by the gospel message. They were offended by the name of Jesus (v. 28) and the judgment of shedding Jesus' blood.*

*There is such a thing as righteous jealousy. God's jealousy for His people is righteous. A spouse's jealousy over his/her spouse is righteous to a certain extent. However, we see that jealousy rooted in selfishness is always sinful. Jealousy shows us the idols of our hearts as it reveals what is most important to us. We get jealous, because we are not the recipients of those idols.*

*The gospel is offensive. It says that we are sinners who are in need of being saved. It says that the judgment for our sins is sin and eternal damnation. It says that we cannot save ourselves, but our only hope is in the sinless Son of God who died for us. He took on the shameful cross, and He was raised back from the dead. It takes faith to believe in the gospel, and that faith itself can be offensive itself since the gospel seems impossible.)*

3. What does this passage have to say about suffering for Christians and God's sovereignty over it?

*(We see in our Savior's words in John 15 that the world will hate us, because we are in the Savior who was hated by the world first. In John 16, Jesus says that in this world there will be tribulation for His people. If we are in Christ, we will suffer and experience tribulation. It's not a possibility but a certainty.*

*We see this opposition for the early church in our passage today. They are suffering for proclaiming the news of Christ. They are persecuted, because they do not remain silent at the Jewish leaders' request. If we are bold about the gospel, there will be persecution for us as well.*

*This passage also shows us God's sovereignty as the apostles are miraculously freed because of the angel of the Lord, who calls them to go back to the temple and proclaim Christ. This will only provoke the leaders to arrest them again. We see that God is sovereign to free his apostles, and He is sovereign during the suffering. Each of these apostles died a martyr's death without any divine, miraculous deliverance. And we can still say that God is sovereign.*

## Community Group Discussion Questions

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*God is sovereign to deliver us from our trials and hardships. And He is sovereign when we are going through our hardships. Our suffering does not prove that God is not in control. Instead, through our passage, we know that He has His purposes, and He will bring us to Himself through it.)*

4. Why do the apostles rejoice in their suffering? How does this speak into our suffering?

*(The apostles rejoice in their suffering, because they are counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. They rejoice, knowing that they are identified with their Savior and that they are having fellowship with Christ in His sufferings- Philippians 3:10. They can be persecuted and even die for their faith, but they know that ultimate glory and ultimate life are not found in this earth but in Christ.*

*This speaks into our suffering, because we can be reassured that God is sovereign. God is glorified, and He will use our suffering for our good (Romans 8). Not only that, we can have fellowship with Christ because of our sufferings. We can rejoice, knowing that even though Satan and the world can take everything away, we will have everything still in Christ. We have the ultimate and eternal things in Christ. They will never be taken away because of Christ.*

*Christ was arrested, so that we may be truly set free. Christ suffered the ultimate suffering, the wrath of God, on our behalf, so that we may receive the favor and countenance of God. He is the ultimate Savior, accomplishing the will of God, so that by His death and resurrection, we can experience love, joy, peace, and life forevermore.)*

***Final Thoughts:*** *Suffering is not an easy topic to talk about. It's difficult and painful. However, we can rejoice in our sufferings, especially our sufferings for Jesus' name, because we know that He is with us. He is for us. He will never leave us nor forsake us. We can have fellowship with Him. We can grow in our faith in His sovereign plan. We can be reassured in our suffering that Jesus first suffered the ultimate suffering, the wrath of God, so that we may have life eternal.*