

# Acts 5



## The Goodness & Severity of God

Life Group Leaders should read through this material and choose a few questions to talk over in your group. Your group will not have time to cover all the material. The guide is for personal study and for choosing a few questions that you and your life group would like to discuss.

### **Read Aloud Acts 5:1-16**

Before we break down this section of Scripture, describe what is happening in your own words. (Being able to summarize Scripture is a great way to see if we are comprehending what we have just read.)


### **Acts 5:1**

The word “But” at the beginning of verse 1 is critical. In the previous chapter, we saw that as the church was filled with the love of Christ they excelled in sacrificial giving. Individuals sold lands and homes in order to help fuel the mission of the Gospel and to support one another. Without a doubt, this sacrifice was applauded in the early church and provided encouragement to the believers to endure persecution. However, in chapter 5 we will see a “little leaven” or “hypocrisy” that enters the camp of the early Christians.

 **Question: Read 1 Corinthians 5:6-12. What is the impact of justifying, accepting, or celebrating a “little bit of sin” in the church?**

### **Acts 5:2-4**

The sin is clear here; no follower of Christ was obligated to follow the example of selling their home and giving the proceeds to the church. Peter makes it clear that each individual had the right to do as they saw fit with their own property. However, the sin was pride, hypocrisy and lying. Ananias and Sapphira wanted to be seen as sacrificial servants selling their house for the sake of the Gospel. They did what they did for the praise and approval of men, while they themselves sought to deceive God and His church.

 When we sin it is not simply against people, but rather we sin against God as David says in Psalm 51:4.

### **Acts 5:5-11**

The judgment of sin is swift and drastic in this scene. Was God right to take the life of Ananias and Sapphira? We must remember that the wages of our sin is death (Romans 6:23). God does not owe us life, but life itself is a gift. All of us deserve death, immediate death, and eternal death for the price of our sins. In this case, God simply withheld His life-sustaining grace from sinners, and we see the result.



Below are other stories in which divine justice took the life of men. These passages are worth studying. God gives us grace, but He does not owe us grace. God gives us life, but He does not owe us life. There are times where He will intervene, and He has the right to do so as He is the Author of life and Judge of all the earth.

Genesis 6 - The Great Flood

Genesis 19 - Sodom and Gomorrah & Lot's wife

Genesis 38:7-10 - Judah's sons

2 Samuel 6 & 1 Chronicles 13 - Uzzah dies

Numbers 15:32-36 - Man dies on the Sabbath

Acts 12:18-25 - Herod struck dead

Exodus 11-12 - The first born in Egypt struck dead

Leviticus 10:1-3 - Aaron's sons devoured by fire

Numbers 16:25-35 - Earth swallows Israelites and fire consumes them

1 Corinthians 10:1-13 tells us that these stories have significance for us in the New Testament

Number 21:1-9 - Fiery serpents kill Israelites

2 Samuel 12:15-23 - King David's son dies

Ezekiel 24:15-25 - Ezekiel's wife



As Christians we have placed our faith in the sacrificial love of Christ and the incomprehensible grace of the Father. However, when we see the divine justice of God it can bring fear into our hearts.



**Question: What comes to your mind when you read the various stories of God's divine justice? What do you see as the purpose of these stories?**

### Acts 5:11-16

One may think that God striking a husband and wife dead would shrink church numbers, but instead we see that the church continued to grow. Look at the fruit that came from God instilling holiness and the fear of the Lord in the church.

1

Great fear came upon the whole church  
Proverbs 9:10-12, 2 Corinthians 7:1

2

Signs and wonders were done  
The Apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the dead through miraculous power. -  
Hebrews 2:1-4, 2 Corinthians 12:12, Mark 16:14-20

3

The people dared not join them  
The world esteemed the church; they saw that they were different, loving, powerful, and committed to their mission. Yet they did not join them. Casual church attendance was not a common occurrence as the church was not seen as a neutral community but one of power, love and controversy.

4


People continued to be saved  
The early church continued to reach the lost and saw people convert despite conflict, persecution and God's judgment. Matthew 16:17-19

## Read Aloud Acts 5:17-42


Describe what is happening in your own words.

### Acts 5:17-21a

- 1 The resistance to the Gospel continues in this passage. The resistance was driven by jealousy. These like selfish ambition, pride and control breed sin and the devil's work. James 3:13-18
- 2 Despite the efforts to stop the Gospel, the work continued through supernatural means. God does not need us to make things happen. However, He has chosen to partner with us and simply asks us to obey Him by faith. It is through God's grace and the faith of His people that the Gospel is advanced. Read Psalm 127:1-2

 **Question/Discussion: Are there areas of your life that you are feeling the need to control? Areas of your life that are "not going right," and you are trying to fix them in your own efforts? Discuss these areas of your life and ways that you can surrender to God's will.**

### Acts 5:21b-32

- 1 In the midst of adversity, the Apostles continued to stand fast on three things.
    - A **The Gospel**  
Peter once again lays out the same principles that we have seen in the past three chapters. He continues to emphasize: The Sin of Man, The Resurrection of Christ, Repentance, Forgiveness, The Power of the Holy Spirit
    - B **The Mission**  
Despite the constant resistance, the Apostles could not stop preaching the Gospel. They could not stop speaking of what they had seen and heard in regard to Christ.
    - C **The Lordship of Christ**  
God was the Apostle's ultimate authority. Romans 13 speaks about obeying governing officials as they have been appointed by God. However, it is important to remember that as believers, we have a King, and when earthly kings ask us to disobey our heavenly King, we must decline.
  - 2 The Holy Spirit is given to those who obey God.
    - A When we receive Christ, we are indwelt with the Holy Spirit. Romans 8:11, Ephesians 1:13-14
    - B As we obey Christ, we are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. Ephesians 5:18
-  **Question: As you have seen the repeating themes of Acts, what has stuck out to you? Peter continually shares the Gospel and seemingly the same information. What do you think this says about God and our mission as believers?**

### Acts 5:33-42

- 1 Gamaliel was a respected Jewish teacher of the time. He gives an account and warning to those wanting to kill the Apostles. He explains that there had been many leaders that rose up and drew a following. However, when these leaders were killed, it did not take much time for their followers to be scattered. Gamaliel proposed to the Jewish leaders that if Jesus was truly the Messiah, they could not stop the movement of His followers. However, if it was not of God, Gamaliel knew that the movement would die off.



This is a great apologetics point for Christianity. It is the only religion birthed out of extreme persecution yet grew. Christianity touched the entire known world, while in most places, it was illegal or caused significant risks to followers of Jesus. All of the Apostles but John were martyred for their confession of Jesus. The Apostles had the ability to test the authenticity of Jesus. They walked with Him for three years, and He said He was going to rise from the dead. Would these men have died for something, and someone they knew was a lie? I do not think so! Gamaliel's point was prophetic in nature and is to this day a great point of emphasis in the resurrection of Christ.



**Question: How confident are you in defending the resurrection of Christ with the historical evidence? If not, the book *Case for Christ* is a simple and accessible resource that you may want to begin with.**

2

The Apostles were not discouraged by their beating, but rather they rejoiced to suffer for the name of Christ. Suffering is one of the most effective tools we have to grow more intimate with Christ. In addition to this, they found themselves unworthy to suffer for such a great name that they would be associated with Jesus Himself and share in His sufferings. Philippians 3:7-11, Hebrews 5:8

3

The sufferings also did not stop the Apostles from the mission, but instead fueled it as they taught publicly and from house to house. Their eyes were set on eternity, not on this life. 2 Corinthians 4:7-18, Colossians 1:24-28

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## Weekly Challenge

As we see the boldness of Peter and the Apostles, it is easy to desire the type of boldness that they had. However, this did not come overnight, but rather through hardship and holiness. We saw in this chapter that God takes sin very seriously. We cannot have the boldness and power of Christ without first developing the holiness and character of Christ. Telling partial truths can be easy. It is easy to hide our sin, minimize it, or even justify it. Is there any sin or lie in your life that you need to be honest about and confess to a brother or sister in Christ? If so, do not wait! Sin hardens our hearts every day that we allow it to hide in our hearts (Hebrews 3:13).

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## Memory Verse

### **Acts 9:31 ESV**

*So the church throughout all Judea and Galilee and Samaria had peace and was being built up. And walking in the fear of the Lord and in the comfort of the Holy Spirit, it multiplied.*

