

Worthy to Suffer

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Acts 5:17-42

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SETTING THE SCENE

- » Have you ever been jealous of someone else (or had someone jealous of you)? Share your experience with the group. What made you jealous? How did you get over it (if you did)? Why do you think the High Council members were so jealous of the apostles?
- » Share with the group a time when you've suffered some sort of hardship (of any kind). How did you feel when you were going through it? Looking back, how do you wish you had responded? Why do you think we have a tendency to strive for peace and comfort (culture, in-born desire, etc.)? As Christ followers, how should we respond to tough times?

THE STUDY

- » Share your overall thoughts and impressions from the sermon this morning. What things stand out to you? What did you learn? Where did God most challenge you? What questions do you still have about the passage or the sermon?
- » Read **ACTS 5:17-42** out loud as a group. What is your initial reaction to this story and how the events unfolded? What do we as a church need to learn from this passage? What specifically do you need to put into practice?
- » Why do you think God miraculously freed the apostles from jail the way He did? What command did He give to the apostles upon their release? Why do you think He put them back to work instead of letting them take some time off and get "re-grouped"?
- » Why do you think the High Priest couldn't even say the name "Jesus"? How would you have responded to the High Priest's demands if you had been the one standing in front of him? How did Peter and the apostles react?
- » Re-read Peter's response to the High Priest in **ACTS 5:29-32**. What was Peter's main point? Why was it important for him to say what he said to these leaders? What lesson(s) do we as a church and you personally need to take away from Peter's speech?
- » Do you think Gamaliel was on the side of the apostles? If not, what motive do you think he had for trying to keep the Council from killing the apostles? What did Gamaliel say that swayed the group to change their plan of action?
- » Gamaliel says in **ACTS 5:38-39** that the best course of action was to leave these 12 men alone. In hindsight, do you think that was really the best plan? Why does Gamaliel say this is the right course of action? What did he say would happen if God wasn't part of this group of men? What did He say would happen if God was part of what was going on? What lessons should we take away from this?
- » How would you have felt and responded if you had stood before the Council and then been beaten/flogged? How did the apostles respond?
- » Why do you think the apostles "rejoiced" because they had been counted worthy to suffer for Jesus' name? Were they out of their minds or was something else going on? Explain. How do you think they were able to have this attitude instead of being angry with God for putting them through such hardship? How can we react more like them in our lives?
- » After this entire event, the apostles went right back to teaching and preaching in Jesus' name (in direct defiance of the Council...knowing they would likely be beaten again (or worse)). Why do you think they didn't even stop for a little while before getting back into it?
- » How does Luke say the apostles went about teaching and preaching? What can we (and should we) learn from this model? What was the message they were teaching? Do you think we make our message more complicated than this? If so, why do you think we do?

APPLICATION

- » Share and discuss your answer to the first question David asked the church to ponder this morning: *Do you consider yourself worthy to suffer for Jesus?* Explain your answer and have a group discussion about our desire to find comfort instead of embracing hardship.
- » Share and discuss your answer to the second question David posed this morning: *Do we keep doing what we're called to do regardless of the circumstances or how hard things get...or do we tend to look for a way out of the pain and misery?* Again, explain your answer and discuss what we as a church and individuals should be doing (that we are either already doing or things we aren't doing).
- » Share with the group the key thing God is working on in your life right now (either as a result of the passage, sermon, and/or group discussion or in any other area). How can the group help you?
- » Where is there hardship in your life right now? Share with the group and spend some time thanking God for counting you worthy and asking Him to help you continue to do what He's called you to do. If you can't think of anything, ask Him to put you in a position and give you the boldness to share His love with those around you—regardless of the potential hardship and/or discomfort it might cause.
- » Share any unanswered questions or comments you have as a result of the group discussion or sermon...

PREPARING FOR NEXT WEEK

- » Up next week: **ACTS 6:1-7**. In this part of the book we start to see some corporate structure being brought into the church for the first time. Why was it important for this new structure to be put into place? Do you think structure and planning has a place in the church? Can it get out of hand? How do we keep it in proper perspective and make sure we're doing things effectively?
- » What was the ultimate goal of the apostles appointing men to take on some of the daily tasks that were distracting the apostles from their work? Were these men in a lower position than the apostles? Explain your answer.
- » Read this passage a few times this week and journal your initial thoughts and reactions to the story. Write down any questions you have as well as what God is saying to you personally through this section of the book.

CARING COMMUNITY

- » **SHARE** with the group how God has been speaking into your life or challenging you this past week (this may be as a result of the sermon or something in your personal journey). Is there anything from this week's LifeGroup discussion you need to work on?
- » Are there any **NEEDS** you have coming up in your life that the group can help you with (this may include spiritual needs, life needs, pretty much anything...)
- » **PRAY** for one another. Share your requests and praises with one another. Write them down here. If you commit to praying, please be sure you do it...