Harvester Christian Church

Life Groups | **PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY**

ACTS | Powered By The Spirit

**WEEK 6– ACTS 5:17-7:60**

In our reading this week we begin to see actual persecution breaking out against the church. The religious leaders are making good on the threats they previously made against the Apostles (4:18-21). Christians are being put in jail and even killed because of their faith in Jesus. This week we are discussing what it means to have a **Spirit Powered Commitment** to Christ even when life gets hard. **Pray for wisdom and read Acts 5:17-7:60.**

**Apostles Arrested (Acts 5:17-42)**

A very interesting series of events is recorded in the last half of Acts 5. Answer the following questions in regard to these dramatic developments in the lives of the Apostles.

* What was the motivation behind the arrest of the Apostles? (5:17)
* How did God miraculously intervene on their behalf? (5:19)
* Later in Acts (16:25-26), other men of God are arrested, only to be miraculously freed from prison. Something to think about: If God is going to free them anyway, why does he allow his servants to be arrested?
* After being re-arrested, how does Peter respond when the leaders remind them they were commanded to stop speaking about Jesus? (5:29)
* After considerable debate, the Sanhedrin decided to let the Apostles go, but only after having them flogged. (5:40) What did flogging (also called “scourging”) involve? Look for a footnote in your Bible or check out [this](http://biblehub.com/topical/s/scourging.htm) entry on BibleHub.com. (Click on “topics,” enter the word “scourging,” and select the first article.)
* How did the Apostles respond after being flogged? ( 5:41-42)

**Stephen Stoned to Death (7:54-60)**

In chapter 6 we are introduced to a great man named Stephen. Even though he is killed soon thereafter, his legacy lives on because of the way in which he honored Christ both in his life and in his death. We read about how he was falsely accused and then brought before the Sanhedrin for questioning. Most of chapter 7 is his fearless defense (or sermon) before this body of religious leaders that led to his death.

* What kind of a man was he? (6:8-10)
* What two things did he pray as he was being killed? (7:59-60)

**Where is God in our Pain?**

When life gets difficult, some people wonder if God isn’t paying attention, doesn’t care, or is powerless to change our circumstances. The Bible teaches just the opposite. We cannot judge God’s love for us by looking at our circumstances. Maybe that’s why Jesus (and later, his Apostles) went to such great lengths to prepare us for hardship in this life. Read the following passages and write a brief summary of each.

* John 15:18-20
* John 16:1-4,33
* I Peter 4:12-16

**How do we deal with hardship/persecution?**

We have to be prepared for a certain amount of pain, disappointment, or even persecution in this life. We have little control over the trials that come our way, but we do have control over our reactions to those trials. Read and summarize the following scriptures in which God tells us how to live a life that honors Him when we are facing trials/persecution.

* Romans 12:14,17-21
* Philippians 4:6-7
* James 1:2-4
* I Peter 5:6-11

**Discussion Questions**

Was there anything in this week’s reading that you wanted to discuss tonight?

The Apostles obeyed God even in the face of persecution. (5:29) Describe a time when you chose to obey God when other people had different expectations of you. How did God reward that decision?

Jesus warned repeatedly that His followers would encounter trials and hardship. Many Christians today seem to think that if they are good followers of Jesus they will be healthy and wealthy. Why do you think that is?

In Act 7:59-60 Stephen prayed for forgiveness of for his attackers. Is there anyone you need to forgive in your life? What steps are you going to take to forgive them?

Some Christians around the world regularly suffer persecution for their faith. What are some things that we can do to show concern for them and solidarity with them?