

LEAD SHEET

ACTS : You Won't Believe This! - WK. 2
THE APOSTLES IN PRISON
JANUARY 24, 2016

THIS MONTH'S FAITH SKILL:
NAVIGATE THE BIBLE

If you want to know God better, read His Word!

GETTING STARTED

General Discussion:

- How were you feeling at the beginning of this activity?
(Overwhelmed, crowded, etc.)
- Did you ever think you would get free from the big bunch of people?
(Allow for discussion.)
- How did you feel once you were untangled?
(Free!)

Today, we are going to talk about some people who stuck together and faced adversity all the while continuing to spread the Word about Jesus. Turn to Acts 5.

DIGGING IN

Read Acts 5:17-21

Discussion Questions:

1. According to verse 17, what is the Jewish leaders' motivation for persecution?
(Jealousy.)
2. What do the Jewish leaders do in verse 18?
(Arrest the Apostles and put them in jail.)
3. Who seems to be included?
(All the Apostles. There is no mention of names.)
4. Who frees them from prison?
(An angel of the Lord.)

5. What are they instructed to do once they are free?
("Go stand in the temple courts and tell the people all about this new life.")

6. What do they do in response?
(They preach as they were told.)

Meanwhile, the High Priest, along with the full assembly of the elders of Israel, were sent to retrieve the Apostles from prison, but they were in for a surprise.

Read Acts 5:22-29

Discussion Questions:

1. What do the High Priest and elders find when they arrive to retrieve the Apostles? *(Empty jail cells.)*

2. What is unique about the cell? *(The doors were locked, guards were in place, but no one was inside.)*

3. Where are the apostles?
(Preaching in the temple courts.)

4. Though they were given "strict orders" not to preach, what is Peter's reply? *(That they must obey God, not human beings.)*

Read Acts 5:30-42

Discussion Questions:

1. When the religious officials hear what the Apostles are saying, what is their reaction in verse 33? *(They are furious and want to put the Apostles to death.)*

2. Who attempts to persuade them against this and why?
(Gamaliel states that if the Apostles' purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail on its own. However, if it is from God, then the officials will not be able to stop it.)

3. Are the officials persuaded by this argument?
(Yes, they are persuaded.)

4. What do they do for additional warning?
(They flog the Apostles)

6. How do the Apostles respond according to verses 41-42? *(They rejoice that they have suffered for the Name of Christ, and then they declare that they will preach day in and day out, house to house.)*

MAKING IT REAL

This story is an inspirational one, for sure. When you slow down and take a close look, this kind of faith is crazy to contemplate:

- The Apostles preach
- People try to quiet the Apostles by throwing them in jail
- The Apostles are saved from jail by an angel of the Lord
- The Apostles continue preaching
- Officials confront the Apostles again
- Officials flog the Apostles
- The Apostles continue preaching

There are two main points here, which we need to apply to our lives as believers.

1. They Were Bold

General Discussion:

- What part of this story illustrates their boldness the most? *(They continued to preach the Gospel despite being imprisoned, beaten, and warned sternly.)*
- Where did that boldness come from? *(The Holy Spirit. See verse 32.)*
- Now let's personalize this: are you that bold? *(Allow for discussion.)*
- Honestly, if you were sent to jail for preaching, preach after you were released? *(Allow students some time to struggle with their answer.)*
- Honestly, if you were warned by powerful people not to preach, would you obey them? *(Again, give students time to struggle with their answer.)*

- Honestly, if someone flogged you and beat you severely, would you walk away rejoicing and then go house to house preaching? *(One last time allow students to struggle with their answer.)*

One of the things we have to wrestle with is why we are not as bold as the Apostles were. Why would flogging stop us? Why would prison stop us? Why would strict warnings stop us?

That leads us to the second point that we can learn from the Apostles in this passage from Acts:

2. God, Not Circumstances, Impacted Their Attitude

General Discussion:

- Why do you think the Apostles continued to preach in spite of their opposition? *(They felt convicted about the message; they had to obey God no matter what.)*
- Did their circumstances change? *(Yes, prison, beatings, strict warnings, etc.)*
- What didn't change? *(The Apostles' attitude, their commitment, their devotion to Christ.)*
- Do you find that circumstances affect your commitment to Christ? Why or why not? Use an example. *(Allow students to discuss. Circumstances have most likely changed their commitment at some point.)*
- How does what is happening to you affect your willingness to be devoted to Christ? *(Sometimes, when things are tough we blame God instead of rejoicing in suffering, etc.)*

The Apostles' God—not their circumstances—affected their attitudes. We worship the same God. No matter what happens, we should be devoted to Christ just as the Apostles were devoted to Him.

It is incredible that the Apostles were severely beaten, but rejoiced afterward because they had the opportunity to suffer for Christ. Some might say, “Hey, if an angel of the Lord freed me from jail, I’d do whatever God said too.” That is a fair point. However, let’s not forget that God has set us free from an even worse imprisonment.

**Read Acts 13:39, Romans 6:22,
and Galatians 5:1**

Discussion Questions:

1. Is it an exaggeration to say we have been set free?
(No.)
2. From whom or what have we been freed?
(Satan, sin, and death.)
3. Does your freedom make you any less free than the Apostles in this passage? *(No!)*
4. How can our response be the same as the Apostles' response? *(In light of our freedom, we should speak up and nothing should stop us.)*

CLOSING PRAYER

Pray for each student to respond *somehow* to the freedom he or she has in Christ.