

DISCIPLESHIP GROUPS

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KEEP JESUS WEIRD: The Book of Acts and the Birth of Non-religious Christianity

Session 5 – Discipleship

DAY 1

Introduction:

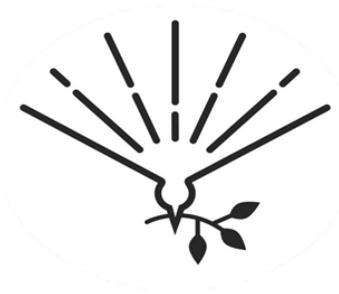
Margaret Atwood said, “You can only be jealous of someone who has something you think you ought to have yourself.” Jealousy has blinded many individuals to the truth, and it consumed the Jewish leaders as the Gospel spread. We learn in Acts 5:17 that, “the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees were filled with jealousy.”

This week’s reading mentions two Jewish groups: the Sadducees and the Pharisees. While these groups were united in their opposition to Jesus and the spread of the Gospel, they differed in their reasoning. The Sadducees were politically oriented aristocrats who were highly concerned with maintaining the temple and the beliefs of the past. The Pharisees held a strong influence in the Jewish community and ruled in local synagogues. They devoted themselves to the study and interpretation of the Law of Moses and believed in strict adherence to the Law. They took it so seriously that they added thousands of laws to those found in the Torah (first five books of the Bible). Both groups were represented in the Sanhedrin, the “full assembly of the elders of Israel” (verse 21). The Sanhedrin (like our Supreme Court) made decisions for Israel, with the final authority retained by the Roman Empire.

We will see the apostles go before their jealous opposition in the Sanhedrin and how they react. We will also see have a glimpse of true discipleship.

Questions:

1. Reflect on the Margaret Atwood quote. What do you think the Sadducees and



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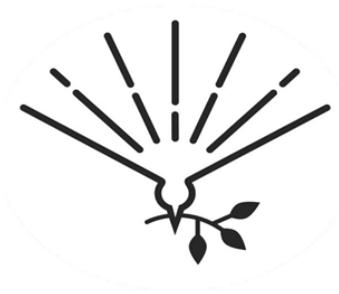
Pharisees wanted that the apostles had?

2. Where in your heart has jealousy taken root? What can you do to recognize and manage your jealous feelings?

DAY 2

Read Acts 5:17-28

1. What do we learn is the reason the apostles were put in jail in verse 17? Sadducees in the leader copy answer.
2. What instructions does the angel give to the apostles? How do the apostles respond?
3. In verse 24 and 26, we can sense that the opposition felt fear. What were they afraid of and why?
4. Read Deuteronomy 21:7-8. Those responsible for murder were guilty of the person's blood. Behavior such as murder brought judgement on the land. What implications does this have for the elders (leaders) in the Sanhedrin?



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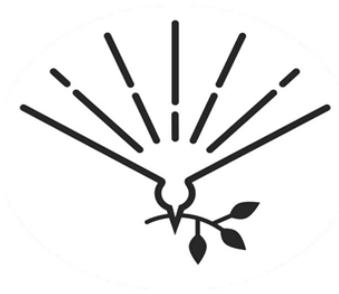


5. Discussion Question: Christians must submit to government authorities (Romans 13:1-7). What do we learn from the apostle's example of how to submit to authority while maintaining obedience to God?

DAY 3

Read Acts 5:29- 42

1. Why must Peter and the other apostles obey God rather than human beings? What was the reaction of the Sanhedrin?
2. How does Jesus' revolution differ from the previous ones mentioned in our reading? What does Gamaliel propose?
3. Discussion question: What was meant to discourage the apostles from preaching the news of Jesus, only emboldened them further to proclaim the good news. Why do you think this is?



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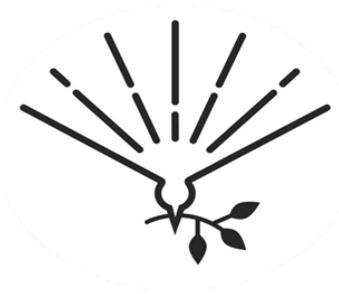
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DAY 4

Read Acts 6:1-7

1. The church is faced with division. What plan do the apostles come up with and what is the result?
2. What was the criteria for the seven that were chosen? Why are these qualities necessary for servant leadership?
3. The apostles have a clear sense of their calling. Where do they need to focus their time, and why is this clarity important?
4. Discussion Question: We have seen several passages pointing to many people accepting Jesus (2:41, 2:47, 5:14). Verse 6:7 notes, "the number of



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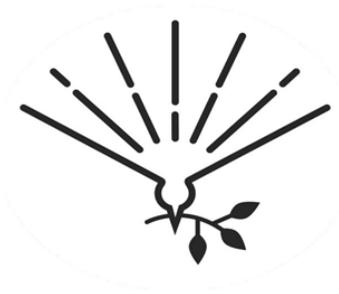


disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.” What is the significance of priests becoming obedient to the faith?

DAY 5

Read Acts 6:8-15

1. Who opposed Stephen and why? What did they do in order to convict him?
2. What ceased the argument between Stephen and his opposition? How can you stand firm in your faith in tumultuous times?
3. False witnesses testified against Stephen. See Matthew 15:19. Where does defilement come from, and what does bearing false witness point toward?



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4. Discussion question: In John 15:18-25 Jesus tells his disciples that “if the world hates you, keep in mind it hated me first”. Would this have brought Stephen anxiety or peace? How do you react to this statement?

DAY 6

Review Acts 5:17 – 6:15

What did you learn about the will of God this week?