LESSON 5

CORNERSTONECONNECTIONS

JANUARY312026

Scripture Story: Acts 5:12–6:7.
Commentary: The Acts of the Apostles (or Unlikely Leaders), chapters 8, 9.

power. perseverance. purpose.

Photo by Colleen Cahill

keytext

"Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me."

(Matthew 5:11, NIV)

flashlight

"The leaders in the Jewish nation had signally failed of fulfilling God's purpose for His chosen people. Those whom the Lord had made the depositaries of truth had proved unfaithful to their trust, and God chose others to do His work. In their blindness these leaders now gave full sway to what they called righteous indignation against the ones who were setting aside their cherished doctrines. They would not admit even the possibility that they themselves did not rightly understand the Word, or that they had misinterpreted or misapplied the Scriptures. They acted like men who had lost their reason" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 78, 79).

what do you think?

Read the following statements and, for each one, select one of these responses: (1) Strongly Agree, (2) Agree, (3) Disagree, or (4) Strongly Disagree:

____ I am confident sharing my testimony about Jesus to others anytime.

____ I enjoy telling others about God all the time.

____ I know what I am good at and what areas I need help in.

____ My non-Christian friends can tell I love God no matter what circumstances I am in.

did you know?

Reproach and persecution have separated many from earthly friends, but never from the love of Christ. Never is the tempest-tried soul more dearly loved by his Savior than when he is suffering reproach for the truth's sake" (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 85).

INTO THE STORY

"Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. 'Go, stand in the temple courts,' he said, 'and tell the people all about this new life.'

"At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people.

"When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles. But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, 'We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside.' On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss, wondering what this might lead to.

"Then someone came and said, 'Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people.' At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.

"The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. 'We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,' he said. 'Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man's blood.'

"Peter and the other apostles replied: 'We must obey God rather than human beings!'"

(Acts 5:17-29, NIV)

OUT OF THE STORY

Why were the religious leaders "filled with jealousy"? Does this emotion play out in your life? If so, how?

The apostles stated that they had to "obey God rather than human beings!" From the passage here, what were the specific orders from God? What were the specific orders from "human beings"?

What were some of the main problems the apostles faced? How did God solve them? What does this tell you about God?

What were the apostles' responses to the problems they faced? Do I have the same responses to the problems in my life?

What is one thing I can do differently from today onward that would change the way I tackle the problems I encounter?

punch lines

"For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline. So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God. He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace" **(2 Timothy 1:7-9, NIV).**

"Through him God created everything in the heavenly realms and on earth" **(Colossians 1:16, NLT).**

"For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" **(2 Corinthians 4:17, 18, NIV).**

"Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope" **(Romans 5:3, 4, NIV).**

"'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future'" **(Jeremiah 29:11, NIV).**

further insight

"What was the strength of those who in the past have suffered persecution for Christ's sake? It was union with God, union with the Holy Spirit, union with Christ."

—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles,* p. 85

connectingtolife

Sabbath

Read 2 Corinthians 4:17, 18.

In Acts 5 it says that "more and more men and women believed in the Lord" (Acts 5:14, NIV). Despite seeing the apostles being jailed and beaten in Christ's defense, the people still believed and accepted Christ. Why?

As you consider your answers in the *What Do You Think*? activity, which one do you think contains the most compelling reason for others to believe and accept Christ? Explain.

Sunday

Read Romans 5:3, 4.

As you read the *Into the Story* section and use the questions in the *Out of the Story* section to prompt your study of the text, notice how the disciples' love and conviction for God grew deeper and deeper until, despite flogging, they left "rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name" (Acts 5:41, NIV). What impressions does their testimony evoke in you today?

Monday

Read Matthew 5:11.

Some people called Matthew 5:1-12 the "be" attitudes of the faith. Jesus concludes His beatitudes with the Key Text for this week's lesson. What blessings have you seen happen because you or someone else was being "persecuted because of righteousness"? Share your experiences with the class.

Tuesday

Read Acts 6:1-7.

Read the quote from *The Acts of the Apostles* in the Flashlight section of this week's lesson. What can you infer will happen to someone who rejects God's plans and purpose for them? What about those who recognize their talents and use them for God's work? What talents and abilities do you have?

Wednesday

As you read the passages listed in the *Punch Lines* section of this week's lesson, which verse strikes you as particularly significant today? Why do you think this verse is especially relevant to you today?

Thursday

Read 2 Timothy 1:7-9.

Have you ever been judged or laughed at by others for doing what is right? It takes courage to do what is right (or not doing what is wrong) even though you know you could get into all kinds of trouble for it. It takes power to forgive those who mistreat us. This courage, this power, comes only from God. It has nothing to do with our wealth or fame. And it has nothing to do with privilege or good looks. It has everything to do with the presence of the Holy Spirit who lives within each of us who believe! How can you tap into this power? What activities can you add to your daily routine so that you remain constantly tapped into God's power?

Friday

Read Colossians 1:16 and Jeremiah 29:11.

When we seek God with our whole heart, we don't have to worry whether or not we're doing the right thing or what kind of purpose we are supposed to fulfill—it just comes naturally. But in order for that to happen, we need to fill our hearts and minds with His ultimate power source: the Holy Spirit. What more do you need to do to rely on God's power? How can you make Him more of a priority?

this week's reading*

The Acts of the Apostles (or *Unlikely Leaders*), chapters 8, 9.

* Unlikely Leaders is a special adaptation of *The Acts of the Apostles* created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.