



WnL CONNECT GROUPS

The Church is Refined

Acts 5:1-41

MAIN POINT

God promises to refine His church through discipline, brokenness, and persecution.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

- Have you ever experienced a challenge that changed you physically? What was the challenge? How did it change you?
- What challenge changed you the most spiritually? Would you say it was worth it? Why or why not?

God will allow nothing to stand in the way of the proclamation of His gospel and the expansion of His church. For this reason, He has various refining processes He puts His children through in order to mold us into people who bring Him glory in all that we do.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

Have a volunteer read Acts 5:1-11.

- Read Acts 4:32-37. Were Ananias and Sapphira required to sell the land and lay all the money at the apostles' feet? Why or why not? What was their sin?
- What do you think motivated Ananias and Sapphira to behave the way they did? What would Ananias and Sapphira gain by lying about the money they received?



Evidently, this couple noticed Barnabas had received recognition for his gift (see Acts 4:36-37), and they desired the same praise for themselves. So they pledged the full proceeds of their sale to the church; however, they decided to keep some of the money for their own personal use. This couple wanted acclaim without sacrifice and comfort without commitment. If Ananias and Sapphira had succeeded with their deception, the church's integrity would have been questioned and its unity damaged. Such a serious offense called for severe action. When Ananias fell over dead, great fear seized all who heard what had happened. They understood that to deceive God meant instant discipline.

Have a volunteer read Acts 5:12-16.

- How would the incident with Ananias and Sapphira lead to the response of people in verses 13-14?

The apostles continued to perform many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. The text seems to indicate if Ananias and Sapphira had not been punished, the apostles' power would have diminished and their witness would have weakened. However, the Lord's judgment on the couple produced reverent fear in those who heard about it both in and out of the church. This served to enhance the church's public ministry and encouraged people with all kinds of needs to seek and receive the church's help.

- As the church today, we are still to be a place for people to come and have their needs met. For what various needs does our church offer help and healing? Why should the church be a place for people of needs?
- What example did Jesus set for us in regards to meeting people's needs?

Jesus' earthly ministry focused on meeting people's needs, both spiritually and physically. The most important need everyone has is a personal relationship with Jesus. Beyond helping to meet that need, though, the church is a place for people to feel accepted and to be connected to other imperfect people who empathize with one another's pain and who can help shoulder the burdens of life. One of the unifying elements of the body of Christ is our mutual understanding of our brokenness.

Have a volunteer read Acts 5:17-26.

- How do you account for the jealousy of the Sadducees?
- As an apostle, how would you feel during the events of verses 18-21? What would you expect to happen next?

As they had done earlier, the Sadducees arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. However, God intervened in the lives of His disciples. Here we have a physical deliverance and a divine revelation directing them precisely back to what they were doing, preaching the gospel in the temple courts.



- Despite the apostles' faith in God and His presence in their lives, they still faced persecution. Why is persecution a cost faithfully serving Christ?

Have a volunteer read Acts 5:27-41.

- What does the Sanhedrin accuse the apostles of in verse 28?
- What assertions in Peter's response would arouse their fury (vv. 29-32)?
- What stands out to you about Peter's response to the accusations he faced? What is the application for us in ministry today?

Christians do not respond with violence or resistance (Luke 22:49–51). Peter offers no defense, only a witness, an offer of salvation to Jesus' murderers.

- Flogging sometimes resulted in death. Why do you think the disciples considered it worthy rejoicing that they suffered in Jesus' name?

It's no small wonder Peter picked up a "suffering for Jesus" theme in his epistles (see 1 Pet. 4:13; 2:18-21; 3:8-17). They had beaten Jesus, and now they had beaten His disciples who praised God that they could suffer for the name of Jesus. God will allow nothing to stand in the way of the proclamation of His gospel and the expansion of His church.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What are ways you have experienced the discipline of our loyal Father? How has your faith been refined through such an experience?

How do you think your relationship with Christ and your commitment to the body would be different if persecution was a real threat to your everyday life? What would this do to your faith?

How do you explain why God sometimes delivers you out of hardships, but at other times He allows you to go through them? What might God be trying to teach you by allowing you to face persecution?

PRAYER

Thank God for refining our faith through discipline, persecution, and brokenness. Pray that God would continue to refine the faith of your group members and use them to proclaim Christ's kingdom.

