

CALVARY CHAPEL COSTA MESA

– COMMUNITY GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE –

Studies in the Book of Acts

“The Unstoppable Good News of Jesus Christ” – Acts 5:17-42

FELLOWSHIP

Sometimes institutions seem so entrenched that it's easy to imagine that they will never change. When their original visions have become codified and legalized, their forms have taken seniority over their original functions. When new ideas arise that seem innovative or exciting, an organization which is bent on protecting the structures of the past will take these ideas as a threat. Power and control are the currency traded by the elite. Threats to the hierarchy of power are met with an arsenal of retaliation, intended to ruin the person or group endangering their rule. Within the short history of our country, this pattern has been played out in government, entertainment, and religious institutions. The scandals of the present reveal the abuse of those who wield power. Lord Acton's comments in 1887 still seem relevant today: "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men." Step into the scene of first century Palestine in Jerusalem, and the battle for control is on full display. Great men, including the famous Rabbi Gamaliel, meet in private conference on how they could destroy the new message that was intruding on their political and religious control. Ironically, they had taken on the role of Goliath, and Peter and John were now standing like David. The apostles' response that, "We ought to obey God rather than men," sounds similar to David's reply, "The battle belongs to Jehovah." Gamaliel, in his sage wisdom, recognized that if maybe they were on the wrong side, they wouldn't be able to stop it. He offers the theologically pragmatic advice: "And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it—lest you even be found to fight against God." This tempered the council for the moment, but the institutional machine would eventually return to its rage. The Gospel of Christ proves too good to be stopped. How amazing that Jesus' message would shortly transform one of Gamaliel's most zealous and furious students into the Gospel's biggest proponent, Paul.

READ & DISCUSS

Read out loud together as a group Acts 5:17-42. Discuss those areas that can be applied, especially on why these believers continued to stay on mission in light of such confrontation:

Acts 5:41-42 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

- God was working on behalf of his messengers, even dispatching angels to the prison. *Where have you seen God intervening in difficult situations that seem stacked against you? The apostles were still beaten and threatened: Why does God not always rescue us from every adversity? What was the most important thing for these apostles in the midst of confrontation? What is your personal mission for God? How can you avoid derailment, and stay on mission?*
- Jesus said we were to love, bless, do good, and pray....for who? **Read Matthew 5:44-45.** *Why are these actions important in how we interact with those the farthest from our camp? How are these actions important to our mission? How do these disciplines change and affect us? When have you witnessed a change in someone who seemed unchangeable because of love?*
- The Sanhedrin council held all the political and religious power of their day. The Puritans came to America to find relief from a King who held the same kind of power. *How does "separation of church and state" help the mission of the church? How does it hinder it? What is the best form of civil government that will allow the church and its mission to flourish?*

PRAY



Community Group Discussion Guide

Based on Pastor Brian Brodersen's message from December 10, 2017.

Watch: <https://cccm.com/teaching/the-spirit-the-church-and-the-world/video/the-unstoppable-good-news-of-jesus-christ/>