

DISCIPLESHIP LESSON 28

1	PRAYER
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Pray for God’s guidance through his Spirit, for awareness of his presence and for listening to his voice. Dedicate this lesson about disciple making to the Lord.

2	SHARING (20 minutes) [QUIET TIMES] GENESIS 16:1 – 19:29
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Take turns and *share* (or *read* from your notes) in short what you have learned from one of your quiet times out of the assigned Bible passages (Genesis 16:1 – 19:29). Listen to the person sharing, take him serious and accept him. Do not discuss what he shares.

3	MEMORISATION (20 minutes) [THE GOSPEL] (2) ECCLESIASTES 12:14
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A. MEDITATION

Read Ecclesiastes 12:1,5-7,13-14. “Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, ‘I find no pleasure in them’ ... Then man goes to his eternal home ... Remember him before the silver cord is severed, ... and the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God who gave it. ... Here is the conclusion of the matter: Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgement, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.”

(2)

Write the following memory verse on a white or black board as follows:

Punishment of sin Ecclesiastes 12:14
For God will bring every deed into judgement, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil. Ecclesiastes 12:14

Write the Bible reference on the back of your card.

There are two ways in which God punishes sin:

1. God punishes sin through his present judgements.

Read Galatians 6:7-8. “God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction”.

God has built laws into his creation. If these laws are transgressed, they bring punishment with them. For example, if you ignore the physic’s law of gravity, you can have a nasty fall.

God has also built spiritual and moral laws into people. Consider the following transgressions of God’s laws and their consequences. When people do not care for the earth and its nature, God allows the air, water and soil to get polluted, which results in all kinds of diseases. When people are lazy and do not work, then God allows them to become poor and hungry. When people hate one another and fight against one another, then God allows them to destroy one another. When people are corrupt in the areas of industry and commerce, then God eventually allows their businesses and society to collapse. When people become tyrants and oppress their subjects, then God allows their country to get destroyed by war. In many such kinds of ways, the consequences of sin catch up with the sinner. People sow sins, and then God allows them to reap the results of their sins. God’s present judgements are built into the laws of his creation and into the laws of functioning in his creation. Nobody can transgress God’s laws and get away with it. At some time, God will allow his present judgement to catch up with most people!

2. God punishes sin through his future final judgement.

Read Hebrews 9:27. “Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgement.”

The Bible says that death is not the end! After death there will be the final judgement! At the end of human history in this world, Jesus will return to earth and judge all the people that ever lived. This day is called the day of judgement. Jesus Christ will separate the Christians from the non-Christians.

(1) Non-Christians will be judged.

They will be judged for all their shortcomings (Matthew 25:41-46). They will be judged for all the evil things they have done (Ecclesiastes 12:14). They will be judged for their unbelief and rejection of Jesus Christ (John 3:18,36). And they will be judged for their ignorance of God and disobedience to the gospel (2 Thessalonians 1:8-9). They will have no second chance to be saved. They will be shut out from the presence of the living God and never experience the goodness and mercy of God, but only his wrath. They will be punished with everlasting destruction, that is, they will be thrown into hell (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 21:8).

(2) The Christians will be judged.

They will be judged for how they have lived the Christian (saved) life (2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:10-15). However, they will not be condemned to everlasting destruction, because through their faith in Christ they have already passed from death to life (John 5:24). "There is no doom for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1).

B. MEMORISATION AND REVIEW

- 1. Write.** Write the Bible verse on a blank card or on one page of your small notebook.
- 2. Memorise.** Memorise the Bible verse in the right way. (2) Punishment of sin. Ecclesiastes 12:14.
- 3. Review.** Divide into twos and check one another's last memorised Bible verse.

4	BIBLE STUDY (70 minutes) [THE CHURCH] (2) THE EVANGELISTIC TASK OF THE CHURCH: ACTS 5:12-42
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Make use of the five steps method of Bible study and study Acts 5:12-42 together.

STEP 1. READ.	GOD'S WORD
<i>Read.</i> LET US READ Acts 5:12-42 together. Let us take turns to read one verse each until we have completed the reading.	

STEP 2. DISCOVER.	OBSERVATIONS
<i>Consider.</i> WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE IS IMPORTANT FOR YOU? Or WHICH TRUTH IN THIS PASSAGE TOUCHES YOUR MIND OR HEART? <i>Record.</i> Discover one or two truths that you understand. Think about them and write your thoughts in your notebook. <i>Share.</i> (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, take turns to share). Let us take turns to share with one another what each of us has discovered. (The following are examples of people sharing what they have discovered. Remember: In every small group, the group members will share different things, not necessarily these things)	

Discovery 1. How God changes a very difficult situation into a victory for the gospel.

Note the small word "but" in this Bible passage.

(1) But God opens closed doors (Acts 5:12-20).

In Acts 5:12-20 we read that the enemies of the gospel put the apostles into prison. It would seem as if the enemies have won and that the apostles could no more preach the gospel.

However, in verse 19 we read how God changed a very difficult situation into a victory. "But during the night, an angel opened the doors of the jail." The enemies could not stop the apostles from preaching the gospel! What a contrast. The enemies put the apostles in prison, but God opened the prison doors! "To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name" (Revelation 3:7-8)!

(2) But God sends them back to teach the gospel (Acts 5:21-26).

In Acts 5:21-26 we read that in the mean time the enemies of the gospel got ready to conduct a big show trial. They called the Sanhedrin together. The Sanhedrin was the highest governing power, especially in religious matters and was the highest legal authority among the Jews. They could punish people severely. The current trial against the apostles could begin. It seemed as if the Sanhedrin was going to finish the apostles that day.

However, in verse 22 we read how God changed a very difficult situation into a victory. "But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there." The doors of the jail were still locked and the guards were still standing in front of the jail. But there was nobody on the inside of the jail! There was nobody they could try in court! The Sanhedrin was confused. Then someone brought a message telling the whole Sanhedrin that the apostles were standing in the temple courts teaching the people. What a contrast. The enemies prepared a trial against the apostles, but God made them teach the people right in the temple!

(3) But God makes them bold in witnessing for Jesus Christ (Acts 5:27-32).

In Acts 5:27-32 we read that the highest religious authority in the country, which was an enemy of the gospel, accused the apostles of disobeying their previous orders not to teach in the name of Jesus. They also accused them of trying to make the leaders of Israel look guilty in the eyes of all the people.

However, in verse 29 we read how God changed a very difficult situation into a victory. The apostles replied, “But (Greek: de) we must obey God rather than men!” God had commanded them to preach the gospel to everyone and nobody had the authority to oppose God’s command. They even preached the gospel to the Sanhedrin! They spoke to them about the death and resurrection of Jesus and about the necessity to repent and receive forgiveness of sins. They said that whoever obeyed God, would receive the Spirit of God in their hearts. What a contrast. The enemies accused and threatened, but God made the apostles bold to even preach the gospel to their enemies and judges (cf. Matthew 10:17-18).

(4) But God makes their enemies take their side (Acts 5:33-39).

In Acts 5:33-39 we read that some of the enemies became very angry and wanted to kill the apostles. It almost seemed as if the apostles would be stoned to death.

However, in verse 34 we read how God changed a very difficult situation into a victory. “But a Pharisee named Gamaliel” intervened. He warned the enemies not to act in a hurry, because it may turn out that they were fighting against God himself! What a contrast. The enemies wanted to kill the apostles, but the sovereign God used one of these enemies to stop their evil plan. “When a man’s ways are pleasing to the Lord, he makes even his enemies live at peace with him” (Proverbs 16:7)!

(5) But God’s people continue to obey God (Acts 5:40-42).

In Acts 5:40-42 we read that the enemies martyred the apostles by 39 lashes with a whip on their backs. Pieces of bone and metal were fixed to the ends of the ropes of the whip so that they tore their backs open. The enemies ordered them again not to speak in the name of Jesus Christ. Once more it seemed as if these authorities could stop the preaching of Jesus Christ.

However, in verse 41 and 42 we read how God changed a very difficult situation into a victory. “The apostles therefore (Greek: oun) left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.” The apostles bore the mistreatment by their enemies with joy, because they shared the suffering of Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul says, “Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh (body) what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his Body, which is the Church” (Colossians 1:24)! What a contrast. The enemies use force and violence to silence the Christians, but the Christians continue to obey God more than the corrupt government of people! The enemies continued to oppose the preaching of the gospel, but the people of God continued to obey God and preach the gospel everywhere!

5:29

Discovery 2. God is the highest authority.

“We must obey God rather than men!” What is the highest authority in the world? A government received from God authority to rule (Romans 13:1-7), but a government can also be corrupt and hostile (Revelation 13:1-10). Acts 5:29 teaches clearly that God is the highest authority on earth and that people should obey God rather than the hostile governments and religious leaders of countries! Nothing and no-one may hinder Christians from proclaiming the gospel!

STEP 3. QUESTION.

EXPLANATIONS

Consider. WHICH QUESTION ABOUT ANYTHING IN THIS PASSAGE WOULD YOU LIKE TO ASK TO THIS GROUP?

Let us try to understand all the truths in Acts 5:12-42 and ask questions about the things we still do not understand.

Record. Formulate your question as clearly as possible. Then write your question in your notebook.

Share. (After the group members have had about two minutes to think and write, let each person first share his question.)

Discuss. (Then, choose a few of these questions and try to answer them by discussing them together in your group.)

(The following are examples of questions the students might ask and some notes about the discussion of the questions.)

5:16

Question 1. How must I explain the shadow of Peter that caused sick people to be healed?

Notes. Acts 5:14-16 may best be translated as follows. “More believers were added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women, so that they brought forth the sick into the streets ... so that as Peter passed by, his shadow might overshadow some of them. Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed.”

This description has nothing to do with superstition among the people, but is rather a historical description of faith in Jesus Christ and his ability to heal people miraculously. It was not a miracle that led to faith, but their faith that led to God's miracle. The people who believed acted by faith.

Similar events happened before in the Gospels. Once a woman (by faith) touched the clothes of Jesus and was immediately healed (Mark 5:27-30). In Gennesaret, the people (by faith) throughout that region placed their sick in the marketplaces and begged Jesus to let them touch even the edge of his cloak. All who touched him were healed (Mark 6:55-56). A Roman centurion believed that Jesus could heal his servant without personal contact or even being present, and Jesus healed him (Matthew 8:8-10). These historic events were a strong proof of the people's faith in Jesus Christ and his ability to heal.

Likewise, here it pleased God that even the shadow of the apostle Peter (Acts 5:16) should have the same effect with regard to miracles as the words and gestures of the apostles on other occasions (Acts 3:6). Likewise, it also pleased God that when cloths (worn around head and used to wipe away sweat) and aprons (worn by workmen) from (that had touched) Paul's skin were brought to the sick, their sicknesses left and evil spirits went out (Acts 19:11-12). These miracles of the apostles are in the historical context and are therefore not teachings how people should be healed.

The miracles of the apostles were the effect of the people's faith rather than the cause of their faith. The people believed in Jesus Christ and the message which the apostles preached. Therefore they also had faith to bring their sick people to the apostles to be healed. The means, by which God healed them, by word, by gesture, by pieces of clothes, by shadow or by no contact at all, is not important, because Jesus Christ himself is the Healer, the One who "has all authority in heaven and on earth".

5:29

Question 2. What are the limits of all human authority?

Notes. When Peter says, "We must obey God rather than men", does he mean that we Christians should always disobey the government in the world? The Bible teaches seven identifiable authority-submission relationships. Christians must obey these authorities that have been instituted by God. No authority on earth is absolute or unlimited. Only God himself has absolute and unlimited authority! And God delegates a part of his authority to the various kinds of leaders here on earth. These leaders or people who have received authority are responsible and answerable to God for everything they do. The seven authority relationships described in the Bible are:

(1) God has authority over man.

God has the highest and absolute authority over all people and everything in creation. James 4:7 says, "Submit yourselves, then, to God." All people, whether they are Christians or not, must submit themselves to the God who revealed himself in the Bible (in the Old Testament prophets, in Jesus Christ and in the New Testament apostles). Also all other leaders mentioned below must submit to God, to his teachings, commands and prohibitions. God has made people for his own glory (Isaiah 43:7) and to live for Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:15-16). God calls all people to know him, love him, obey him and serve him. The highest goal for all people is to live to the glory of God (soli Deo gloria).

(2) Man has authority over creation.

God has given man a limited authority over nature in his creation. Psalm 8:4,6 says, "What is man that you are mindful of him? ... You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet." God has given to people the responsibility to care for his creation.

But people's authority with respect to the earth is limited. People may not do with God's creation what they want. For example, Deuteronomy 20:19 says, "When you lay siege to a city for a long time, fighting it to capture it, do not destroy its trees by putting an axe to them, because you can eat their fruit." And Ezekiel 34:18-19 says, "Is it not enough for you to feed on the good pasture? Must you also trample the rest of your pasture with your feet? Is it not enough for you to drink clear water? Must you also muddy the rest with your feet?" Man may not pollute or destroy God's creation!

(3) The man has authority over the woman in Christian marriage and in the Christian Church.

In Christian marriage God has given to both the husband and the wife limited authority! They received authority to serve one another. But the ways in which they serve are different: the husband must serve his wife by leading her and the wife must serve her husband by submitting to his leadership. Colossians 3:18 says, "Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord."

But the authority of a husband is also limited, because Colossians 3:19 says, "Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them." And Ephesians 5:33 says, "However, each one of you must also love his wife as he loved himself, and the wife must respect her husband." A husband may exercise his authority within the marriage relationship only in love, in gentleness and appropriately. And the wife must show her submission in her respect for her husband. God created the man and the woman as they are and also instituted the marriage ordinance. Therefore he alone has the right to determine their relationship! Modern opinions about the role of men and women may not set God's teaching in the Bible aside!

In the Christian Church, God assigned the leadership to men (Acts 20:17,28; 1 Timothy 3:2). The apostle Paul does not allow a woman to teach (in the official meetings of the church) or to have authority over (domineer) a man¹ (1 Timothy 2:11-12; 1 Corinthians 14:33-37; cf. Titus 2:4).

(4) The parents have authority over their children.

God has given the parents a limited authority over their children (as long as they are still “children”). Colossians 3:20 says, “Children, obey your parents in everything (that does not oppose the Bible), for this pleases the Lord.”

But the authority of parents is also limited, because Colossians 3:21 says, “Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.” Parents must exercise their authority towards their own children in a way that encourages them and, if necessary, in a way that disciplines them (Proverbs 13:24). God gives children to parents (Psalm 128:3-4) and determines the relationship between parents and children. Modern opinions about the role of parents and children may not set God’s teachings in the Bible aside!

(5) The government has authority over its citizens.

God has given political and judicial leaders a limited authority over the citizens in its country. 1 Peter 2:13-14 says, “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every authority instituted among men: whether to the king ... or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.” Christians should obey the rulers of their country in everything that is right.

But the authority of all rulers is also limited, because Revelation 13:1-10 exposes the antichristian governments in the world and Acts 5:29 says, “We must obey God rather than men.” No matter in which position of authority these men stand, if they demand anything against the will of God, we Christians should gently resist their demands.

(6) Employers have authority over employees.

God has given employers a limited authority over their employees. Colossians 3:22 says, “Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything, and do it not only when their eye is on you and to win their favour, but with sincerity of heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.”

But the authority of earthly employers is also limited, because Colossians 4:1 says, “Masters, provide your slaves with what is right and fair, because you know that you have a Master in heaven.” Every employer must realise that God is his Employer and that God will one day reward or punish him as he has done to his employees. If an earthly employer demands anything against the will of God, then we Christians should also gently resist their demands. Employers that fail to pay workmen their wages will be judged in the day of slaughter (James 5:1-6).

(7) The elders have authority over the church members.

God has given the elders of a congregation authority over its members, whether they are registered members or only participants in the congregation. 1 Thessalonians 5:12 “Respect those who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you.” “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them, so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you” (Hebrews 13:17).

But the authority of all the leaders of congregations is also limited, because Matthew 20:25-28 and 1 Peter 5:1-4 say that the leaders of the congregations may not lord it over those entrusted to them. All leaders must lead, not in an authoritarian way, but by personal example and by serving those entrusted to them. Leadership in the Bible is always “shared leadership”, “servant leadership”, “leadership by means of the Bible” and “leadership in which the faith is worthy to be imitated”.

5:32

Question 3. Of what were the apostles especially witnesses?

Notes. The apostles were especially called by Jesus Christ to be witnesses of Jesus Christ himself on earth (Acts 1:8). They have not been called to be witnesses of some church denomination of Christian organisation, of some spiritual leader, of some Christian doctrine (confessional statement) or even of some kind of spiritual experience! Throughout the history of Christianity, the devil has tried to change the contents of witnessing away from Jesus Christ to some selfish goal or ambition of certain people. Watch out for false prophets, false apostles, false teachers, false bishops and false witnesses!

The apostles had belonged to the first group of disciples of Jesus and had followed Jesus wherever he went from the time he began his public ministry to his death, resurrection and ascension. Therefore they were able to be the first-hand eye-witnesses and ear-witnesses of Jesus Christ, his life, death and resurrection (Acts 1:21-22). They were witnesses of his trials before the Jewish and Roman authorities. They were witnesses of how the Jewish Sanhedrin sentenced Jesus to death. They were witnesses how the Jews used the wicked Roman authorities to put Jesus to death by crucifixion (Acts 2:23; 5:30). They were witnesses how God raised Jesus up from the dead (Acts 2:32). And they were witnesses how God exalted him to his own right hand through his ascension (Acts 5:31).

¹ Greek: didaskein de gunaiki ouk epitrefó oude authentein andros

Also the Holy Spirit living in Christians witnesses about Jesus Christ and glorifies Jesus Christ in the midst of every group of Christians (John 16:14). “The testimony of Jesus Christ (of who he is, what he said and what he did) is the spirit (essence) of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10)! Therefore, Christians should always be the witnesses of Jesus Christ.

STEP 4. APPLY.

APPLICATIONS

Consider. WHICH TRUTHS IN THIS PASSAGE ARE POSSIBLE APPLICATIONS FOR CHRISTIANS?

Share and record. Let us brainstorm with one another and record a list of possible applications from Acts 5:12-42.

Consider. WHICH POSSIBLE APPLICATION DOES GOD WANT YOU TO TURN INTO A PERSONAL APPLICATION?

Record. Write this personal application down in your notebook. Feel free to share your personal application.

(Remember that people in every group will apply different truths or even make different applications of the same truth. The following is a list of possible applications.)

1. Examples of possible applications from Acts 5:12-42.

- 5:12. Meet together as believers in your town.
- 5:18. Expect that you may be arrested and put into jail.
- 5:19. Expect also that the Lord may open the door of the jail for you.
- 5:20. “Tell people the full message of this new life.” “Proclaim the whole will of God” (Acts 20:27).
- 5:28-29. When the government authorities order you not to speak about Christ, you should rather obey God and tell them also about Christ. They too must hear the message (Matthew 10:17-20).
- 5:40. Expect that you may be flogged for speaking about Jesus Christ to people.
- 5:41. Rejoice when Christ counts you worthy of suffering disgrace for his Name.
- 5:42. Never stop teaching and proclaiming the good news in public and in houses that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah).

2. Examples of personal applications from Acts 5:12-42.

I want to remember the seven “authority – submission” relationships. I especially want to exercise my authority within the limits set by the Bible. For example, I want to lead other Christians by being a personal example and by serving them, not by lording it over them.

I am very impressed by the courage of the apostles and the sovereignty of God. Every time the enemies of the gospel tried to stop their preaching, God himself intervened and helped them to continue preaching the gospel! Nothing in this world will stop the Christians from preaching the gospel to all the nations in this world, because God is fighting for them. I want to follow their example.

STEP 5. PRAY.

RESPONSE

LET US TAKE TURNS TO PRAY ABOUT ONE TRUTH THAT GOD HAS TAUGHT US in Acts 5:12-42.

(Respond in your prayer to what you have learned during this Bible study. Practise to pray only in one or two sentences. Remember that people in every group will pray about different issues.)

5	PRAYER (8 minutes)	[INTERCESSION] PRAY FOR OTHERS
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Continue to pray in groups of two’s or three’s. Pray for one another and for the people in the world (Romans 15:30; Colossians 4:12).

6	PREPARATION (2 minutes)	[ASSIGNMENT] FOR NEXT LESSON
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(*Group leader.* Give the group members this preparation for at home in writing or let them copy it down).

1. Commitment. Be committed to make disciples.
Preach, teach or study the Bible study of Acts 5:12-42 together with another person or group of people.
2. Personal time with God. Have a quiet time from half a chapter of **Genesis 20:1 – 23:20** each day.
Make use of the questions method of quiet time. Make notes.
3. Memorisation. (2) Punishment of sin. **Ecclesiastes 12:14.** Daily review the last 5 memorised Bible verses.
4. Prayer. Pray for someone or something specific this week and see what God is doing (Psalm 5:3).
5. Update your notebook on making disciples. Include the notes on your personal time with God, memorisation notes, Bible study notes and this preparation.