

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this series about sharing from our quiet times you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will share from what they have learned from their quiet times. Every day during the past week we had a quiet time from a passage in the New Testament. Once a week we come together to share with one another what we have learned. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. We will first explain how to have a quiet time. Then we will share the important truths and lessons from our quiet times and try to answer some difficult questions. Today's topic is A DISCIPLE SHARES WHAT HE LEARNS FROM ACTS 4:1 – 7:60.

(S) **POINT 1. HOW TO HAVE A QUIET TIME AND SHARE**

Have a time of fellowship with God or quiet time every day of the week from one of the seven assigned Bible passages. An easy quiet time method is called "The favourite truth" method. It has 5 steps. Step 1. Pray and ask God to speak to you. Step 2. Read one of the seven assigned passages. Step 3. Choose your favourite truth. It is the truth, verse or passage through which God is speaking to you, stimulating your thinking or touching your heart. Step 4. Meditate on your favourite truth. Meditate by doing the following four things. First. *Think* about the meaning of words. Second. *Ask* God what he intends to say to you. Third. *Relate* your favourite truth to your life by making a practical application. Fourth. *Write* the most important thoughts of your meditation in a notebook so that you may share them with others. Step 5. Pray your favourite truth for yourself. Then pray your favourite truth for someone in your family. Then pray your favourite truth for someone nearby. And finally, pray your favourite truth for someone far away. When you meet together with one friend or with other Christians in a house fellowship or discipleship group, take turns to share the meditation of one of your quiet times. You may also try to answer some questions from the assigned passages.

(T) **POINT 2. SHARING FROM ACTS 4:1 – 7:60**

This past week we have read, meditated and prayed from Acts 4:1 – 7:60. Now we will use our quiet time notes to share truths and lessons from the assigned passages and discuss some questions.

Sharing quiet times from Acts chapter 4.

(S) I want to share from Acts 4 about the bold witness of the apostles. The Jewish leaders put the apostles Peter and John on trial for healing a crippled beggar in front of the temple. Technically the apostles were on their *defence*, but actually they went over to the *attack*.

Peter told them that the authority to do their work was given by Jesus Christ. Then he proceeded to preach the gospel to his judges. He quoted the well-known Messianic prophecy in Psalm 118:22, "The stone which the builders have rejected, have become the capstone". The Stone is Jesus Christ and the builders were the leaders of the Jewish nation, who refused to acknowledge Jesus Christ as their Messiah. But the Stone, which they had thought nothing of, had now received from God the place of honour as head stone of the corner. The capstone was the most important stone in the foundation to which every other stone in the building had to be aligned. Jesus Christ now sat at God's right hand, the most powerful position in the world. Every human being had to get aligned to him or perish! Then Peter warned the leaders that there is no one else than Jesus Christ who could save them from their sin and from the coming judgement of God. He said, "Salvation is in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which they must be saved."

There are particularly two things that are important to me. First. The apostles make use of every opportunity to preach the gospel, even to their judges at their trial. As a Christian, I want to follow their example and make use of opportunities to tell the good news to people. Second. The Jews never made any attempt to disprove the resurrection of Jesus! They absolutely had no prove that Jesus was not resurrected, because they could not produce the body of Jesus. Moreover hundreds of people were eyewitnesses and ear-witnesses of his resurrection! People, who say that Jesus was not resurrected, can only say that without any evidence on their side! I too want to testify to the resurrection of Jesus with great confidence.

Sharing quiet times from Acts chapter 5.

(T) I want to share from Acts 5:17-42 about the sovereignty of God.

First. The apostles healed many more people. Great crowds of people started to come from the towns all around Jerusalem to hear the gospel and to be healed from their sicknesses. The Jewish leaders became very jealous and arrested all the apostles and put them into the public jail. Their intention was to have a public trial and scare all the people away from the Christian faith. It seems as if the apostles lost this battle. However, in verse 19 we read the first "but". *But* during the night an angel of God opened the prison, brought them out and told them to continue to preach the gospel. First lesson. Nobody can stop the preaching of the gospel!

Second. The next day, the Jewish court assembled to put them on trial. The Jewish authorities and the judges were there as well as many people. They were going to make this a show-trial with great publicity. However, in verse 22 we read the second “but”. *But* when the officers arrived at the jail, they could not find the apostles. The prison was still locked securely and the guards were still standing outside on guard. They were very embarrassed. When they were told that the apostles were teaching the people in the temple, they brought them without force to the court. Second lesson. God is sovereign and can open any door to give us an opportunity to do his work!

Third. The judges accused the apostles of violating their strict orders not to preach the gospel and not to teach anything about Christ. They accused the apostles of filling the city with their teaching about the death and resurrection of Jesus and thus attempting to make the Jewish authorities guilty of crucifying Jesus. They thought they could scare the apostles into obedience. However, in verse 29 we read the third “but”. *But* the apostles said to the authorities and judges, “We must obey God rather than men!” And then they proceeded to take the initiative by preaching the gospel to the authorities and judges! No matter whether a person is a government official or a judge, anybody who repents from his sin will be forgiven! Anybody who obeys Jesus Christ will be given the Holy Spirit. In history many leaders and judges have become believers in Jesus Christ after hearing the gospel. Third lesson. When people put you on trial for your faith, then use that opportunity to preach the gospel to them!

Fourth. The Jewish leaders and judges became very angry and wanted to give the apostles the death sentence. This time it seemed as if the apostles were going to lose their lives! However, in verse 34 we read the fourth “but”. *But* God moved the heart of one of the judges to calm the situation as well as to warn the authorities and judges. His name was Gamaliel, one of the most well known teachers in Israel. He said, “Leave these apostles alone and let them go, because, if what they say and do is from human origin, their efforts will surely fail. However, if what they say and do is from God, then no authority and no judge on earth will be able to stop them! If the authorities and judges tried to stop them anyway, they would discover that they were fighting against God!” (verse 38-39). Gamaliel’s speech persuaded the authorities and judges. They did not kill the apostles, but had them flogged with whips. Fourth lesson. God is sovereign and all-powerful. He can even use one of your opponents to help you when you are persecuted!

Fifth. The flogging consisted of 39 lashes with a whip on their bare backs. The authorities and judges warned the apostles not to speak about Jesus Christ again. They thought that after such a flogging, the apostles would be too scared to talk about Jesus. However, in verse 41-42 we read what the apostles did instead. Day after day, both in the public place of the temple as well as in private homes of people, they preached the gospel and taught people about Jesus Christ. They never stopped doing what God told them to do in the beginning. Fifth lesson. There is one authority higher than every other authority in the world, and that authority is God himself. When people order us to do things contrary to what God has ordered us to do, then we must obey God rather than man!

Sharing quiet times from Acts chapter 6.

(S) I want to share from Acts 6 about the leadership structure in the early church. The Jerusalem church was the first historical church. God founded the church, because the apostles prayed and preached the gospel since the Day of Pentecost. The first church among the Jews probably chose *elders* as its leaders just as God taught his Old Testament community to choose *elders* as its leaders. According to Deuteronomy 1:9-18, elders had to be men that were wise, understanding and respected. They had to be the leading men in their community and their task was to judge the people fairly. According to Acts 6:4, their tasks were to preach and teach the Bible and to pray for the people. According to 1 Timothy 3:4-5 and 5:17, their task was to manage or rule the whole church by walking in the front and setting the example. According to 1 Peter 5:1, the apostles also functioned as *elders* within the local churches. According to Acts 14:23 and Titus 1:5, when the gospel spread to the non-Jews (Gentiles), those churches also appointed *elders* as their leaders.

However, when the number of disciples in this first local church at Jerusalem increased to over 5000 people, a specific problem or need developed. Certain people were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. The apostles as elders felt that it would not be right for them to neglect their own service, namely prayer and the preaching of the Word, in order to serve the tables. Therefore the whole church chose *deacons* to take care of this special service of distributing food to the poor and needy members of the church. The conclusion is therefore that the leadership of every local church must at least consist of *a group of elders*. If the members of the church cannot or do not take care of a particular difficult task, then the church should appoint *deacons* to take of that task. While every local church *must* appoint a number of elders as their leaders, they *may* appoint a couple of deacons, if deacons are really needed.

(T) I want to share from Acts 6 about the deacons. The first church did not appoint just anyone to become a deacon. The apostles clearly taught the qualifications of deacons.

First. Deacons must be men from among you, that is, believers from the same congregation and not strangers coming from the outside. They must be well known by the local believers and they must know the local people and circumstances.

Second. Deacons must be men full of the Spirit. They must be born-again and have the Holy Spirit living in their hearts. Being full of the Holy Spirit means to be full of the fruit of the Holy Spirit, like love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). It also means that they are using their spiritual gifts or special abilities of the Holy Spirit *to serve* others. For example, Stephen had the gift of doing wonders and miraculous signs (verse 8). And Philip had the gift of doing evangelism.

Third. Deacons must be full of wisdom. Wisdom is the ability to put knowledge into practice. Wisdom is the ability to use the best means for the accomplishment of the highest goals. While the elders were the leaders of the whole church, the deacons were only people that served in tasks, which no one else was able or willing to do. In Jerusalem the deacons distributed food to the poor and helpless. While the Bible teaches that every church should have elders, it does not teach that the church should have deacons. If the church needs people to do some special service, then it may appoint deacons.

Sharing quiet times from Acts chapter 7.

(S) I want to share from Acts 7 about the sovereign acts of God. When Stephen was put on trial by the Jewish authorities and judges, he also used this opportunity to witness about the living God and Jesus Christ. He talked especially about the sovereign acts of the God of the Bible in the history of his people in this world. Stephen started right at the beginning of God's people, when God called Abraham to be the father of his people in this world.

The first important thing that God did was to reveal himself to his people. God appeared to Abraham (verse 2). If God had not revealed himself to Abraham, Abraham would never have known who God really was. God revealed the future suffering of his people and commanded Abraham to go to an unknown land that would later become the inheritance of his people. Today, God through his Holy Spirit continues to reveal himself to you and me through what is written in the Bible and especially through the first coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The second important thing God did was to be present with his people. Abraham's great grandchildren sold Joseph to Egypt as a slave. But God was with Joseph (verse 9). God rescued Joseph from every one of his troubles, gave him heavenly wisdom and enabled him to win the goodwill of the mightiest ruler of the world at that time in history. Today, our God is still present with his wisdom and his power to help us to do his will in this world!

The third important thing God did was to rescue his people. God saw their oppression and persecution, heard their groaning and rescued them from their oppressors (verse 34). Likewise, today, God sees our difficulties, hears our prayers and will rescue us from our oppressors and persecutors.

The fourth important thing God did, was to clearly reveal his specific will to his people. Many people believe that God exists, but they don't know the specific will of God. God gave to his people "the moral law". The moral law consisted of "ten commandments" that showed them how they should live and behave as the people of the living God of the Bible. The first four commandments told them how they should relate to God and the last six commandments told them how they should relate to other people. God also gave to his people "the ceremonial law". The ceremonial law consisted of laws that showed them how they could approach the most holy God and how they should worship him during the Old Testament period. The ceremonial law consisted of rules with regard to the temple, the priests, the religious festivals and religious actions like circumcision, food rules, animal sacrifices, harvest offerings and tithes. Finally, God gave them "the civil law". The civil law consisted of various laws that showed God's people how they should function as a nation during the Old Testament period. The civil law consisted of laws with regard to marriage, sexual immorality, property rights and settling legal disputes. Likewise, today, God has given to us the Bible in which we can know the specific will of God in every important area of life.

The fifth important thing God did was to raise Jesus Christ to his right hand. After the Jewish leaders had rejected Jesus and condemned him to death, God raised him from the dead and gave him the place of honour in heaven from where he now rules over the world. When Stephen was stoned to death, he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. This is a warning to everyone. God *accepts* Jesus, who was once *rejected* by men, and God has given to him all power in heaven and earth. Therefore, no one in the world should close his ears to the words and deeds of Jesus Christ. No one should harden his heart or resist the Holy Spirit.

(T) ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. Divide Acts 8:1 – 11:18 into seven passages. Every day have a quiet time from one passage. Record the meditations of all your quiet times in a notebook. Once a week meet with a friend or with a house fellowship or discipleship group and share from your quiet times.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and make disciples" and Internet on www. Etc

Third. Listen on short wave radio from SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY to "Discipleship training on the air".