



Thanks for checking out our sermon-based Study Guides! If you've never used our Study Guides before, you'll find some basic instructions at the end of page 2.

SERMON-BASED STUDY GUIDE
for the sermon preached on June 6, 2021
Finding Our Way Forward Week 8: "The Way of the Margins"
Acts 5:12-41



Our spring teaching series, "Finding Our Way Forward," has been helping us look forward by looking back. We've been reading through the Acts of the Apostles, looking for wisdom and practices from the apostles and the first Christ followers that can guide us as we move forward as a church. Today, Pastor Jeanette helps us understand that the early church was a counter-cultural force that both offended and attracted people in its care for people on the margins.

Group Discussion Questions

- Pastor Jeanette began the sermon by reflecting on the experience of not quite fitting in. Quoting the Japanese proverb, "The nail that sticks out gets hammered down," she observed that those who stand out for being too different often get criticized by others.
 - When have you experienced not quite fitting in? What was this experience like?
 - When have you witnessed another person or group being criticized or sanctioned for not quite fitting in?
- Our passage for today is Acts 5:12-41. Have someone start by reading vv. 12-16 aloud.
 - What two apparently contradictory truths about the early church do we learn in vv. 13-14? How do you understand the tension between these two truths?
[Leader's note: "This apparent paradox shows that the church's growth is not superficial but comes from those who weigh the cost and are truly committed."]
- Next have someone read vv. 17-18.
 - What do you think made the high priest and his associates so jealous (v. 17) and later furious (v. 33)? What can we learn from this?
- Continue reading with vv. 19-20.

- After freeing the apostles from jail, what does the angel of the Lord instruct them to tell the people?
- What do you make of the phrase, “this new life”? In what ways does following Jesus constitute a new life?
- Let’s look at one last section of the passage together. Invite someone to read vv. 25-33.
 - In what sense did the apostles face a choice between obedience to God and obedience to the authorities?
 - What possible consequences could result from their decision to “obey God rather than human beings”? What enabled the apostles to take this bold stand?
- Reflecting on this passage, Jeanette observed: “Those who are willing to count the cost and live lives in radical obedience to Jesus, these brothers and sisters lead vibrant lives and create faith-filled communities that demonstrate the love, grace, and mercy of God to a watching, skeptical world.”
 - When have you faced a tension between obedience to what you believed God was calling you to, and going along with what other people expected of you? How did you respond?
- Jeanette shared several ways that the early church was counter-cultural, beginning with the fact that “honor was shown to *all* people, especially to those living along the margins of society.”
 - In what ways do we need to grow as a church in showing honor to people on the margins? What groups of people might we especially struggle to love well? Is there a particular step the Lord is inviting *you personally* to take in this direction?

Prayer Suggestion

Lord, give us wisdom, courage, and boldness to seek and speak your truth, to serve the most vulnerable, and to follow and obey Jesus, even when it costs us. In Jesus’s name, Amen.

How to Use These Study Guides:

- Consider sending out the Scripture passage to your group members ahead of time.
- Begin each meeting with a short time of checking in with one another.
- You may want to begin the discussion by reading the Scripture passage together out loud, or by summarizing the passage if everyone has read it ahead of time.
- Don’t feel like you need to discuss every question included in the Study Guide. Pick one or two to start with, and see how the conversation flows.
- If your group meets over Zoom:
 - You may need to do more overt facilitating over Zoom than you would in person. Feel free to call on people to invite them to share.
 - Try to be sensitive to attention spans over Zoom—keep the meetings shorter than they would be in person.
- Be sure to set aside time for sharing prayer requests and praying together.

Group Leader Support: Please reach out to your Coach or Campus Pastor with questions about leading your group or concerns about your group dynamic. Please reach out to Pastor Tim or Pastor Rachel from the Group Life team with questions about or feedback on the Study Guides.