

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series you may learn to become a disciple of Jesus Christ. Two teachers will do Bible study together about one important aspect of being a disciple of Jesus Christ. We will use a very easy Bible study method called the five steps method. As you listen to this programme, make notes in a notebook or record the programme. The third series of 5 Bible studies is about the church. The topics are: “The cultural task of the church”, “The missionary task of the church”, “The evangelistic task of the church”, “The goals of the church” and “The leadership of the church”. Today’s Bible study is: A DISCIPLE IS OCCUPIED WITH THE EVANGELISTIC TASK OF THE CHURCH.

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read Acts 5:12-42. Let us take turns to read one verse each.

(T) Acts 5:12-42. The apostles performed many miraculous signs and wonders among the people. And all the believers used to meet together in Solomon’s Colonnade. **(S)** No one else dared join them, even though they were highly regarded by the people. **(T)** Nevertheless, more and more men and women believed in the Lord and were added to their number. **(S)** As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter’s shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by. **(T)** Crowds gathered also from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing their sick and those tormented by evil spirits, and all of them were healed. **(S)** Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy. They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail. **(T)** But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. “Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people the full message of this new life.” **(S)** At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people. When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin - the full assembly of the elders of Israel - and sent to the jail for the apostles. **(T)** But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, **(S)** “We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside.” **(T)** On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were puzzled, wondering what would come of this. **(S)** Then someone came and said, “Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people.” **(T)** At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them. **(S)** Having brought the apostles, they made them appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest. **(T)** “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,” he said. “Yet, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.” **(S)** (But) Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than men!” **(T)** The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead - whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. **(S)** God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Saviour that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. **(T)** We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.” **(S)** When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. **(T)** But a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honoured by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. **(S)** Then he addressed them: “Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. **(T)** Some time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. **(S)** After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. **(T)** Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. **(S)** But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God.” **(T)** His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. **(S)** The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. **(T)** 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.

(S) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in this Bible passage. “Which truth in this passage is important for you?” or “Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?” Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries with one another.

(T) An important truth for me is the little word “but” in this passage.

First. 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 the first

“but”. “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! Second. In Acts 5:21-26 we read that 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 the second “but”. “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 the court! The Sanhedrin were 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 prepare a trial against the apostles, because they teach people the gospel, but God makes the apostles teach the people the gospel right in the temple!

Third. In Acts 5:27-32 we read that the enemies 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, instead of answering their accusers, we read in verse 29 the third “but”. “But”, the apostles replied, “We must obey God rather than men!” God had commanded them to preach the gospel to everyone and nobody has the authority to oppose God’s command. They even preached the gospel to the highest governing body among the Jews! 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 accuse and threaten, but God makes the apostles bold to even preach the gospel to their enemies.

Fourth. 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 the fourth “but”. “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.

Finally. In Acts 5:40-42 we read that the enemies punished the apostles and again ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus Christ. Again it seemed as if these authorities could stop the preaching of Jesus Christ by force. However, in verse 41 we read that the apostles gladly accepted their punishment and continued to obey God rather than men. They preached the gospel, not only in the public temple, but now also in the houses of the people. What a contrast. The enemies continued to oppose the preaching of the gospel, but the people of God continued to obey God and preach the gospel everywhere!

(S) An important truth for me is in Acts 5:29, which says, “We must obey God rather than men!” Often when I think about the question of authority, I wonder what is the highest authority in the world? Verse 29 is my answer: The highest authority on earth is God. He is above every other authority in this world! This truth helps me to make some important decisions about how I behave in this world and especially how I do evangelism.

(T) STEP 3. QUESTION

Let us try to understand all the truths in this passage and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. “Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask?” Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. When must Christians disobey the governing authorities?

(S) When Peter says, “We must obey God rather than men”, he does not mean that we Christians should always disobey the governing authorities in the world. According to the Bible, there are seven identifiable authority-submission relationships. Christians must obey these authorities. Nevertheless, all authorities on earth are limited. No authority on earth is absolute. Only God himself has absolute authority! God has delegated certain authority to various kinds of leaders here on earth. They are responsible and answerable to God for everything they do. The seven authority-submission relationships described in the Bible are the following.

The first authority-submission relationship. God and man. James 4:7 says, “Submit yourselves, then, to God.” All people must submit to God. God has made people for his own glory. 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.

The second authority-submission relationship. Man and 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, “Do not destroy its trees by putting an axe to them, because you can eat their fruit.”

The third authority-submission relationship. Husband and wife. Colossians 3:18 says, “Wives, submit to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.” But a husband’s authority is also limited, because Colossians 3:19 says, “Husbands, love your wives and do not be harsh with them.” A husband must exercise his authority within the

marriage relationship only in love and in gentleness. Remember, marriage as well as the relationship between a husband and wife is instituted by God. Modern people have no authority to change what God has instituted. The fourth authority-submission relationship. Parent and child. Colossians 3:20 says, "Children, obey your parents in everything, 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 only in a way that encourages their children. Also the relationship between parents and children is instituted by God. Modern people have no authority to change what God has instituted. The fifth authority-submission relationship. Governor and those governed. 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." But the authority of all rulers is also limited, because 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.

The sixth authority-submission relationship. Employer and employees. Colossians 3:22 says, "Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything." 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 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.

The seventh authority-submission relationship. Spiritual leader and spiritual follower. 1 Thessalonians 5:12 says, "Respect those who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you." But the authority of pastors and other spiritual leaders is also limited, because 1 Peter 5:3 says that church leaders may not lord it over those entrusted to them. Spiritual leaders must lead by example and by serving those entrusted to them.

(T) STEP 4. APPLY

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of *possible applications*, consider which possible application does God want you to turn into a *personal application*.

(S) I want to remember the seven authority - submission relationships. I especially want to exercise my authority in the limiting way of the Bible. For example, I want to lead other Christians by being an example and by serving them, not by lording it over them.

(T) 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 sovereignly 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.

(S) STEP 5. PRAY

Let us take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught us in Acts 5:12-42.

Dear Father in heaven, give me the same attitude as the people in the Bible, to exercise my authority with humility, love and service. Give me grace to love my spouse, to be an encourager to my children and to be fair to my employees.

(T) Dear Father in heaven, make me as bold and courageous as the apostles. Let me experience your sovereignty over every situation in my life! Let me see how *my difficulties* can become *your possibilities*.

(S) ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK

First. What does God want you to do with regard to preaching the gospel in your neighbourhood?

Second. Prepare next week's Bible study from Ephesians 4:1-16. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. See the workbooks "Go and make disciples" and Internet on www. Etc

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