



If God is Good, Then Why is There Suffering?

May 30-31, 2020

 Leader Notes

Some housekeeping for you:

- **Curriculum:** This is the final week of sermon-based curriculum for this semester. We will begin curriculum again at the end of August.
- **Together Again:** Small Groups can begin gathering as the Church in homes again! Although we are not offering curriculum, we'd encourage those that are comfortable to gather on the weekend during one of our service times to watch the service together. Please see Pastor Paul's letter and video on at hdc.mobi/leaderhub for more details.
- **Don't answer all the questions:** Pick and choose what questions will land in your group. In fact, the best thing you can do is use these questions as jumping off points and write your own. You might even add other passages that compliment what is written below.
- **Attendance:** Thanks so much for keeping your group roster updated and taking attendance. It really partners with us to know who is active at HDC.

Any Questions: Please email smallgroups@highdesertchurch.com or talk to your campus point person.

MAIN POINT

We are called to boldly share the life we have in Christ.



1. Take a moment to share what you took away from Pastor Chris Hilken's message this weekend.

Read Acts 5:12-16.

2. What strikes you most about the community the early church enjoyed? (See Acts 2:42-47, 4:31, 4:32-36)

3. Verses 13 and 14 seem to contradict each other. Who is the "no one else" in verse 13? What were they afraid of that the men and women of verse 14 were attracted to?

The key to understanding this apparent contradiction is to look at the story this passage flows from culminating in the fear expressed in 5:11. What had happened to Ananias and Sapphira had put the cost of commitment to Christ and loyalty to the fellowship at a high price, and the opportunists (referred to as "no one else") were not able to raise that kind of spiritual capital. The church really stood for something! It was this high commitment to its purpose and its dependence on the Spirit of God that attracted others to the church ("highly regarded by the people").

4. The fifth step in the Oikos Challenge is to Prepare yourself to share the Gospel because you know it and live it. What can we learn from the early days of the Church that would help us to remain "highly regarded" by those around us?

Read Acts 5:17-21.

5. What was the command of the angel that liberated the apostles in verse 20? What does their obedience in verse 21 display about what they were most committed to?

"...tell the people all about this new life." That's exactly what the apostles did, even at the risk of their freedom. They could very well have been thrown back into prison as they were ignoring the direct command they had received from the authorities (4:18). The apostles were more committed to the Truth than they were to their own freedom. Their message was "Life."

Christ as Life is central to the message of the believer. The word "life" is used 36 times in the New Testament. It is a synonym for Christ himself. The Apostle John, who was among those released from the prison that day, used "life" as central to all of his writings. See John 1:4 and 1 John 1:1-2. Jesus also used "life" to summarize his own ministry. He claims to feed the deepest needs for life



by saying “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35). He claims ultimate authority as “the way, the truth and the life” (John 14:6). We are also called to life together. This isn’t accomplished by something, but someone. Christ is the life that draws us together and gives us our purpose that infuses meaning into our times together.

6. What have you been set free from? Brainstorm in your group simple ways you can share the new life you have in Christ with those in your Oikos, even in the midst of social distancing.

The fourth step of the Oikos Challenge is Invite. HDC offers experiences that make it easy for members to invite their oikos to hear the Word preached. Although those experiences can be powerful, your story is just as powerful. Invite others into your story so they can hear about your new life. People are in need of connection with others during these crazy times. Think through different ways you can still have these conversations.

Read Acts 5:22-33

7. Analyze together Peter’s response to the Sanhedrin. What was his defense for defying their orders?

The religious leaders are increasingly becoming aware that they can’t silence this new movement. They couldn’t intimidate the apostles and the respecting masses precluded them from doing to the apostles what they did to Jesus. All they had the power to do was to issue the same threat and warning. Peter responds with the same three points he used earlier - 1) he and the other apostles must obey God and not men - including the Sanhedrin; 2) Jesus Christ is God’s Messiah and He’s alive! and 3) He is living in us.

8. The apostles were in trouble for all the right reasons! Contrast together some wrong reasons to get into trouble with some right reasons.

Often our lack of prayer for guidance or our reluctance to be willing to follow the Lord’s leading gets us into all sorts of skirmishes which are not part of the real battle we were meant to fight. Our determination sends us off in directions the Lord has not guided. Or we fuss with people over minor issues and end up with a trail of broken relationships. Others of us have areas of our personality that still need to be surrendered to the Spirit so we can be better communicators. It is a sign of maturity that we can discern the difference between the trouble we caused out of willfulness or insensitivity or stubbornness, and what has been the result of courageous living of life in Christ and telling all about this new life.



Read Acts 5:34-42.

9. Looking at Gamaliel's advice in verses 38-39, how can we be encouraged to stay on mission even during difficult times?

Nothing has been able to stop God's church. Centuries of persecution, pandemics and pandemonium have not silenced the work God is doing through his people. However difficult our circumstances seem right now, we have a long history of God's faithfulness to look back on and be encouraged by. The Lord of life intervenes to help us. Always on time! Never late. He even intervenes in troubles that we have brought on ourselves. He loves us that much. May we be committed to communicate that life of grace to those He has supernaturally and strategically placed in our life.

