

THE NEW NORMAL ACTS 5:12-42

QUESTIONS FOR LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION:

1. What's been your experience on either side of a jail cell? What sights, sounds or feelings do you associate with jail?
2. When you leave your home or car unattended, do you always lock it? Why or why not?
3. What is the ultimate authority in your life? When does that create problems for you? What can you do to overcome those problems?
4. How do you think you would feel if you were sent to jail for what you believed? How would your family feel? How does joy in suffering relate to your ultimate authority?
5. How do you explain why God sometimes delivers you out of hardships, but at other times allows you to go through them?
6. Have you ever suffered persecution, perhaps not physical, but social, emotional or relational persecution for being a Christ follower? What was the situation and how did you cope?
7. The Angel told the Apostles to take their stand in the temple and speak. From the very beginning faith has been something that needs to be explained, that needs to be taught. N.T. Wright says that "without words to guide it, faith wanders in the dark and can easily fall over a cliff." When have you had to explain your faith? If you have children, how have you explained it to them?
8. Can you think of a "New Normal" that you have had to face and come to grips with?
9. Of the points Shannon mentioned in the message as being important to know and remember, is there one that has (or would have) made the most difference in your response to the situation?

FOR PERSONAL STUDY:

C.S. Lewis says if we are taught an illusion we will become disillusioned. How do these verses describe a reality you may not have been told about when you decided to follow Jesus?

Matthew 10:22

Luke 6:22-23

Acts 14:21-22

2 Corinthians 4:17

The battle is real and dangerous. How do these verses describe what we are facing as believers?

2 Corinthians 4:4

1 Peter 5:8-10

Acts 5:40-41

Acts 12:1-3

God's power shows up on God's timetable. These Scripture verses give a demonstration of God's timing.

Acts 28:1-10

1 Corinthians 12:6-11

Mark 6:4-6



If we're honest, a lot of things don't make sense...yet. Do these verses help see the long range picture of faith.

Deuteronomy 29:29
Hebrews 11:6-8

Scripture would indicate that we get the grace we need when we need it.

Check out 1 Corinthians 10:13

This week we were reminded that we shouldn't be surprised when we experience setbacks, hardship or even persecution. Like us, many of the Israelites had some unrealistic expectations. Theirs were centered on what it would take to claim the Promised Land as their own.

Read Numbers 13:25-14:4 and then jot down how you think their response to this situation would have been different if they had taken to heart Joshua 1:6-9.

What would it look like to put 1 Corinthians 16:13-14 into practice? How can this short passage help us have more realistic expectations?

There is an aspect where the Church is living the paradox of power and persecution. Power of the Holy Spirit and persecution from the religious authorities. We would expect anyone to welcome the wonderful things described in Acts 5:12-16. However we see the Scribes upset over and over again in the book of Acts particularly this week in Acts 5:17-28. How does God vindicate the Apostles?

Prior to Jesus, there were many Jewish Zealots who led rebellions against Rome.

What was Gamaliel's point in recalling two such leaders? Do you think he may have been one of the secret believers mentioned in John 12:42 or a political opportunist not wanting to arouse the public?

How do you think Peter's statement in 5:29 and 4:19 may have influenced Gamaliel?

What does the response in 5:41-42 show you about the Apostle's?

One of the fascinating things about Acts is that no one knew what to call the new movement. Not until chapter 11 will the followers of Jesus be called Christians. In 5:20 they are referred to as "this new Life."

Acts 5:41 gives us a snapshot of trusting God and actually praising Him regardless of circumstances.

How can the following passages add to your understanding of what it means to trust God and move closer to the kind of faith shown in:

Acts 5:41

Jeremiah 17:7-8

Nahum 1:7

Mark 6:45-56

Accepting our "New Normal" means continuing to trust and follow Christ even when we're facing unavoidable or unwanted changes.

What was the "New Normal" for the man in Mark 5:1-20? What mission was he given?

Two primary tasks to which the Apostles were called was teaching and prayer. Take some time to pray that you will live honestly before God and others, whether believers or not. Thank God for sending people to intervene on your behalf when it was needed. Pray that God will give you the privilege of being the right person in the right place at the right time for someone else.