



The Scrolls

Helping **CENTRAL BIBLE CHURCH** Families Belong, Become and Go Beyond V28 N12 March 22, 2026

POWER AND PURPOSE

“Rejoicing in Suffering”

Acts 5:17-42

THIS WEEK'S CORE COMPETENCY

Single-Mindedness

I focus on God and his priorities for my life.

“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”

Matthew 6:33



How are believers to respond to persecution?

The early apostles, Peter and John in particular, are New Testament examples of Single-Mindedness with regard to their witness to Jesus’ death and resurrection (see Ac 2:14-36; 3:11-26; 4:8-12, 19-20; 5:17-32). The following article by Lead Pastor Roger Sappington describes the Central Practice of Single-Mindedness:

I still remember when Kelly and I began dating, and I started to believe she was “the one.” There was nothing else I could think about! My mind was transfixed upon her and our future together. All I wanted to do was spend time with her and get to know her better. Maybe you can remember a time like this when your whole world was singularly focused in one direction, for one purpose. It might have been when you were preparing to go to college or getting your home ready for your first baby. When we center our thoughts and attention on something to this degree, we’re said to be single-minded.

At Central Bible Church we define single-mindedness in the Christian’s life as being “focused on God and his priorities for my life.” This means that the primary orientation of my life is meant to be bent toward the purposes of God. For this to be possible I need to do two things. First, I need to understand from God’s Word what his desire is for my life. Second, I need to be willing to submit to God’s purposes and plan for me.

Understanding God’s Priorities

The Sermon on the Mount is the greatest sermon ever taught. In it, Jesus reveals his desire for his followers. In the high point of his sermon, Jesus calls upon us to “seek first his kingdom and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). The kingdom of God is his reign in and through his people. At present, the kingdom is manifest on earth through Spirit-filled followers of Christ who serve as ambassadors of his reign through the gospel. To seek “first” his kingdom and righteousness is to direct our energies towards the purpose of extending the reign of God’s grace into the lives of others.

Seeking God’s kingdom is a rich and integrated occupation. We do this by carrying out our daily work in a way that honors the Lord (Colossians 3:23), by teaching our children to know and obey God’s Word (Ephesians 6:4), by showing kindness to neighbors and strangers (Mark 12:31), by opening our mouths with truth that can transform (2 Corinthians 6:7), by standing as advocates for the vulnerable (Proverbs 31:8-9), by sharing what we have with others (1 Timothy 6:17-19), and by setting our gaze on Jesus (Hebrews 12:2). Jonathan Edwards once wrote, “The seeking of the kingdom of God is the chief business of the Christian life.”

Submitting to God’s Priorities

Now that we have a better understanding of God’s priorities for our lives, the question now is, “Are we willing to adjust our lives toward those purposes?” This is where the rubber meets the road. This is where faith is called to be put into action. Let me encourage you to ask several questions that might help you to have greater single-mindedness toward God and his priorities for your life:

After I die, when I stand before God, what will I have wanted my life to be most focused upon?

How am I presently seeking first God’s kingdom and his righteousness?

What areas of my life – job, family, time, money – need the most redirection for me to be faithful to God’s purposes and plan for me?

Prayer

Father, I truly want to have my mind, my heart, and my life to be set upon you. However, I need your help. I so easily get distracted by things that aren’t really that significant. I pray you would give me determination to be devoted first to you and your desire for people around me to know who Jesus is. May my single-mindedness to your kingdom purposes lead others to know you and worship you. Amen. (nextstepdisciple.org/article/single-mindedness)



EXAMINE GOD'S WORD

Read Acts 5:17-42

17 But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy 18 they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison. 19 But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, 20 "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." 21 And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.

Now when the high priest came, and those who were with him, they called together the council, all the senate of the people of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. 22 But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, 23 "We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside." 24 Now when the captain of the temple and the chief priests heard these words, they were greatly perplexed about them, wondering what this would come to. 25 And someone came and told them, "Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people." 26 Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.

27 And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, 28 saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." 29 But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus, whom you killed by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted him at his right hand as Leader and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are witnesses to these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

33 When they heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. 34 But a Pharisee in the council named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law held in honor by all the people, stood up and gave orders to put the men outside for a little while. 35 And he said to them, "Men of Israel, take care what you are about to do with these men. 36 For before these days Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a number of men, about four hundred, joined him. He was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. 37 After him Judas the Galilean rose up in the days of the census and drew away some of the people after him. He too perished, and all who followed him were scattered. 38 So in the present case I tell you, keep away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail. 39 But

if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them. You might even be found opposing God!" So they took his advice, 40 and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. 42 And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.

After reading the text, practice your Observation skills by noting the following:

- Box "but" indicating *contrast* in vv. 17, 19, 22, 23, 26, 29, 34, 39.
- Bracket "party of the Sadducees" in v. 17.
- Circle "public prison" in v. 18.
- Underline "an angel of the Lord" in v. 19.
- Circle "this life" in v. 20.
- Circle "council" in v. 21.
- Underline "captain of the temple" in vv. 24, 26.
- Underline "this man's blood" in v. 28.
- Highlight v. 29.
- Bracket "hanging him on a tree" in v. 30.
- Bracket "Leader and Savior" in v. 31.
- Underline "repentance" and "forgiveness of sins" in v. 31.
- Circle "Pharisee" and "Gamaliel" in v. 34.
- Circle "Theudas" in v. 36 and "Judas" in v. 37.

What one word would you use to describe the **TONE** of this passage? (i.e., stern, joyful, cautious, etc.)

What one thing do you not understand in this passage?

Try to summarize the **THEME** of this passage in one word. If you were going to describe these verses, you might say, "This text is about _____."



DIG DEEPER

Answer the questions to help you apply the passage and prepare for discussion

1. The Jewish authorities arrest and put the apostles in “the *public* prison.” Why the *public* prison, do you think?
2. But they have to be rearrested later. Explain why.
3. The disappearance of the apostles is mysterious and inexplicable to the officers. How so?
4. Describe the authorities’ reaction to the disappearance of the apostles.
5. When the apostles are rearrested, two charges are leveled against them. Identify the two charges.
6. What *exactly* enraged the authorities and caused them to want to kill the apostles?
7. Describe the person who persuaded the court to do otherwise.
8. Explain his rationale behind advising that the court “take care.”
9. Describe the court’s verdict and how the apostles responded to it.
10. **Discussion:** This passage is quite similar to 4:1-22. Do you think the two have practically the same application for today? Talk about it.

Commentary On The Text

Acts 5:17-42 contains a record of the apostles' second encounter with the Sanhedrin; Luke records their first one in 4:1-22. As the storyline beginning in 3:1 unfolds, the apostles' conflict with the Jewish authorities grows. One commentator writes: "The conflict between the Christians and the Jews steadily intensified. With the growing success of the Christian witness, there is a heightened reaction on the part of the Jewish authorities—at first only a hearing, warning, and release (4:5-22). Now those on the Council would impose the death penalty (5:33) and were only thwarted in their intentions by the sage advice of a Pharisee (5:34-39). The apostles were again released but this time the Council had them whipped before so doing (5:40)" (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 165-66).

The conflict grows ever more intense with the killing of Stephen (6:8-8:2) and the resulting persecution of the Christians in Jerusalem (8:1). It ultimately reaches its apex in chap. 12, with the execution of James and the attempt to execute Peter, which gained the support not only of the Jewish official but also the populace (12:3). Luke's record of the second encounter can be divided into three parts: 1) the arrest and rearrest of the apostles, following their release by the angel of the Lord (5:17-26); 2) their hearing before the Sanhedrin, beating, and release (5:27-40); and 3) their release and continuing witness (5:41-42).

The apostles continue to minister in and around Solomon's Portico after being warned "to speak no more or teach at all in the name of Jesus" (4:18). Nevertheless, they continue to do many signs and wonders among the people (5:12), resulting in more believers than ever being added to the Lord, "multitudes of both men and women" (v. 14). Crowds from towns around Jerusalem gather, "the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits and they were all healed" (v. 16).

Filled with jealousy, the Sadducean Jewish religious establishment reacted—according to one commentator, because "the apostles and their message represent a major irritant and a perceived assault on Sadducean authority. They sense a loss of power, which they will seek to reassert. So their reaction is about theology and power politics" (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 238)—by arresting and publicly jailing the apostles, but not for long. Overnight, an angel releases them and tells them to return to the temple and speak "all the words of this Life," that is, the salvation life found in Jesus, and by daybreak, the apostles are at it again. So when the high priest sends his officers to the prison to fetch the apostles to appear before the Sanhedrin, they are nowhere to be found. When the officers return from the jailhouse emptyhanded, they report: "We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but

when we opened them, we found no one inside" (v. 23). The incident leaves the leadership "wondering where it would all end" how this would all end" (NLT). Lo and behold, the apostles are discovered standing in the temple teaching the people and peacefully rearrested. Interestingly, neither the high priest nor the court attempts to explain their mysterious disappearance.

Once before the Sanhedrin, the high priest reiterates the warning the court has previously given the apostles (4:18). The high priest is especially concerned that the apostles "intend to bring this man's blood upon us" (v. 28). Clearly, the Sanhedrin objects to the apostles' attempt to pin a charge of murder on them. One commentator explains: "To 'lay someone's blood' on someone is an Old Testament expression for a charge of murder and in accordance with the *ius Talionis* demanded the death of the guilty party. In essence the high priest was saying, 'You are trying to get us killed for responsibility in this man's death' (author's paraphrase)" (Polhill, 169).

As before, Peter and the apostles reply: "We must obey God rather than men" (v. 29) and then go on to share the message of salvation through Jesus—the one whom the leadership killed by crucifying him, but whom God raised and exalted to his own right hand as "Leader and Savior" (vv. 30-32). Repentance and forgiveness are available through him. One commentator observes: "Jesus's exaltation means that the blood of Jesus need not remain on the leaders' heads. For with repentance and the forgiveness God offers through Jesus, all culpability can be forgiven . . . The offer is of repentance to Israel so that the nation can be forgiven. This offer of forgiveness that Jesus makes explains why he can also be called Savior" (Bock, 248).

At this point an enraged court wants to kill the apostles and would have apart from the sage advice of a highly regarded rabbi named Gamaliel (see note), who counsels it to "take care" (v. 35), that is, to go slowly and think twice before acting rashly. He then gives two examples of past men and their movements, which came to naught ostensibly because neither was of the Lord (see note), concluding, "if this plan or this undertaking is of man, it will fail" (v. 38), and if not, "You might be found opposing God!" (v. 39). The court takes his advice, gives the apostles thirty-nine lashes minus one, charges them again "not to speak in the name of Jesus," and lets them go (v. 40).

"Rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name," the apostles left the council, "and every day in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus" (vv. 41-42).

Word Studies/Notes

v. 17 *party of the . . .* “The Sadducees are often seen as more hostile to the new movement than the Pharisees in Acts, whereas in Luke’s Gospel the Pharisees are major opponents of Jesus. This fits the shift of attention to Jerusalem from the setting of Jesus’s ministry outside the city. The Sadducees have more to lose, since they control the council and have worked out a compromise with the Romans to share power. Any destabilizing element in the culture could threaten their control” (Darrell L. Bock, *Acts*, BECNT, 237-38).

v. 18 *public prison* “This arrest is designed to make a visible public point. People are to know that the apostles have been arrested. Despite the public, common holding area, Acts 5:23 makes clear that the apostles are held under special guard” (Bock, 238).

v. 19 *angel of the Lord* Cf. 12:6-10; 16:25-26. “The word ‘angel’ (Gr. *angelos*) means messenger. Wherever this word occurs, the context usually determines whether the messenger is a human being or a spirit being. Luke did not identify which kind of messenger God used here. His point was that the Lord secured the apostles’ release. The messenger’s message had a very authoritative ring, so probably he was a spirit being (cf. 12:6-10; 16:26-27). This is one of three ‘jail door miracles’ that Luke recorded in Acts (cf. Peter in 12:6-11; and Paul and Silas in 16:26-27)” (Thomas L. Constable, “Notes on Acts,” 2026 ed., 133, soniclight.com/tcon/notes/pdf/acts.pdf). Other references to the “angel of the Lord” and “angel of God” in Acts suggest a spirit being (Ac 8:26; 12:7, 8, 10; 27:23). Ironically, Sadducees did not believe in angels.

v. 20 *this life* “They were to resume their witness, preaching the gospel that leads to life, the message of salvation” (John B. Polhill, *Acts*, NAC, 166).

v. 21 *council, senate* Two names for the same group; cf. “the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles” (NIV). “Since both terms for the leadership council are used, the point is that every available leader at every level is present . . . The concern is so great over the apostolic preaching that the entire leadership gathers” (Bock, 240).

vv. 24, 26 *captain of the temple* Cf. 4:1; 5:26. “Unusual circumstances like this had best not be left to lesser officials—he was second in rank to the high priest himself and ultimately responsible for order on the temple grounds—So he went with his officers to gently persuade the apostles to accompany him to the Council changers” (Polhill, 167).

v. 30 *hanging him . . .* “Jesus’ crucifixion is described as ‘hanging on a tree,’ probably in allusion to Deut 21:23, an Old Testament text the early Christians saw as pointing to Christ” (Polhill, 169).

v. 31 *Leader and Savior* “God had ‘exalted’ Jesus to the place of supreme authority, namely, at ‘His right hand.’ The Sanhedrin had asked Jesus if He was the Christ, and Jesus had replied that they would see Him seated at God’s right hand (cf. Luke 22:67-71). Jesus was Israel’s national ‘Prince’ (leader, Messiah, Gr. *archegos*, cf. 3:15) and the Jews’ individual and collective ‘Savior’ (deliverer)” (Constable, 135).

v. 34 *Pharisee, Gamaliel* “The Pharisees looked for a personal Messiah, they believed in the resurrection of the dead and the existence and activity of angels and demons, and they tried to live a simple life, in contrast to the Sadducees’ luxurious living . . . ‘Gamaliel’ was the leader of the more liberal school of Hillel, one of the two most influential branches of Pharisaism. He had been a protégé of Hillel, who may have been Gamaliel’s grandfather. Saul of Tarsus was one of Gamaliel’s own promising young disciples (22:3). People called him Rabban Gamaliel. Rabban (lit. ‘our teacher’) was a title of higher honor than rabbi (lit. ‘my teacher’). Gamaliel was perhaps the most respected Pharisee of his day (‘respected by all the people’)” (Constable, 137).

vv. 36, 37 *Theudas, Judas* “Gamaliel cited two examples from Jewish history to support his basic argument that movements not backed by God always come to nothing. Both examples were failed movements, the first being that of a revolutionary name **Theudas**, and the second that of ‘Judas the Galilean’ (v. 37), who is said to have come ‘after him.’ Judas the Galilean is well known, having led a tax revolt in A.D. 6 (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 18.23), and this is evidently the person to whom Gamaliel is referring. Although there is no historical record of the ‘Theudas’ mentioned here (other than this statement by Gamaliel), most likely this ‘Theudas’ was one of many otherwise unknown leaders of such movements following the death of Herod the Great in 4 B.C. Although Jewish historian Josephus (writing in A.D. 95 in *Jewish Antiquities* 20.97) mentions someone named ‘Theudas’ who led a movement at a later date (A.D. 44-46). It is clear that Josephus’s reference is to a different person, since the movement to which he refers occurred many years after the speech by Gamaliel (c. A.D. 30 or 33)” (*The ESV Study Bible*, note on Ac 5:36).

4

APPLY THE TEXT

CENTRAL MESSAGE OF THIS PASSAGE

Recognizing that opposition to Jesus appears in every generation, believers are neither to be surprised by it nor to stop preaching the message of salvation through Christ because of it.

CENTRAL MESSAGE FOR YOUR LIFE

(Rewrite the Central Message above to personally apply to your own life)



3 LIVING QUESTIONS

The “Living Questions” are simple questions we may ask of any text in order to apply the Bible to our life. Answer the questions below as personally as you can.

1. What does this passage teach me about God?

2. What does this passage teach me about myself?

3. What does this passage lead me to do?



PARENT CONNECTION

Just like the generation before us and the generation to follow, all parents want their kids to have an easy go at life with a smoother sailing launch into adulthood than our own personal experience. We want to impart all our hard-earned wisdom and have our kids say, “Wow, Mom and Dad. Thanks so much. Now I know the right way to think/act/speak,” and immediately put this wisdom into practice, thus eliminating hardship. The problem is that growth and maturity, good decision-making and wisdom generally develop from circumstance under tremendous pressure. Suffering, strife, unfavorable conditions, oppression—these are all catalysts for growth that, through time and experience, will build character, strengthen their relationship with you and the Lord, and deepen their faith. If we don’t allow our children to experience and learn from hardship in everyday life, how can we expect them to be able to stand firm under pressure when it comes to living out the Gospel? In sitting back and allowing our kids to experience the tension of the daily struggles that come with growing in maturity, we aren’t just teaching them to undergo pressure under fire, we’re preparing them to gracefully and joyfully experience opposition because of their faith, which they’ll inevitably face in junior and senior high, the workplace, and among their friend group. Next time your kids face a struggle, resist the urge to immediately fix it. Instead, teach them to run to the Lord, pray through it, and watch how He’s working in their life. Approaching opposition with joy will strengthen their witness and develop their testimony. That’s good parenting.

What Does The Bible Say?

Read Acts 5:17-42.

1. Where were the apostles put? Why?
2. Who released them from prison and what did he tell them?
3. How did Peter respond when the apostles were brought in front of the council?

What Do You Think?

What miracle, sign, or wonder was performed in this story?

What Do You Do?

What are you going to do?

CORE COMPETENCY: Single-Mindedness

I pay attention to what God thinks is important for my life.

MEMORY VERSE: Luke 6:45

“The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.”

KidPIXCOUPON

Earn 1 KidPIX Token by completing the CENTRALKids Bible Study on this page and another token by memorizing and reciting the memory verse for this week.

Questions: kids@wearecentral.org

- I completed my Bible Study
- I memorized this week’s verse
- I brought my Bible to church
- I brought a friend



CHILD’S NAME

GRADE

PARENT SIGNATURE

OUR CORE COMPETENCIES

CENTRAL BELIEFS

Authority of the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
I believe the Bible is the Word of God and has the right to command my belief and action.

Church (Ephesians 4:15-16)

I believe the church is God's primary way to accomplish His purposes on earth today.

Eternity (John 14:1-4)

I believe there is a heaven and a hell and that Jesus Christ is returning to judge the earth and to establish His eternal kingdom.

The Holy Spirit (Romans 8:9)

I believe the Holy Spirit convicts, calls, converts and changes me as a child of God.

Humanity (John 3:16)

I believe all people are loved by God and need Jesus Christ as their Savior.

Identity in Christ (John 1:12)

I believe I am significant because of my position as a child of God.

Jesus Christ (Hebrews 1:1-4)

I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God who became man, died for sinners and rose from the dead.

Life Purpose (Acts 20:24)

I believe I am a steward of God's resources and have been redeemed to participate in His Kingdom purposes for His glory.

Personal God (Psalm 121:1-2)

I believe God is involved in and cares about my daily life.

Salvation by Grace (Ephesians 2:8-9)

I believe a person comes into a right relationship with God by His grace, through faith in Jesus Christ.



CENTRAL VIRTUES

Love (1 John 4:10-12)

I sacrificially and unconditionally love and forgive others.

Joy (John 15:11)

I have inner contentment and purpose in spite of my circumstances.

Peace (Philippians 4:6-7)

I am free from anxiety because things are right between God, myself and others.

Patience (Proverbs 14:29)

I take a long time to overheat and endure patiently under the unavoidable pressures of life.

Kindness/Goodness (1 Thessalonians 5:15)

I choose to do the right things in my relationships with others

Faithfulness (Proverbs 3:3-4)

I have established a good name with God and with others based on my long-term loyalty to those relationships.

Gentleness (Philippians 4:5)

I am thoughtful, considerate and calm in dealing with others.

Self-Control (Titus 2:11-13)

I have the power, through Christ, to control myself.

Grace (Colossians 3:13)

I demonstrate forgiveness, mercy and generosity to others, even when they have offended me.

Hope (1 Peter 1:3-5)

I have a growing anticipation of God's promises and my secure eternity with Him.

Humility (Philippians 2:3-4)

I choose to esteem others above myself.



CENTRAL PRACTICES

Bible Study (Hebrews 4:12)

I study the Bible to know God, the truth, and to find direction for my daily life.

Biblical Community (Acts 2:44-47)

I fellowship with other Christians to accomplish God's purposes in my life, others' lives, and in the world.

Compassion (Psalm 82:3-4)

I seek to serve the last, the least and the lost in my community.

Disciple-Making (2 Timothy 2:2)

I multiply godly beliefs, virtues and practices in others to encourage their spiritual growth in Christ.

Evangelism (Acts 1:8)

I share Jesus with others through personal proclamation and demonstration of the gospel.

Generosity (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

I gladly give my resources to fulfill God's purposes.

Prayer (Psalm 66:16-20)

I pray to God to know Him, to lay my request before Him and to find direction for my daily life.

Single-Mindedness (Matthew 6:33)

I focus on God and His priorities for my life.

Spiritual Gifts (Romans 12:4-6)

I know and use my spiritual gifts to accomplish God's purposes.

Worship (Psalm 95:1-7)

I worship God for who He is and what He has done for me.

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Stephanie Thomas (B.B.A University of Texas at Arlington). Stephanie is married to James and they have five children: Elijah, Levi, Bo, Ella and Simon. Stephanie has attended Central Bible Church for more than 20 years, has been on staff since 2014, and now serves as Children's Minister.

The Scrolls Bible Study is a spiritual growth resource of Central Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas.

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BIBLE CHURCH**

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OUR MISSION
Making God known by making disciples who are changed by God to change their world.