



Summary

This powerful exploration of Acts chapter 5 reveals a profound truth about the necessity of divine discipline in the life of the church. We witness how God established, through the sobering accounts of Ananias and Sapphira, that His church would not be dominated by the flesh but by the Spirit. The message challenges us to understand that church discipline isn't about punishment, but about preserving the purity and power of God's work among His people. We see how the apostles, freshly empowered after these events, experienced an unprecedented flow of miracles and healings—even Peter's shadow brought healing to the sick. This teaches us that when we allow God to discipline our hearts and motives, removing hypocrisy and self-glory, we position ourselves to witness the supernatural work of God in ways we never imagined. The contrast is striking: undisciplined religion seeks self-preservation and human glory, while God-disciplined faith pursues truth regardless of personal cost. For us today, this means examining whether we're willing to submit to God's discipline in our own lives, knowing that His discipline frees us to become vessels of His miraculous power rather than monuments to our own achievements.





Points

Title: The Discipline of God's Church: Standing Firm in Truth Over Self-Preservation

Sermon Summary: This sermon examines the early church's miraculous growth and the essential role of divine discipline in maintaining spiritual integrity. The pastor emphasizes that God's discipline, demonstrated through the sobering account of Ananias and Sapphira, established a foundation that prevented the flesh from receiving glory meant only for God. The message highlights how the apostles, newly empowered by the Holy Spirit yet facing intense persecution from the Sanhedrin, chose obedience to God over self-preservation. Their supernatural boldness—refusing to defend themselves before authorities, continuing to preach despite imprisonment and beatings, and rejoicing in suffering—mirrors the discipline Christ demonstrated during His trials. The sermon challenges believers to recognize that true spiritual discipline means the truth can no longer be beaten out of them because it resides within through the Holy Spirit, not as external philosophy but as living reality.

Key Points:

- Church discipline must be established early and enacted when the Holy Spirit leads to prevent the flesh from dominating God's house
- God will not share His glory with any man; supernatural ministry flows only after proper discipline is in place
- The miraculous healing ministry through the apostles occurred only after they demonstrated willingness to confront sin through the Ananias and Sapphira incident
- Men disciplined by God do not consider their options or self-preservation; they simply obey divine orders
- The apostles displayed the same godly discipline Jesus showed during His trials—making no defense and speaking only truth
- Being unjustly disciplined by men serves as further inspiration when you're sharing in Christ's discipline
- Truth cannot be beaten out of a born-again believer because it's no longer external but resident within through the Holy Spirit
- The cost of following Christ includes potential excommunication from established religion and persecution from family and friends
- Gamaliel's counsel reveals how the world views new believers—as going through "just another phase"
- Daily, consistent teaching and preaching despite opposition characterizes those truly disciplined by God

Scripture Reference:

Acts 5:12-42 (primary focus)

- 1 Corinthians 14:40 (doing all things decently and in order)
- Isaiah 42:8 (God will not share His glory)
- Acts 4:29-30 (prayer for boldness and signs and wonders)
- John 16:1-2 (excommunication from synagogues)
- Matthew 16:13-19 (Peter's confession and the foundation of the church)
- Psalm 2:1-4 (God laughs at those who plot against Him)
- Matthew 26:59-68 (Jesus' trial before the Sanhedrin)
- John 19:5-16 (Jesus before Pilate)
- Acts 4:13 (recognition that the apostles had been with Jesus)
- Matthew 27:24-25 (the people accepting Jesus' blood upon themselves)



Stories:

- The miraculous jailbreak of the apostles by an angel who commanded them to return to the temple and preach
- The humorous scene of the guards finding the prison secure but empty, while the apostles openly taught in the temple
- The historical references to failed movements led by Theudas and Judas of Galilee, used by Gamaliel to counsel patience
- The pastor's personal observations of church plants that failed because they didn't exercise discipline at the first opportunity
- The hypothetical journey of a person trying various spiritual paths (religion, agnosticism, atheism, Eastern mysticism) before encountering Christ
- The comparison of family and friends' reactions to new believers ("just another phase") with Gamaliel's counsel to the Sanhedrin
- The contrast between Jesus' silence during His trials and the typical human response of self-defense
- The apostles' response of rejoicing after being beaten, demonstrating supernatural discipline





Scripture

Scripture References from the Sermon

Explicitly Referenced and Read:

1. Acts 5:12-42 - Main passage of the sermon
2. 1 Corinthians 14:40 - "Let all things be done decently and in order"
3. Isaiah 42:8 - "I am the Lord, that is my name, and my glory I will not give to another"
4. Acts 5:5 - Ananias's death and the fear that came upon all
5. Acts 5:10-11 - Sapphira's death and great fear
6. Acts 4:29-30 - Prayer for boldness and signs and wonders
7. John 16:1-2 - Jesus warning about being put out of synagogues
8. Matthew 16:13-18 - Peter's confession and "on this rock I will build my church"
9. Acts 4:3 - Peter and John's first imprisonment
10. Acts 4:19 - "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God"
11. Psalm 2:1-4 - "Why do the nations rage" and "He who sits in the heavens shall laugh"
12. John 20:22 - Jesus breathing on disciples saying "receive the Holy Spirit"
13. Matthew 26:59-66 - Jesus's trial before the Sanhedrin
14. John 19:5-16 - Jesus before Pilate
15. Acts 4:13 - "They perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men...they had been with Jesus"
16. Matthew 27:24-25 - "His blood be on us and on our children"

Alluded To:

17. Acts 4 (end of chapter) - The church's need for money
18. Acts 12 - Peter's miraculous jailbreak (mentioned as future event)
19. Acts 16 - Paul and Silas's jailbreak (mentioned as future event)
20. Matthew 28:19-20 - Great Commission ("Go therefore and make disciples")
21. Luke 14:28-30 - Counting the cost of building (parable about discipleship)

Relevant Verses for Main Themes:

Based on the sermon's emphasis on church discipline, God's glory, and boldness in persecution, these additional verses align with the themes:

22. Hebrews 12:5-11 - God's discipline of His children
23. 1 Peter 4:12-16 - Rejoicing in suffering for Christ's name
24. 2 Corinthians 4:7 - Treasure in earthen vessels, power from God not ourselves
25. Galatians 1:10 - Seeking to please God rather than men
26. Romans 1:16 - Not ashamed of the gospel



Quotes

When you've been disciplined by God, the discipline of men becomes nothing.

God will not share his glory with any man.

Church discipline is designed by God specifically to prevent the flesh from becoming the dominant force in any church and the danger of that taking place is always present, why? Because of the tenuous balance between flesh and spirit.

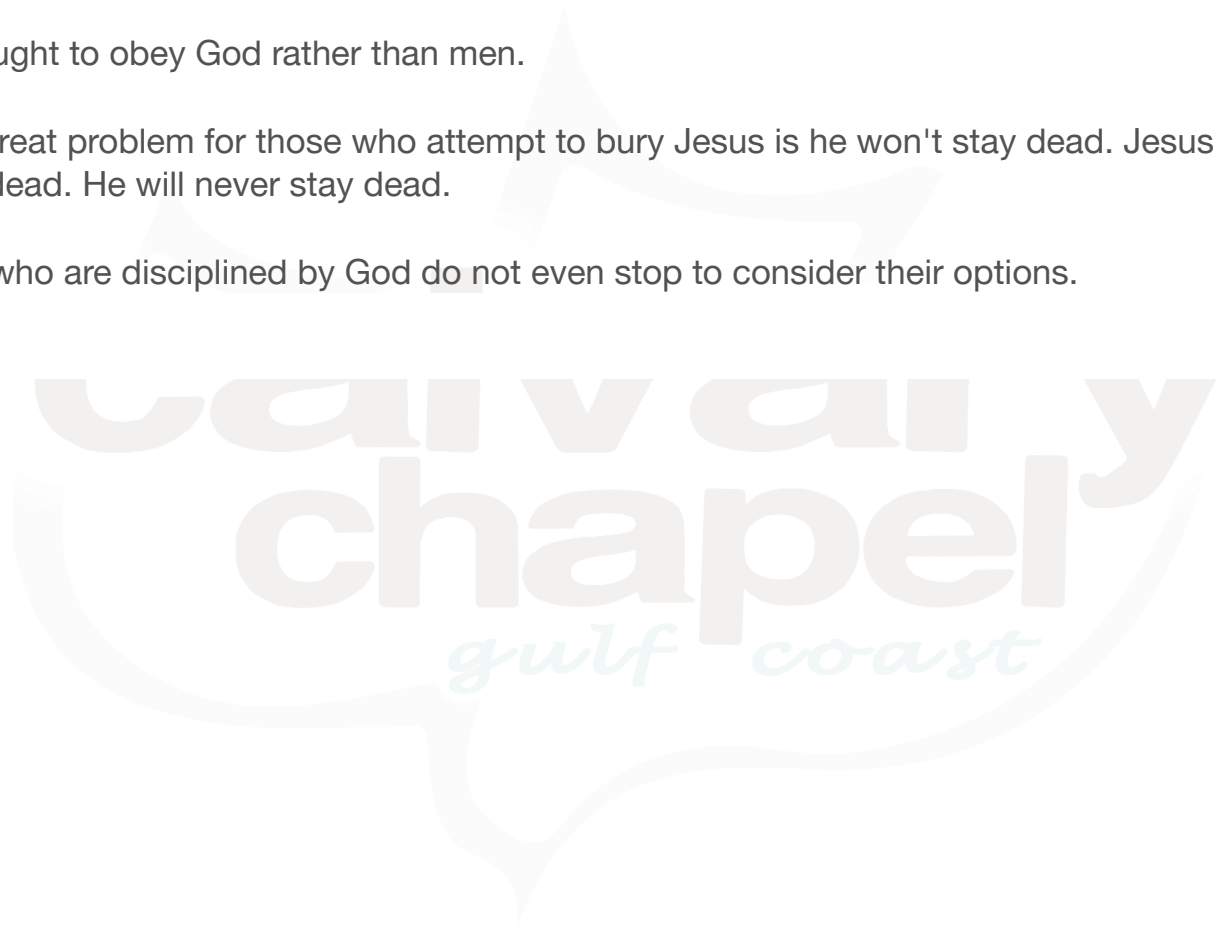
The flesh shall not dominate in God's house.

Truth can no longer be beaten out of you. At one time it could be because it was just a thought pattern. It was just a philosophical, it was external. But now, once you've been born again, now, once the Holy Spirit is alive in your heart, once the truth is resident within you, it can't be beaten out of you.

We ought to obey God rather than men.

The great problem for those who attempt to bury Jesus is he won't stay dead. Jesus won't stay dead. He will never stay dead.

Men who are disciplined by God do not even stop to consider their options.





Discussion Questions

How does the dramatic discipline of Ananias and Sapphira in Acts 5 demonstrate God's priority that His glory not be shared with human flesh, and what does this reveal about the importance of integrity in the early church?

In what ways might modern churches be tempted to prioritize financial needs or numerical growth over confronting hypocrisy and sin, and what are the consequences of failing to exercise godly discipline?

What does Peter's bold response to the Sanhedrin—'We ought to obey God rather than men'—teach us about navigating conflicts between religious or governmental authority and obedience to Christ?

How does the supernatural deliverance of the apostles from prison, followed by their immediate return to teaching in the temple, illustrate the relationship between divine intervention and human obedience?

Gamaliel's advice to 'let them alone' suggests that genuine works of God cannot be overthrown by human opposition. How can we discern whether a movement or ministry is truly of God or simply of human origin?

The sermon describes how truth becomes internal rather than external once someone is born again. How does this transformation affect a believer's ability to withstand persecution or opposition to their faith?

When the apostles rejoiced at being counted worthy to suffer shame for Christ's name, what does this reveal about the proper Christian perspective on suffering and persecution?

How does the contrast between the apostles' godly discipline and the Sanhedrin's self-preservation expose the fundamental difference between living for God's glory versus protecting one's own reputation?

In what ways might family members or friends respond to your conversion with the attitude that 'it's just a phase,' and how can sustained godly discipline in your life demonstrate the authenticity of your faith?

What does Jesus' refusal to defend Himself before both religious and civil authorities teach us about the nature of godly discipline, and how might this challenge our natural instinct for self-preservation?



Small Group Guide: "Disciplined by God, Not Men"

Acts 5:12-42 - "Disciplined by God, Not Men"

Opening Prayer (5 minutes)

Begin by asking God to open hearts and minds to His Word and help the group understand what it means to live under God's discipline rather than seeking self-preservation.

Ice Breaker (10 minutes)

Question: Share about a time when you had to choose between doing what was popular/easy and doing what was right. What did you choose and why?

Key Takeaways from the Sermon

1. Church discipline must be established early - It prevents the flesh from dominating and ensures God receives all the glory
 2. God will not share His glory - Isaiah 42:8 reminds us that God's glory belongs to Him alone
 3. Godly discipline enables supernatural ministry - Only after Ananias and Sapphira were disciplined did signs and wonders flow freely
 4. Truth becomes internal, not external - When born again, truth resides within us and cannot be beaten out of us
 5. We must obey God rather than men - Peter's famous declaration applies to our lives today
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Discussion Questions

Section 1: Understanding God's Discipline (15 minutes)

1. Why do you think God dealt so severely with Ananias and Sapphira at the beginning of the church? What message was He sending to the early believers and to us today?
2. Read 1 Corinthians 14:40. How does the church balance "letting all things be done" with doing things "decently and in order"? What does this look like practically?
3. The pastor mentioned that Peter only got "one first chance" to establish church discipline. Why is that first moment so critical in any church or ministry?



Section 2: The Miraculous Follows Discipline (15 minutes)

4. Read Acts 5:12-16. What happened AFTER the church demonstrated it would not tolerate hypocrisy? Why do you think the timing matters?
 5. The sermon mentioned that if Peter's shadow could heal people, how would you respond? How does God's discipline in the church prevent ministry from going to people's heads?
 6. Verse 13 says "none of the rest dared join them, but the people esteemed them highly." What does this tell us about the cost of discipleship? Why were some unwilling to pay that cost?
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Section 3: Disciplined by God vs. Disciplined by Men (20 minutes)

7. Read Acts 5:27-29. What's the difference between being disciplined by God versus being disciplined by men (or self-preservation)? Give practical examples.
 8. The Sanhedrin had never seen anything like the apostles' boldness except in Jesus. What made their witness so powerful? How did their lack of concern for self-preservation impact their testimony?
 9. Read Acts 5:40-42. The apostles rejoiced after being beaten. How is this possible? What does this reveal about what happens when truth becomes internal rather than external?
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Section 4: Personal Application (20 minutes)

10. The pastor gave a hypothetical about sharing your faith with family and friends who respond with skepticism. Has this happened to you? How did you respond? How does Gamaliel's advice in verses 38-39 apply?
 11. "Truth can no longer be beaten out of you." What does this mean practically in your life? Are there areas where external pressure still influences your faith?
 12. Read Acts 4:19-20 again. Peter said, "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." What have you "seen and heard" in your relationship with Jesus that you feel compelled to share?
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Practical Applications

This Week's Challenge:

Choose ONE of the following to put into practice this week:

Option 1: Examine Your Motives



- Spend time in prayer asking God to reveal any areas where you're seeking glory for yourself rather than giving it to Him
- Journal about one area where you need to surrender self-preservation for God's truth

Option 2: Bold Witness

- Identify one person in your life who needs to hear about Jesus
- Pray for an opportunity to share your testimony with them this week
- Remember: you're disciplined by God to speak truth, not to preserve relationships at the cost of truth

Option 3: Embrace God's Discipline

- If you've been resisting an area where God is trying to discipline you, surrender to it this week
- Ask a trusted friend or group member to hold you accountable

Option 4: Water Baptism

- If you've never been baptized after being born again, sign up for the upcoming baptism service
- If you have been baptized, commit to attending to support those taking this step of obedience

Reflection Questions for the Week

- Am I more concerned with what people think or what God thinks?
- Where am I trying to establish my own righteousness instead of accepting God's?
- Is the truth of Jesus external to me (just ideas) or internal (alive in my heart)?
- What would change in my life if I truly believed "we ought to obey God rather than men"?

Closing Prayer (10 minutes)

Prayer Focus:

- Thank God for His discipline that keeps us on the right path
- Ask for boldness to speak truth even when it's uncomfortable
- Pray for anyone in the group who hasn't been water baptized
- Ask God to help each person live disciplined by Him, not by self-preservation or fear of others

Group Prayer: Go around the circle and have each person pray a one-sentence prayer for the person on their right, asking God to help them be disciplined by His truth this week.

Before Next Week



- Read Acts 6:1-15 in preparation for next week's study
 - Complete your chosen practical application
 - Share with one other person something you learned from this discussion
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Leader Notes:

- Be sensitive to those who may be struggling with family relationships due to their faith
- Emphasize that godly discipline is about love and truth, not harshness
- Remind the group that we're all in process—none of us has "arrived"
- Consider sharing your own story of choosing God's discipline over self-preservation



Daily Devotional

5-Day Devotional: Disciplined by God for His Glory

Day 1: The Foundation of Divine Discipline

Reading: Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 14:40

Devotional: The sobering account of Ananias and Sapphira reveals a foundational truth: God's discipline protects His church from the dominance of the flesh. Before the miraculous could flow through the apostles, God established that hypocrisy and self-glorification have no place in His house. This wasn't cruelty but love—protecting the fledgling church from corruption at its birth.

God's discipline in your life isn't punishment; it's purification. When He corrects you, He's preparing you for greater usefulness in His kingdom. The church that allows "all things to be done decently and in order" creates space for the supernatural while maintaining holiness.

Reflection: Where might God be calling you to greater authenticity in your walk with Him? Are there areas where you're tempted to receive glory that belongs to Him alone?

Day 2: Obedience Over Self-Preservation

Reading: Acts 5:17-32; Matthew 16:13-18

Devotional: When the angel freed the apostles from prison, they faced a choice: flee to safety or obey God's command to return to the temple. Without hesitation, they chose obedience. Their response reveals the heart of godly discipline—being so aligned with God's purposes that self-preservation never enters the equation.

Peter's bold declaration, "We ought to obey God rather than men," echoes through the centuries. These were new believers—the Holy Spirit had indwelt them for barely fifty days—yet their commitment was absolute. They had witnessed Jesus' own refusal to defend Himself, choosing truth over survival.

When you've been disciplined by God, human threats lose their power. The gates of hell cannot prevail against those who stand on the rock of faith in Christ.

Reflection: What fears of consequence keep you from full obedience? How might God be calling you to choose His approval over human acceptance?



Day 3: Truth That Cannot Be Beaten Out

Reading: Acts 5:33-42; John 19:5-16

Devotional: The Sanhedrin's fury couldn't silence the apostles because truth had moved from external knowledge to internal reality. They had been transformed from followers of a philosophy to carriers of a living Person. When truth resides within you through the Holy Spirit, it cannot be extracted by persecution.

Notice their response after being flogged: they rejoiced that they were "counted worthy to suffer shame for His name." This is the paradox of Christian discipleship—suffering becomes a badge of honor, not a reason to retreat. They had seen this same discipline in Jesus, who made no plea for His life but remained committed to truth.

Your salvation isn't merely intellectual agreement; it's supernatural indwelling. The Holy Spirit alive in you makes you unshakeable.

Reflection: Is your faith external (easily influenced) or internal (rooted in Spirit-wrought transformation)? How does knowing truth lives within you change your approach to opposition?

Day 4: Counted Worthy to Suffer

Reading: Acts 5:40-42; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12-16

Devotional: The apostles' joy after being beaten seems incomprehensible until you understand their perspective. They weren't masochists celebrating pain; they were disciples recognizing that sharing in Christ's sufferings meant sharing in His mission. Persecution confirmed they were on the right path.

This radically challenges our comfort-seeking culture. We avoid discomfort, yet the early church rejoiced in it. Why? Because unjust suffering for righteousness' sake validates that you're living differently than the world. It proves you're no longer conformed to this age but transformed by the Spirit.

When your family ridicules your faith, when colleagues mock your convictions, when standing for truth costs you opportunities—you're in good company. You're walking the path Jesus walked, and the apostles after Him.

Reflection: How do you typically respond to opposition for your faith? Can you identify ways God might be inviting you to reframe suffering as a privilege rather than a problem?

Day 5: It's Just Another Phase (Or Is It?)

Reading: Acts 5:34-39; Galatians 1:6-10

Devotional: Gamaliel's counsel reveals what many experience when they come to Christ: loved ones dismiss your transformation as "just another phase." Like the apostles, you may have tried many spiritual paths before encountering Jesus. Now that you're genuinely changed, others expect this too shall pass.



But here's the difference: every previous pursuit was external, something you tried on and could discard. Being born again is internal—the Holy Spirit has taken up permanent residence. This isn't a phase; it's a new identity. What was once a religious system you explored is now a Person who lives within you.

Gamaliel was wiser than he knew: "If it is of God, you cannot overthrow it." Your family and friends will eventually see what the Sanhedrin saw—this isn't fading. The question is whether they'll respond with faith or continued resistance.

Reflection: Who in your life is waiting for your faith to "fade"? How can you demonstrate through consistent, disciplined devotion that Christ in you is permanent, not temporary?

Closing Thought: God's discipline isn't about restriction but about alignment—aligning your will with His, your glory with His, your life with His purposes. When you're disciplined by God rather than driven by self-preservation, you become unstoppable for the kingdom. The same power that raised Christ from the dead dwells in you, and no amount of opposition can extinguish what God has ignited within your heart.

