CORNERSTONE CONNECTIONS
AUGUST 08 2026

Scripture Story: Acts 5:25-42.
Commentary: *The Great Controversy* (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 11, 12.

swimming upstream



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flashlight

"The reformed princes had determined upon having a statement of their views in systematic form, with the evidence from the Scriptures, to present before the Diet; and the task of its preparation was committed to Luther, Melanchthon, and their associates. . . . The Reformers were solicitous that their cause should not be confounded with political questions; they felt that the Reformation should exercise no other influence than that which proceeds from the word of God" (*The Great Controversy,* p. 206).

key text

"Peter and the other apostles replied: 'We must obey God rather than human beings!'"

(Acts 5:29, NIV)

what do you think?

Look at the situations below. For each one, decide whether it is appropriate to go with public opinion or with your personal belief.

- Most people you know think that a particular guy is creepy and possibly dangerous. You don't really see it. He asks you to get together with him one evening.
- You have been invited to a party. You are excited to go until you hear that alcohol may be served. All your friends say, "It's no big deal. Just don't drink any."
- You don't really like a particular style of music, but all of your friends love it. They want you to go along to a concert.
- A group of fellow students are angry at a teacher for giving them low grades. You like the teacher and think that they aren't being fair; however, they seem to feel very strongly about their position. Do you say something?

did you know?

The Bible's authority for faith and practice rises from its origin. Its writers viewed the Bible as distinct from other literature. They referred to it as 'Holy Scriptures' (Romans 1:2), 'sacred writings' (2 Timothy 3:15, RSV), and the 'oracles of God' (Romans 3:2; Hebrews 5:12).

The uniqueness of the Scriptures is based on their origin and source. The Bible writers claimed they did not originate their messages but received them from divine sources. It was through divine revelation that they were able 'to see' the truths they passed on (see Isaiah 1:1; Amos 1:1; Micah 1:1; Habakkuk 1:1; Jeremiah 38:21)" (*Seventh-day Adventists Believe,* p. 13).

INTO THE STORY

"Just then someone showed up and said, 'Did you know that the men you put in jail are back in the Temple teaching the people?' The chief and his police went and got them, but they handled them gently, fearful that the people would riot and turn on them.

"Bringing them back, they stood them before the High Council. The Chief Priest said, 'Didn't we give you strict orders not to teach in Jesus' name? And here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are trying your best to blame us for the death of this man.'

"Peter and the apostles answered, 'It's necessary to obey God rather than men. The God of our ancestors raised up Jesus, the One you killed by hanging him on a cross. God set him on high at his side, Prince and Savior, to give Israel the gift of a changed life and sins forgiven.

And we are witnesses to these things. The Holy Spirit, whom God gives to those who obey him, corroborates every detail.'

"When they heard that, they were furious and wanted to kill them on the spot. But one of the council members stood up, a Pharisee by the name of Gamaliel, a teacher of God's Law who was honored by everyone. He ordered the men taken out of the room for a short time, then said, 'Fellow Israelites, be careful what you do to these men. Not long ago Theudas made something of a splash, claiming to be somebody, and got about four hundred men to join him. He was killed, his followers dispersed, and nothing came of it. A little later, at the time of the census, Judas the Galilean appeared and acquired a following. He also fizzled out and the people following him were scattered to the four winds.

"'So I am telling you: Hands off these men! Let them alone. If this program or this work is merely human, it will fall apart, but if it is of God, there is nothing you can do about it—and you better not be found fighting against God!'

"That convinced them. They called the apostles back in. After giving them a thorough whipping, they warned them not to speak in Jesus' name and sent them off. The apostles went out of the High Council overjoyed because they had been given the honor of being dishonored on account of the Name. Every day they were in the Temple and homes, teaching and preaching Christ Jesus, not letting up for a minute."

(Acts 5:25-42, *The Message*)

OUT OF THE STORY

There is a lot of social pressure in this story. Both Peter and the Sanhedrin must deal with the opinions of the people. How do they deal differently?

Whose opinions matter most to the Sanhedrin? Whose opinions matter most to Peter and the apostles?

How does peer support give strength to either side of this conflict?

The Sanhedrin were *fearful* that the people would riot, so they handled the apostles "gently" How does fear keep us from obeying God? How can we combat fear?

Gamaliel stands up for Peter and the apostles. What is his argument? Do you agree with his point that groups of people, no matter how devoted to each other, are doomed to lose their bond if it isn't blessed by God?

punch lines

"The Lord God said, 'It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him'" **(Genesis 2:18, NIV).**

"When Esther's words were reported to Mordecai, he sent back this answer: 'Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you remain silent at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows but that you have come to your royal position for such a time as this?'" **(Esther 4:12-14, NIV).**

"Pointing to his disciples, he said, 'Here are my mother and my brothers. For whoever does the will of my Father in heaven is my brother and sister and mother'" **(Matthew 12:49, 50, NIV).**

"A time is coming and in fact has come when you will be scattered, each to your own home. You will leave me all alone. Yet I am not alone, for my Father is with me" **(John 16:32, NIV).**

"God sets the lonely in families" **(Psalm 68:6, NIV).**

further insight

"These faithful men acknowledged an authority above that of earthly rulers."

—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy,* p. 202

Sabbath

Read Ephesians 4:1-6.

Peer pressure isn't always a bad thing! Peer pressure can make people do good things that they wouldn't normally do as well as bad things. That is why God gave us a church. That's not to say that we should pressure each other, but the very fact that people around us hold certain values, do certain things, or talk a certain way rubs off on us. Everyone wants to belong, and we subtly change our behavior and manners in order to do so.

Make a list of four things that you would not normally do if it weren't for your church community or Christian friends encouraging you. How have these things affected your life for the better?

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Sunday

Read Acts 5:38, 39.

In the *Into the Story* section, Peter and the apostles are pressured to stop preaching about Jesus. Gamaliel stands up to the Sanhedrin (his peers) in support of Peter. He has an interesting argument. He cites other charismatic leaders who have had significant numbers of followers. Over time, the groups always fell apart. He claimed that if the leader were not of God, then the group did not have a chance! What groups are you a part of? Is God a part your group bond? If not, do you think that your group will remain united in the long term? Why or why not?

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Monday

Read Acts 5:29.

As children, we are told that obedience makes us good. We are supposed to obey our parents and other authority figures in order to gain praise and avoid discipline. Look up the word "obey" in a concordance. Look up some of the texts in your Bible. Who are we supposed to obey? When Peter was told to stop preaching, he declared that "We must obey God rather than men!" Have you ever had an experience where an authority figure was telling you to do something that you felt was wrong? How did you handle it? How do you wish you had handled it?

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Tuesday

Read Matthew 22:21.

In the *Flashlight* excerpt some reformed princes who had accepted the Protestant faith drew up a document describing their beliefs to be brought before the Diet (a committee of Catholic officials) to gain the right to worship as they believed they should. These were powerful men who could have mustered up armies to support their cause, but, they didn't. They refused to use violence, and they refused to get involved in political questions. They believed that the "Reformation should exercise no other influence than that which proceeds from the Word of God." They respected the existing authorities as much as they could but, ultimately, they obeyed God. In what ways can you show your support of the authority figures you encounter? Get some practice: How would you respectfully disagree with an authority figure in your life?

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Wednesday

Read Matthew 12:49, 50.

Make a list of the social groups that you belong to. You might list groups such as your family, your school, your church, or your job. Out of these groups, *place an X* beside the ones that you chose to belong to. How important are these social groups to you? Which group is the most important to you?

God created us with the need to belong with other people. Take a look at the *Punch Line* texts. Is belonging to the family of God a comfort to you? Why or why not?

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Thursday

Read 1 Corinthians 15:33; 2 Corinthians 6:14.

Since peer pressure can work in a positive way as well as a negative way, have you ever considered using it for your benefit? What kind of person do you dream of becoming? Do you want to be smart? successful? known for your kindness and compassion? Do you want to be someone spectacular? God created you with huge potential, but the people with whom you choose to surround yourself will affect what you become. Whom do you choose to spend time with? Is their influence positive or negative for your life?

Friday

Read Colossians 1:9, 10.

Going against popular opinion is never easy. Whose opinion matters the most to you in your life? Why? What do you gain by pleasing this person?

this week's reading*

The Great Controversy (or *Love Under Fire*), chapters 11, 12.

**Love Under Fire* is a special adaptation of *The Great Controversy*, created for you by the Ellen G. White Estate and Pacific Press. Get more information about it at http://www.cornerstoneconnections.net/article/191/about-us/conflict-of-the-ages-companion-books#.URlhF1rBO9s. By following the weekly reading plan, you will read at least one book of the Conflict of the Ages Series each year.