



WEEKLY STUDY

The Marks of a Movement - Week Six

The marks of the early church movement include the fact that followers of Jesus will be challenged and questioned when the Way of Jesus confronts the ways of the world. And when we are challenged, we are encouraged to place our difficulties in the context of our calling. As you engage with the Bible and spend time with Jesus this week, consider how your life is making Jesus known.

Please note our prayer focus for the week in the box below. Join us in seeing what God will do as we unite in prayer.

Peace of Christ,
Pastor Mark Youngman

If you are studying with your Providence Small Group or Discipleship Group, you can share from your own daily reflections and consider the Group Discussion questions below. If you would like to get connected visit prov.church/smallgroups.

Prayer Focus:

- Join us in prayer for teachers, parents and students as they prepare for the upcoming school year. May God make a way for each child to be seen, known and loved as they grow into their calling as children of God.

DAILY STUDY

MONDAY: ACTS 5.17-18 (NIV)

Then the high priest and all his associates, who were members of the party of the Sadducees, were filled with jealousy.¹⁸ They arrested the apostles and put them in the public jail.

- When Luke shared these accounts, he was doing no favors to the religious authorities. We could imagine that the Sadducees believed they were acting out of religious zeal, but Luke cuts to the truth...it was jealousy that led them to arrest the apostles. They were jealous of the movement

itself. People were bringing their sick and demon possessed family and friends for healing. No longer were they going to the high priest. It was embarrassing! Has jealousy ever impacted your actions? Were you able to see through your own jealousy?

- **Prayer Prompt: if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. ¹⁵Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly (James 3.14-15)**
- *God, would you root out and heal any jealousy that is within me. I want to put your will before my own. Transform me with your love. Amen.*

TUESDAY: ACTS 5.19-24 (NIV)

But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the doors of the jail and brought them out. ²⁰“Go, stand in the temple courts,” he said, “and tell the people all about this new life.”

²¹ *At daybreak they entered the temple courts, as they had been told, and began to teach the people.*

When the high priest and his associates arrived, they called together the Sanhedrin—the full assembly of the elders of Israel—and sent to the jail for the apostles. ²²But on arriving at the jail, the officers did not find them there. So they went back and reported, ²³“We found the jail securely locked, with the guards standing at the doors; but when we opened them, we found no one inside.” ²⁴On hearing this report, the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests were at a loss, wondering what this might lead to.

- The leaders were truly bewildered by the empty jail cell. We don't know if their response was the early stages of faith or if it was based solely on fear. What might this development lead to? Would they lose their jobs? When have you been so surprised by a plot twist that you worried about the future? Consider what prison cell God has opened up for your freedom.
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- **Prayer Prompt: It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5.1)**
- *God, I know that you have invited me into the life of freedom made possible by Jesus Christ. Give me boldness to walk through the doors he has opened for me. Amen.*

WEDNESDAY: ACTS 5.25-27 (NIV)

Then someone came and said, “Look! The men you put in jail are standing in the temple courts teaching the people.”²⁶ At that, the captain went with his officers and brought the apostles. They did not use force, because they feared that the people would stone them.

- The rulers were beginning to get a sense of the scope of the early church movement. They feared that the people (presumably some of the same folks who yelled for Jesus’ crucifixion) would turn against them. So they wisely tried to turn down the temperature by not causing a scene. The previously jailed apostles were back at it, and with no explanation as to how they got there. The rulers were no longer in control. Have you ever witnessed the actions of a leader desperate to keep control? Are there any ways in which you see the ground swell of energy and excitement of the early church in our world today?
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- **Prayer Prompt: Truly I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.” (Matthew 17.20)**
- *O God, I believe that you are still at work in this world today. As much struggle as I see around me, I believe that you are up to something undeniable. Use me as you will. Amen.*

THURSDAY: ACTS 5.27-32 (NIV)

The apostles were brought in and made to appear before the Sanhedrin to be questioned by the high priest.²⁸ “We gave you strict orders not to teach in this name,” he said. “Yet you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and are determined to make us guilty of this man’s blood.”

²⁹ Peter and the other apostles replied: “We must obey God rather than human beings!³⁰ The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead—whom you killed by hanging him on a cross.³¹ God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might bring Israel to repentance and forgive their sins.³² We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

- Once again the apostles are being reprimanded for teaching about Jesus. And once again, they declare that they must be obedient to God. This statement is not at odds with the command from Jesus to “give unto Caesar what belongs to Caesar”, rather it is saying that if the authorities create a conflict with the will of God, we must follow God’s will. They didn’t resist arrest, they didn’t initiate a riot, they simply remained faithful to what God was asking them to do. They preached Jesus and healed in his name. Are there ways in which following Jesus puts you at odds with the leading sentiment in the culture around you? How do you remain calm and faithful in such situations?
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- **Prayer Prompt: He has shown you, O mortal, what is good.
And what does the LORD require of you?
To act justly and to love mercy
and to walk humbly with your God. (Micah 6.8)**
 - *Lord God, I want to walk in the Way of Jesus. Teach me to be humble and wise as I respond to your calling in my life. Amen.*

FRIDAY: JOHN 16.33 (NIV)

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."

- Jesus wanted to be clear that following him is not the easy path. Everyone faces trouble in this world, but the world does not have the final say. Jesus has overcome the world! Make a list of things that are currently troubling to you. Things that impact the world around you. Lift them up to the God who has already overcome the worst this world can throw at you.
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- **Prayer Prompt: for everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. ⁵ Who is it that overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. (1 John 5.4-5)**
- *Jesus, I know that through you, we have victory over the things of this world, but I must confess that this world is hard. Remind me of your victory at every turn and give me grace to minister in the midst of the hurt I see. Amen.*

SATURDAY: MATTHEW 22.35-40 (NIV)

One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: ³⁶ "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?"

³⁷ Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' ³⁸ This is the first and greatest commandment. ³⁹ And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' ⁴⁰ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

- At the very core of our calling as followers of Jesus is this command to love God and love others. It sounds simple, and it is very different from simply keeping the rules of the religious leaders. How are you revealing God's love to your neighbor? How are you demonstrating your love for God?

- **Prayer Prompt: For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (John 3.16)**
- *God, I want to live this day with your greatest commands written on my heart. Teach me to love more like you. Amen.*

GROUP DISCUSSION

Pastor Garrett spoke about our calling as followers of Jesus. Discuss how you see this understanding of your calling. How does it impact your decisions?

1. Our primary calling is to love God. How does this primary calling impact your relationship with God and others?
2. Our secondary callings are how we live out that love of God in our daily lives. What are your secondary callings? Family? Work? Community? Church?

Step one: Recognize your calling.

Step two: Act in obedience.

Step three: Make Jesus known.