

O C T O B E R 6 & 7 , 2 0 0 1

ANCIENT LESSONS FOR REAL LIFE

*Learning the Cadence of the First Christians*

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Lesson 5—Swimming Upstream

Acts 5:12-21

The River of Life is both beautiful and dangerous. It is filled with moments of celebration and moments of difficulty. Its unexpected splash can refresh us one day and terrify us the next. The older we get, the more treacherous we discover the River to be. And the longer we are carried along by its currents, the more aware we become of its difficulties—difficulties we didn't notice quite as much in earlier years.

When a person becomes a follower of Christ, we are tempted to hope that we will be taken from the dangerous water. That we will be exempt from difficulty. Some evangelistic offers capitalize on such desires by including such an exemption in their presentation of the gospel: "Trust Jesus and your problems will go away."

Yet the true gospel of Jesus Christ makes no such promises. It doesn't take an authentic follower of Jesus very long to discover that God's intention is not to exempt him or her from hardship. In fact, God's call for us is to swim upstream—against the flow!

The early church quickly discovered that following Jesus Christ is the greatest joy and privilege a human being can know. But they also learned that following Jesus also involves hardship. It means swimming upstream in a downstream society. How did they do it? How can we? The obvious answer is to swim with a heart that is filled with God's strength. But how does my heart become supernaturally strong?

In Acts 5, we see a parallel increase in both the display of God's power through the early believers and the threat of persecution by their opponents. As we watch them move farther out-- into the center of the current's strength—and swim upstream, we learn four qualities of a heart that is appropriating God's strength.

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*Four "heart" qualities of a Christ-follower who is swimming upstream:*

1. \_\_\_\_\_ heart – v. 12a

2. \_\_\_\_\_ heart – v. 12b

3. \_\_\_\_\_ heart – vv. 13-16

4. \_\_\_\_\_ heart – vv. 17-21