

## ORDER OUT OF CHAOS

**Pam Lemaster**  
**April 26, 2026**  
**Acts 5:12-6:7**

**Prayer:** *Lord, thank you for this morning...for the quiet, for the pause, for the chance to breathe without rushing. We don't want to carry the weight of the week into this day. Help us lay it down – every stress, every otherthinking moment, every thing we've been trying to control on our own. Slow us down in the best way. Let us notice what actually matters today instead of what steals our peace. Restore what's been drained in us – mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. And if this day brings anything unexpected, help us meet it with calm instead of chaos. Amen.*

Have you ever experienced dis-order? If you're like me, you certainly have...and quite often. Let's take for example a kitchen cupboard – the Tupperware cupboard in particular.

Yeah, you know the one. Usually, it starts out neat and tidy, but after some time and multiple people opening, retrieving, putting away and closing those cupboard doors, the dedicated space for containing the containers that contain the contents of various foods and household items, inevitably becomes the horror of all horrors that no one wants to mess with.

So what happens when it gets like this? Just a few weeks ago, this was *my* story. It started when I needed to find a container that was just the right size and just the right flexibility or strength for whatever thing I wanted it to hold. But, of course, I needed the lid to that “just the right size” container. And that's where it all fell apart. I bent down, opened the bottom cupboard dedicated to my plastic containers, got an instant dread feeling and immediately closed it. Mind you, this was in the morning, about 4am, after letting the dogs out and wanting to go back to bed. I don't even know what I wanted to put in a container that morning, but it really doesn't matter, because what came next, took center stage.

I instantly got a wave of adrenaline – maybe sparked by irritation or annoyance - opened the cupboard and glanced around to see if I could spot a matching pair – lid and bowl. I pulled a few out, thinking they were matching, but no such luck. I knew what needed to be done. I took a deep breath, found a spot on the kitchen floor in front of the bottom cupboard, crouched down with every creaking sound of my knees and sat down Indian style so I could get a better view. Then, I took EVERYTHING out of the cupboard, carefully inspecting each item, finding matching lids and discarding anything that was of no use. When I completed this task, I was finally able to put things back neatly into the cupboard so that the next time my husband or I needed to find a container, it would be within our reach and without unnecessary negative emotions.

**Disclaimer: these images are not of my cupboards, but they closely resemble them.**

Let's take a look at a few more examples of dis-order:

**A junk drawer:**

**A Bedroom:**

**A garage:**

**An Ashland favorite: Yoder's Red Barn Ice Cream**

I don't know if you drove past the Red Barn before they put the doors and windows in, but I will tell you there was a deep satisfaction and calm that washed over me as I passed by the day they were installed.

**There's even an image about how mental health counselors put thoughts in order for people with chaotic minds:**

Doesn't God's word tell us a story about putting things back in order? Of course! Many, many stories! Here is a famous one that was read earlier from the Old Testament!

**The Flood:**

Many, many stories of chaos are depicted in scripture. The book of Acts has some of these stories. In fact, continuing where Pastor Keith left off, the next three stories all have an element of chaos followed by order. We will be discussing these stories today.

Acts 5:12-16 is an account of the apostles healing many.

Acts 5:17-42 is an interesting and dramatic story of the apostles being persecuted and rescued by an angel.

Acts 6:1-7 is a report about the disciples choosing delegates to accommodate the growth of believers, so they don't have to carry all the responsibilities once it became too much for them to handle.

It may seem counter-intuitive, but I want to talk about these three stories in non-consecutive order, starting with the last story about the disciples choosing delegates.

I will be reading from the English Standard Version.

### **Acts 6:1-7**

*6 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists<sup>[a]</sup> [or Greek speaking converts] arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. <sup>2</sup> And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.*

(Can you picture this exchange? It's a legitimate issue. They were worried about people falling through the cracks and not being able to keep up the pace. In fact, I had a similar issue this past week at work because we are short-staffed, and sometimes things can get missed when you are short-staffed and overworked. But that's for another time. Let me continue at verse 3.)

*<sup>3</sup> Therefore, brothers,<sup>[b]</sup> pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. <sup>4</sup> But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." <sup>5</sup> And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus [PRO – co – rus], and Nicanor [Ni – CA – nor], and Timon [TY – man], and Parmenas [PAR – me – nas], and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. <sup>6</sup> These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.*

*<sup>7</sup> And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.*

I chose to discuss this one first because it is the simplest. It is a good old-fashioned form of project management.

Project management is a common task we hear about in today's language which describes organizing, ordering, assigning and executing. Some of you may even be a Project manager where you work. Busy moms and dads are Project Managers of their homes. I like the job description listed here for a parent:

- Keeping tiny humans alive, fed, and relatively clean
- Executing high-stakes negotiations before coffee (e.g. socks vs. no socks)
- Responding to emails, texts, calendar invites, and random questions yelled from the bathroom
- Grocery shopping, meal prep, and snack distribution on a rolling loop
- Acting as chauffeur, therapist, nurse, teacher, cheer leader, project manager, and snack curator
- Managing logistics for school, daycare, summer camps, and 2.5 extracurriculars per kid
- Showing up to work like nothing happened after a night of 3 hours of sleep

While the book of Acts focuses on the forward movement of the Gospel, it makes pit stops along the way to highlight various lessons, barriers, losses, joys and praises. This particular story tells of a problem that happened naturally when the number of believers grew as a result of the Good News being spread around the villages, cities and countries. Somehow, it was revealed that the basic needs of the most vulnerable population were not being met. As a result, the disciples put on their best problem-solving skills and got to work. This is a good example of the introduction of committees, councils and guilds in churches and other

organizations. Without these smaller groups of leaders put in place to hold us accountable towards the mission of the organization, we might lose sight of the bigger picture and hinder any progress from being made or worse, we could steer the organization down a path of destruction.

The second story I will be discussing is the most dramatic. Full of theatrics and plot twists that create chaos within the camp of the high priest who opposed the Gospel being talked about. It reads like a book, I will add illustrations on the screen instead of the words, so all you have to do is listen to the story.

### **Acts 5:17-42**

*<sup>17</sup> But the high priest rose up, and all who were with him (that is, the party of the Sadducees), and filled with jealousy <sup>18</sup> they arrested the apostles and put them in the public prison.*

Can you imagine being put in prison just by professing your faith and speaking about the Love of Jesus? We read about it in scripture, but I'm pretty sure it is currently happening in the World today.

Get ready for the next explosion of a dramatic scene (although if you read it straight from scripture, it doesn't seem like it's that big of a deal)...

*<sup>19</sup> But during the night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, <sup>20</sup> "Go and stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this Life." <sup>21</sup> And when they heard this, they entered the temple at daybreak and began to teach.*

I'm pretty sure there is more to this scene. I have questions! What happened to the guards? How did the apostles react with this sudden turn of events? Did they just comply? Were they awe struck? Did they ask questions? Let me continue:

*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. <sup>22</sup> But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison, so they returned and reported, <sup>23</sup> "We found the prison securely locked and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened them we found no one inside."*

*<sup>24</sup> 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. <sup>25</sup> And someone came and told them, "Look! The men whom you put in prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people."*

*<sup>26</sup> Then the captain with the officers went and brought them, but not by force, for they were afraid of being stoned by the people.*

That's how popular they were! And threatening to the high priest!

*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.*

The chaos depicted in this story is most seen in the high priest with feeling out of control. First, they arrest the apostles for preaching the name of Jesus, then the apostles were nowhere to be found until, again, they were preaching in the name of Jesus. Arrested again and brought to the high priest, an unexpected twist happened when someone spoke up for the apostles basically negotiating for their lives to be spared. Needless to say, the high priest and his people felt out of control and probably a little defeated.

BUT... the passage ends with the "teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus" (v. 42). Again, order was brought through the spreading of the Gospel, though it did not appear to be in order from the perspective of the high priest. They acquiesced reluctantly, probably in a persistent state of chaos, but knowing there was no use in fighting it.

If I were to put my counseling hat on, this would be a good time to teach you about "Radical Acceptance". Radical acceptance is a form of Dialectic Behavioral Therapy, and highlights accepting things as they are without judging them or trying to change them. The well-

known common phrase, “it is what it is” can be an example of radical acceptance. Another phrase can be something like, “I can’t change the past, I can only learn from it.” Radical acceptance is meant to reduce the intensity of suffering from certain traumatic experiences. Easy concept to teach, yet difficult to put into practice. Maybe one day I can teach a class on it and other concepts learned from Dialectic Behavioral Therapy or DBT.

Back to the story.

I saved the first story chronologically in scripture for last.

### **Acts 5:12-16**

*<sup>12</sup> Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. <sup>13</sup> None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem.*

More examples of Holy Boldness from Acts chapter 4.

*<sup>14</sup> And more than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women, <sup>15</sup> so that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. <sup>16</sup> The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were all healed.*

This part of scripture is more of an account of what happened in history rather than a theatrical story. In five verses, it sums up the importance of teaching the Gospel. The chaotic scene depicts droves of sick and lame and unclean and possessed people. They all want healing. They all want to be normal. They all are hoping for a sense of order and at the end of this passage, they all received order in the form of healing.

How are these stories all connected?

The first one about project management ended with

*<sup>7</sup> And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.*

The second one about feeling out of control ended with

*<sup>42</sup> And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus.*

And the third story about all the people coming to be healed ended with

*<sup>14</sup> And more than ever believers were added to the Lord...<sup>16</sup> and they were all healed.*

In all of these stories the word of God continued to spread and the believers multiplied. As a result of the Holy Boldness of the apostles we learned about a couple weeks ago, and learning about how the communities came together to usher a new way of living life through the Joy of Salvation in the first part of chapter 5, we see time and again that God can't be diminished or kept down. His word continues to spread no matter what!

Robert Tannehill writes: "The basic belief is in the power of God's purpose to reach its goal in spite of, or even by means of, the suffering caused by human opposition."

Fred Craddock emphasizes this stance by stating, "By the end of Acts, it becomes clear that the gospel is irrepressible."

We started this morning discussing examples of disorder and chaos that were turned around and brought into some type of order. If we apply this principle to our understanding of God, then no matter how chaotic life can get or how much things are in disarray, if we are in tune with the Holy Spirit and are living our life based on obedience to God, there is always a possibility that order can come out of the chaos. 1 Corinthians 14:33 most appropriately states,

***33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace."***

Ask Him. You never know what He'll show you.

Amen.

Tannehill, Robert C. (1994). *The Narrative Unity of Luke-Acts A Literary Interpretation: volume two: The Acts of the Apostles*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress.

Craddock, Fred B... [et al.]. (1994). *Preaching Through the Christian Year: Year C*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International.

# Order Out of Chaos

Acts 5:12-6:7





Junk Drawer Before



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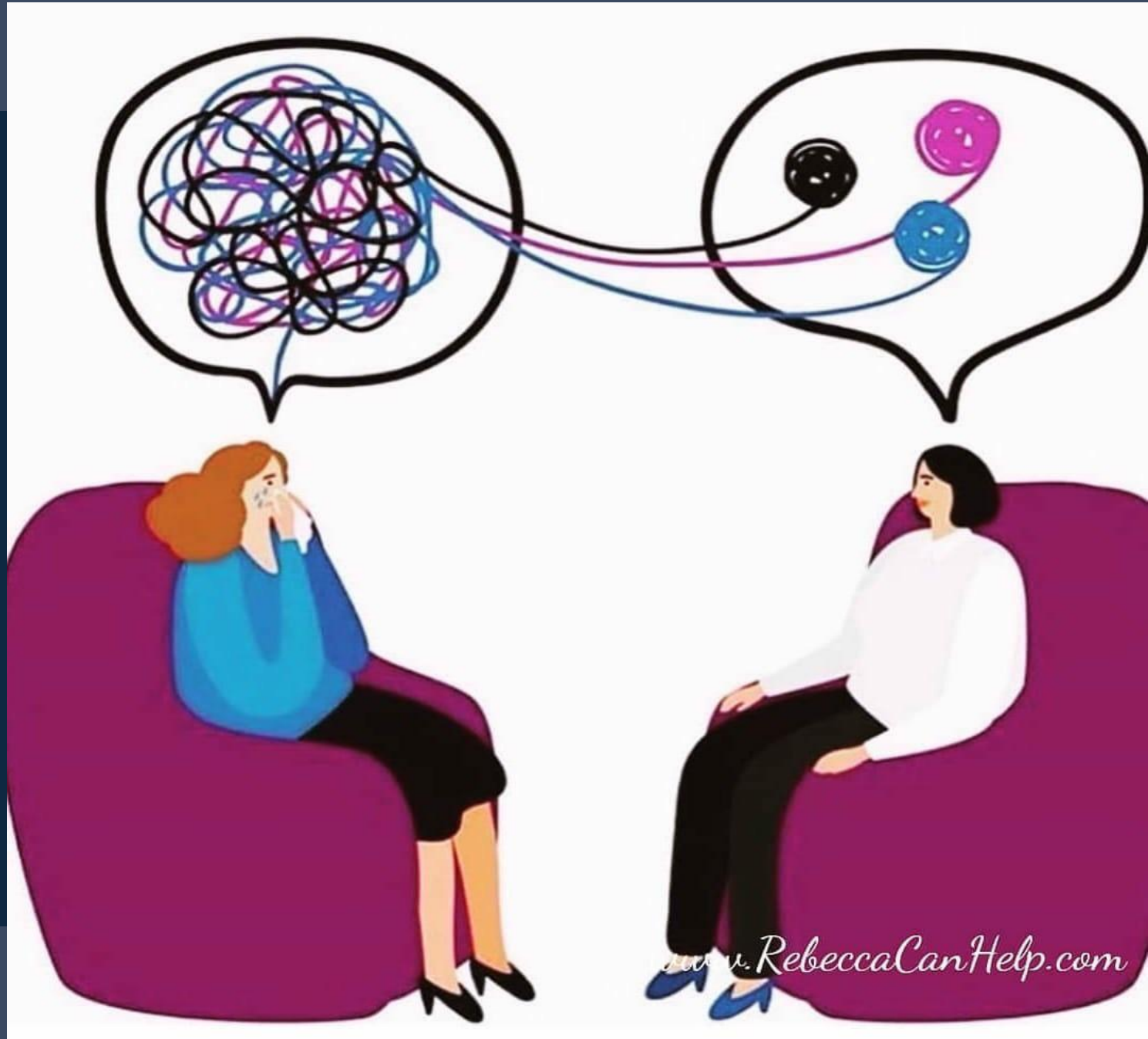






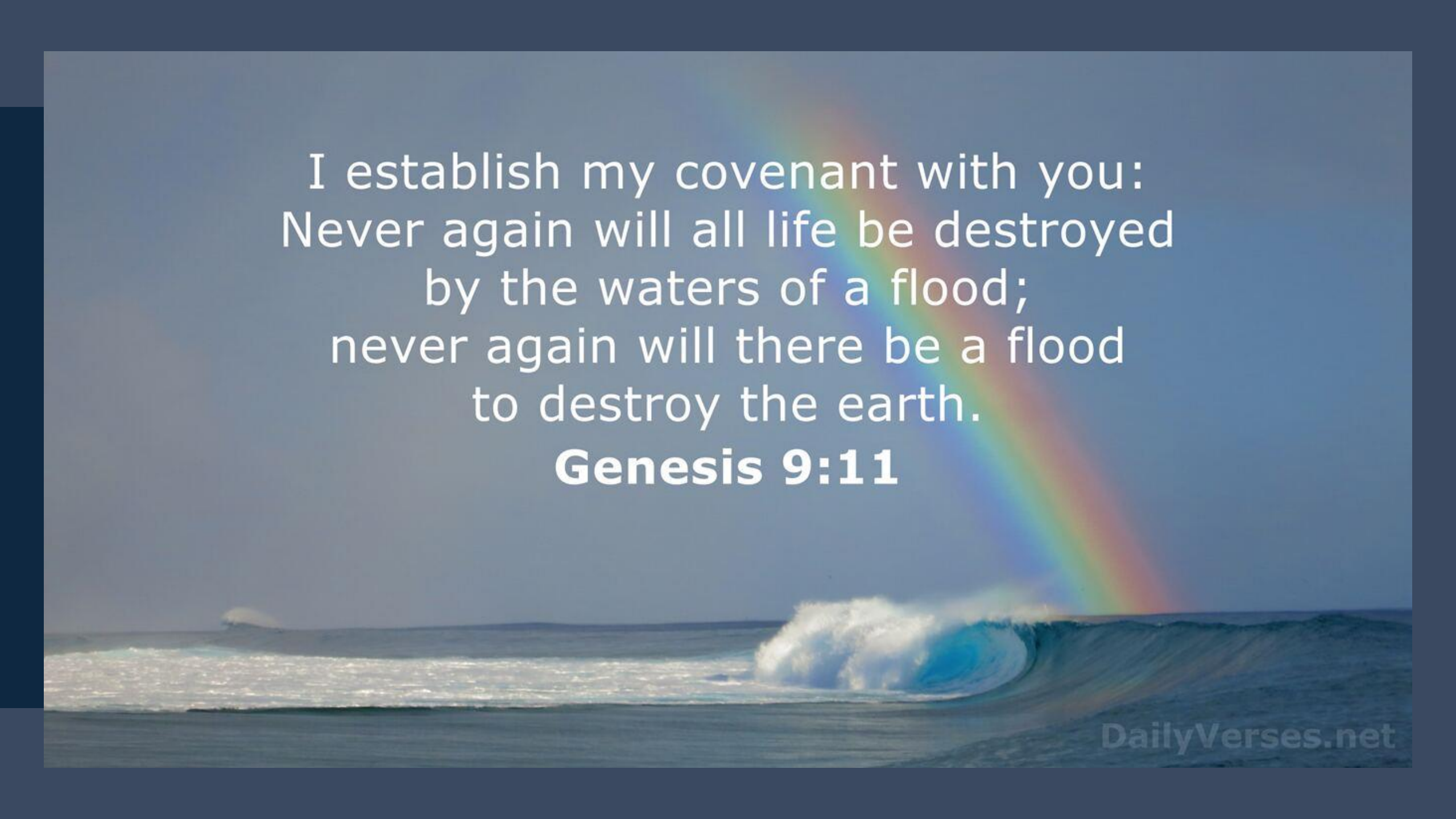






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A vibrant rainbow arches across a clear blue sky, its colors reflecting on the surface of a blue ocean. In the foreground, a large, curling wave with white foam is breaking. The overall scene is bright and serene, symbolizing hope and a covenant.

I establish my covenant with you:  
Never again will all life be destroyed  
by the waters of a flood;  
never again will there be a flood  
to destroy the earth.

**Genesis 9:11**

## Acts 6:1-7

<sup>6</sup> Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. <sup>2</sup> And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables."

## Acts 6:1-7

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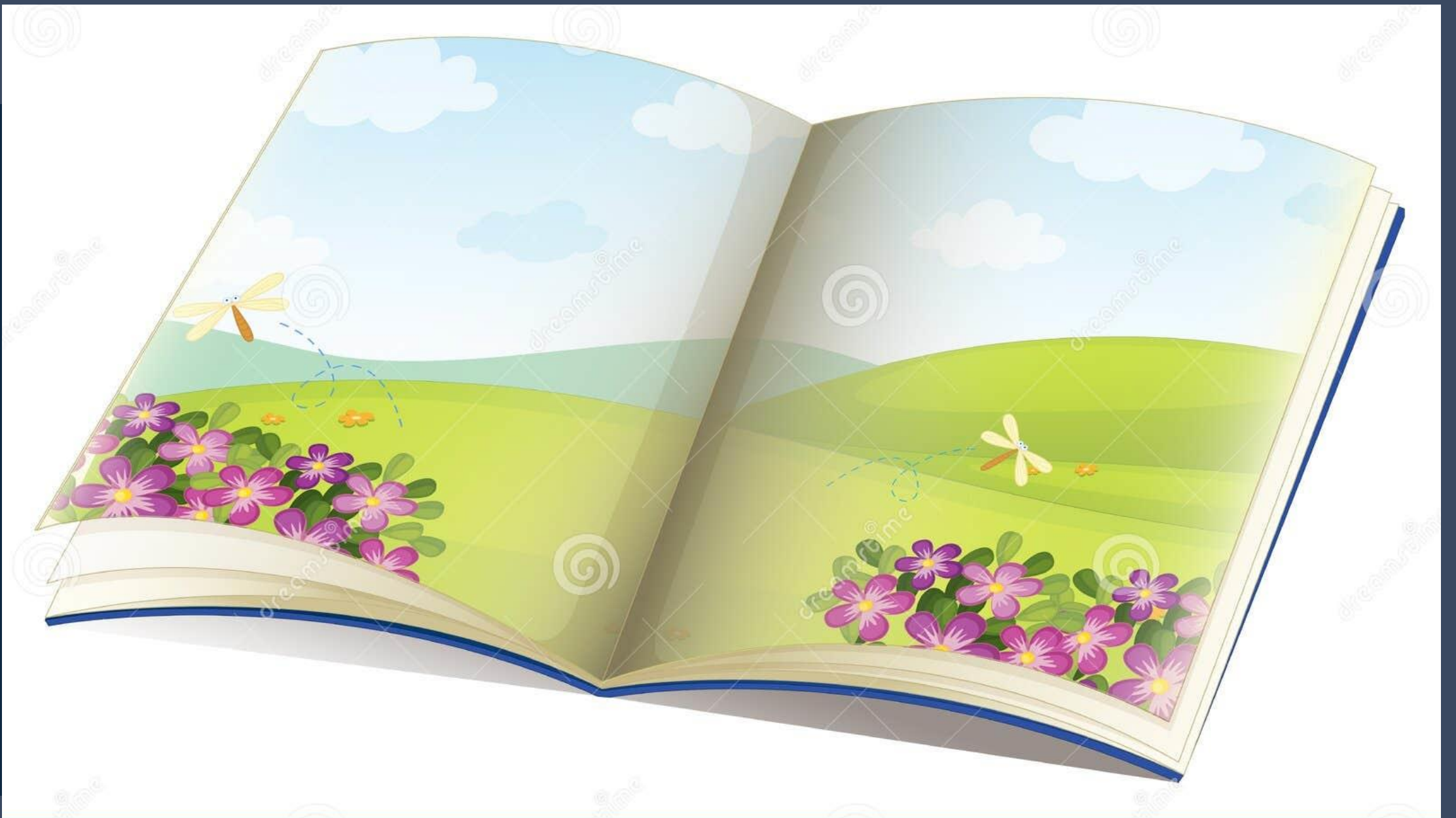
## Acts 6:1-7

- <sup>7</sup> *And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.*



# KEY RESPONSIBILITIES.

- Keeping tiny humans alive, fed, and relatively clean
- Executing high-stakes negotiations before coffee (e.g., socks vs. no socks)
- Responding to emails, texts, calendar invites, and random questions yelled from the bathroom
- Grocery shopping, meal prep, and snack distribution on a rolling loop
- Acting as chauffeur, therapist, nurse, teacher, cheerleader, project manager, and snack curator
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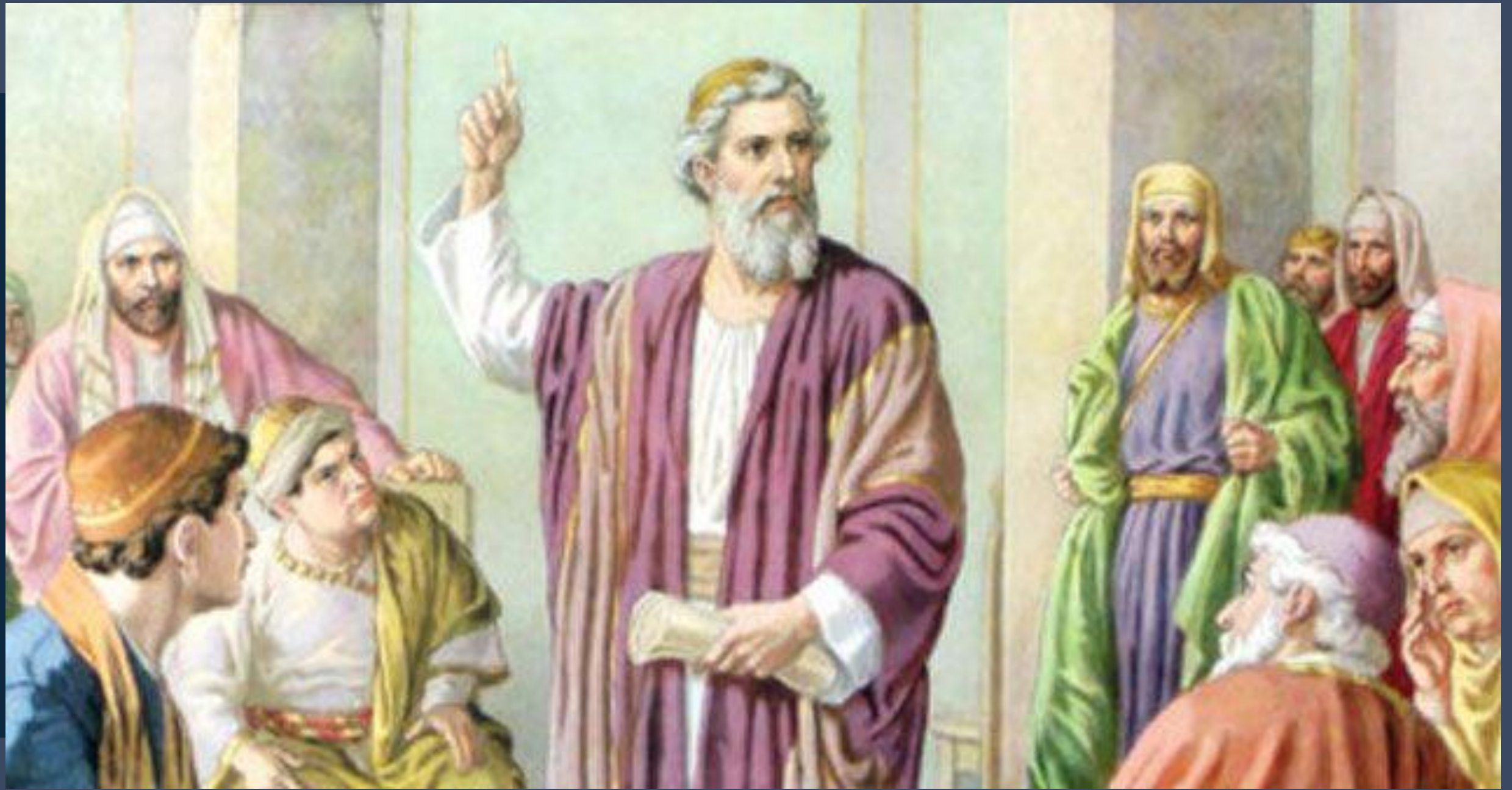






Then Peter and the other  
apostles answered and said,  
***We ought to obey God  
rather than men.***

Acts 5:29





Acts 5:41

So they left the council rejoicing because they had been considered worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name.



Feeling out  
of control

## Acts 5:12-16

<sup>12</sup> Now many signs and wonders were regularly done among the people by the hands of the apostles. And they were all together in Solomon's Portico. <sup>13</sup> None of the rest dared join them, but the people held them in high esteem.

## Acts 5:12-16

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*And the word of God  
continued to  
increase*

*They did not cease  
teaching  
and preaching that  
the Christ is Jesus*

*And more than ever  
believers were added  
to the Lord*

† all things faithful

# God's Unstoppable Purpose

A person stands on the peak of a rugged mountain, silhouetted against a dramatic sunset sky. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden glow over the scene. The sky is filled with soft, wispy clouds. The mountain's surface is rocky and textured, with some snow or light-colored patches. The overall mood is one of solitude and contemplation.

“the gospel is  
irrepressible”

-Fred Craddock

*God*  
IS NOT A GOD OF  
DISORDER  
*but of peace*

1 Corinthians 14:33

Pictured:  
Galilee, Israel



**WALL OF PRAYER**