



## Life Group Study Questions\*

Sent - Part 7 (Acts 7) "Stephen"

**If you were telling the story of your life, what are three key events you would include? Why did you choose those events? How did they shape who you are today? How has the gospel played a central role not only in your life in the past, but as you move forward into the future?**

Sometimes we have the tendency to treat the Bible like it's a collection of isolated stories that don't fit together, but one of the things we see from Stephen's speech in Acts 7 is that God has been telling the same story since the beginning. The central theme of the Bible is the gospel. Stephen understood that centrality, and he was willing to humbly give himself fully to it. It cost him his life, but in the end, the gospel was worth it all.

### UNDERSTANDING

**Look back at Acts 6:3, 8. What kind of a person was Stephen? What do you think it would have been like to be around him? Why? Does it encourage you that this great early church leader was not one of the apostles, but a lay person who rose up from within the church? What implications does that have about every Christian's potential significance?**

Stephen was a regular guy; he was not one of the early apostles, but one of the men they chose because of his great reputation and spiritual wisdom and insight to lead in the food distribution efforts of the early church. He was clearly well respected, and he was going to have an opportunity to testify to the greatness of the gospel in a way he probably had never imagined.

Read select portions of Acts 7:1-50.

**To whom was Stephen speaking? Would they be familiar with the Old Testament stories Stephen shared? Do any of the stories Stephen recounted surprise you? Why do you think he chose these stories in particular? What does the fact that Stephen articulated his speech like this tell you about him? What point was he making to the Jewish leaders? What was he leading up to?**

\* For quality discussion take time to answer all questions as thoroughly as possible

Stephen addressed these Jewish leaders with stories that were from their heritage. They were the well-worn tales of their past; stories that they had told and retold over and over again. But despite their hearing, they had missed the point of it all. Over and over again in their past, their ancestors had rebelled against their loving God. The same thing had happened in the case of Jesus, and that's what Stephen was getting to.

Ask a volunteer to read Acts 7:51-53.

**What charges did he make against the Sanhedrin? What was Stephen saying about Jesus? Was Jesus the type of Messiah the Jews expected? Why or why not? What can we learn about humbly sharing the story of God with others from the way Stephen did it?**

Stephen emphasized the prophets and their treatment to underscore that Christ (who was the true prophet) was received in the same manner. Stephen called out the Sanhedrin as responsible for Christ's death. Jesus Christ was not the type of Messiah the Jewish leaders and scribes expected (a conquering king). Instead, He was a humble man who gave Himself up for His people. When we share the story of Jesus with others, we can't back down from the truth, but we must also realize in humility that we too are the sinners for whom Jesus died.

Ask a volunteer to read Acts 7:54-58.

**Why do you think the leaders reacted so violently against Stephen? How might humility like Stephen's inspire hatred? What do you think was the purpose of Stephen's vision of Jesus standing next to God's throne?**

Enraged by Stephen's sermon—especially by his charge that they had received but not kept the law—the Sanhedrin members stoned Stephen, who knelt down in an attitude of prayer and worship. Stephen was humbly faithful to the message of the gospel, and God was honored. This is the only time we see Jesus standing rather than sitting in heaven. Maybe Jesus was standing to receive His faithful servant.

Ask a volunteer to read Acts 7:59-60.

Stephen died with a vision of His exalted Lord in his mind and immediately stepped into His presence. In the end, Stephen not only testified about the centrality of the gospel; he lived that truth.

#### APPLICATION

**What sacrifices is God calling you to make right now for the sake of the gospel?**

**Have you ever believed that doing great things for God is the job of the church staff or Christian leaders? What's wrong with believing that?**

**What is one way that Stephen's sacrifice encourages you in your daily life?**

#### PRAYER

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