

***What Can We Learn from the First Christian Martyr?***

*Date: 3/6/16*

**Read Together**

**Read the Scripture and overview below before your Life Group meets.**

Scripture passage: Acts 6:8-15 & 7

One of the most pivotal personalities in the Book of Acts and the history of the Christian Church is Stephen. He was not an apostle or a pastor, but rather a deacon, a servant, a common man—not a religious professional. As we continue our study of Acts, we must pause and study the life and legacy of this first martyr of the Church. As we study the tragedy of his life, we not only find an amazing story of faith, but also one of spiritual victory. Woven within the sadness, we see a catalyst for growth among the people of the First Church. We also see lessons of faith, faithfulness, and forgiveness that continue to stir God's people for generations to come. Stephen's example of tragedy and triumph spurs us on as we continue to grow into faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ.

**Pray Together**

**Use the first few minutes of your lesson to lead your group in a focused prayer time.**

- **Praise** God for His grace, His guidance, and His goodness.
- **Repent** from any disobedience in your walk with Christ.
- **Ask** the Holy Spirit to help you be a faithful witness to Jesus.
- **Yield** to the Spirit and trust God to help you tell others about Him.

**Discuss Together**

**Use these questions to engage in an informative and impactful discussion with your Life Group.**

- Discuss various martyrs from history?
- What did these people have in common? How were they different?

**Read Acts 6:8-15 & 7:54-60**

- Discuss the life and character of Stephen. (See also Acts 7)
- Stephen was condemned by the Jewish Council but confirmed and vindicated in Heaven. What indications do we have from Scripture that affirm that God was pleased with Stephen's faithful witness to Jesus Christ?
- Read 1 Peter 2:22-24. What was Jesus' response to His accusations?
- Has there ever been a time in your life when you were condemned on earth, but vindicated in heaven? What was your response?



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- Skim Acts 7:1-53. Stephen boldly proclaimed the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the angry Jewish Council. Discuss the major points of Stephen's speech. What did Stephen proclaim in his speech? What did he not do?
- If asked, could you give a credible, Biblical witness for Christ? What would you say? (1 Peter 3:15-16)
- There are many truths to be gleaned from the example of Stephen.

- **Truth regarding faith:** While faith alone saves, faith is not always safe. What did Jesus tell His disciples about the risk they would take in following Him? (See Matthew 5:10-12)

How should a person respond when confronted with persecution because of their faith?

Jesus spoke to His disciples about persecution during His earthly ministry. What did He tell them? (See John 15:18-21)

- **Truth regarding faithfulness:** "A successful witness is sharing Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit and leaving the results to God." (Bill Bright) What is our job as Christian witnesses? What is not our job?
- **Truth regarding freedom:** We have freedom to worship but many exclude themselves. We have freedom to witness but many defer to others. How do you treat your *Freedom of Religion*? Do you exclude and defer or do you actively participate and proclaim the Gospel?
- **Truth regarding forgiveness:** Forgiveness may not resolve your injury but it will release God's authority in the lives of others. How did Stephen handle this truth? What were the results? (See Acts 7:59-60)

What did Stephen realize regarding the oneness he had with Christ? (See Colossians 1:9-14 & 3:1-4)

- **Truth regarding fear:** There is a reality greater than death; it is the triumph of Christ over the grave. Read Isaiah 41:10 and remember this promise in the midst of your uncertainty. What do you fear today? Will you, like Stephen, choose instead to trust in the One who conquered sin and death for you, intercedes for you, and resides in you?
- Spend time praying specifically for any fears that your group members will share.

## Do Life Together

**These questions are meant to encourage you to apply spiritual truth and live on mission for Jesus. It is your Life Group leader's responsibility to challenge you and hold you accountable to taking steps of growth and faith. Take these questions to heart. Allow the Holy Spirit to prompt you to grow in your role as a disciple and ultimately, a disciple-maker.**

- What will you do this week to make disciples and multiply disciple-makers?
- Will you commit to attend the **Go There Workshop** on Sunday evening, March 13 so you can learn how to share the Gospel effectively?



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