



Week 16: Acts 1-7

Study Guide for the week of April 13-19

Personal reflection / journaling exercise

Spend some time this week reflecting on the life of Stephen, Acts 6-7.

Stephen is known as the first Christian martyr. But before you can die for Jesus, you need to live for him. What was remarkable about Stephen's life? What gifts had Stephen received from the Holy Spirit? What did he do with these gifts?

What is remarkable about your life? Yes, it is remarkable! You are the only you around with your own unique story, perspective, experiences, talents and relationships. What gift(s) have you received from the Holy Spirit? How are you nurturing, developing and using the gift(s)?

Stephen ultimately clashed with the religious leaders because he followed the "Spirit" of the law, rather than the letter of the law which the leaders twisted to protect their own power, position and prestige. Where are you most open to the leading of the Spirit? Where are you struggling with the world's idea of power, position and prestige?

Stephen was accused of speaking against the Temple; Stephen actually understood the importance of the Temple, but more importantly, that God was not confined to the Temple. Read 2 Chr 6:18-21, a portion of Solomon's prayer at the Dedication of the Temple. Now read 1 Cor 3:16-17. With the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, all believers become the temple where God dwells. This week, pray Solomon's prayer, knowing God is watching over you, the place where he wishes to dwell.

Discussion starters

1. Share with your group an event that was life-changing for you. It may be meeting your spouse, a new job or opportunity, rethinking a dream or discovering your passion. Can you identify common elements in the stories? The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus was life-changing for the disciples. Compare their behavior before the resurrection with their behavior after. Can you identify their life changes?
2. The apostles had to choose a replacement for Judas. Reread Acts 2:21-26. What procedure did they use? How would you evaluate their decision-making process for today? What elements would still function well in decision-making today?
3. Reread Acts 2:36-37. The question "What should we do?" is a very basic one; have you asked it of yourself lately? How would you answer the question if a friend asked you what they needed to do to come into a relationship with Jesus? What are you doing currently to grow closer to Jesus in character and actions?
4. Notice how the believers prayed in Acts 4:23-31 after Peter and John were freed from prison. How does the prayer start (verse 24)? Did the believers ask for generalities or specifics (v 20-30)? Did they ask God to solve the problem for them or remove it completely? How can we use this model of prayer in our own lives? Have you ever prayed for strength and courage to face a problem rather than for God to remove the problem? How was your prayer answered?
5. Reread Acts 5:1-11, the account of Ananias and Sapphira. What is your reaction to the story? Were Ananias and Sapphira obligated to sell their land? (Hint: read 2 Cor 9:7). What was the sin of Ananias and Sapphira?

Bible verse to memorize: Acts 2:42