

MOVING FORWARD

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READ

Take some time in advance to read and consider the Bible study questions and come up with personal examples to encourage discussion.

WATCH

Make sure everyone can see the screen and the audio is at a comfortable level.

DISCUSS

We hope those who participate in the study walk away knowing, feeling, and doing differently as a result of amazing discussion.

MOVING FORWARD

SESSION 5

COUNTING THE COST

OPEN

As you open up tonight, let's think about this past week. What bullies do you remember from grade school?

What jumped out at you from the message this week? What led you to really think or even better, to change your actions?

WATCH THE VIDEO

What jumped out at you from the video?

INTRODUCTION

What made the early church in the time of the apostles so transformative and powerful?

The apostles were bold in the face of persecution and even death. They did not fear what anyone could do to them because the Spirit-wrought faith in the person of Jesus Christ.

What were the clearest examples of boldness in Acts?

Stephen, the first martyr of the church. He was brought before the Sanhedrin for preaching the message of Jesus Christ. As Stephen preached in Acts, he boldly told who Jesus is and how Jesus fulfills the whole of the Old Testament. Because of this boldness, he was stoned to death but as he was dying, he asked God to forgive the very people who were killing him.

What does chapter 6 tell us about Stephen?

Stephen was one of those leaders chosen to help with the issue related to the care of widows and after Stephen is chosen to help make sure that the widows are cared for, Scripture says of him that Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people.

MOVING FORWARD

SESSION 5

COUNTING THE COST

What does Stephen do that draws the attention of the Sadducees?

Stephen is able to perform signs and wonders to confirm the word that they are preaching. We also see in the text that Stephen is debating with the Freedmen, and they are not able to cope with his wisdom and spirit.

What were the Sadducees' response to Stephen's wisdom and Spirit?

They couldn't handle Stephen in a debate, so they trumped up some false charges and had him arrested and now Stephen is standing before the Sanhedrin, Israel's high court. He is on trial, accused of speaking blasphemy against God.

What was Stephen's defense as he stood on trial?

Stephen's defense is quite long as he goes over the history of Israel in order to show that God

had given the Law, and they disobeyed. God sent His prophets, and they rejected them.

READ

READ ACTS 7:54-60

Why do you think the Sadducees were filled with rage and gnashed their teeth?

Stephen made the case that it wasn't he who was worthy of death, but his audience, the Sanhedrin. By the time he is done with his defense, they are the ones on trial, being accused of blasphemy.

What was Stephen's response to their rage?

He looked "steadfastly" into heaven. He was determined that nothing was going to draw his attention away from this revelation of his Lord.

Why was this attitude so important for Stephen, and for us, to have?

MOVING FORWARD

SESSION 5

COUNTING THE COST

This attitude says that It doesn't matter what the world is going to throw at us, our hearts will be filled "with the peace that passes all understanding"

What are the two difficult realities that we must know and accept if you are to live faithfully as Christians in a fallen world?

1. you will have enemies and 2. you must love those enemies. Both of these things are taught clearly by the Lord Jesus.

What must happen in order to know an accept these truths?

A believer might be able to do one or the other but embracing both of them takes a unique work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian.

What was the ultimate result of Stephen's boldness before the Sanhedrin?

V 58 says that 'they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul.'

What was Stephen's final act in this world and what can we learn from it?

His final act was to love his father in heaven and to love his fellow man even those who had made him their enemy. We must love God and love people the same way that Stephen did.

LET'S PRAY

Consider the following questions as you pray together as a LifeGroup.

- Have you counted the cost of following Christ?
- Are you ready to face the consequences of a life fully committed to Christ?
- What are you willing to give up in order to follow Christ fully?
- Are you willing to count the cost and be ready?

MOVING FORWARD

SESSION 5

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BIG IDEA

Ever wonder what makes a Christian different from everyone else in the world? It is the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. It is He who empowers the lives and ministries of all believers. Stephen was a man who lived like Christ, spoke like Christ, and died like Christ. His death brings a powerful encouragement to all who follow Jesus. It presents a real life example of how the victory of Christ over death changes the way a Christian can face death too. These wonderful truths on dying in Christ are also very instructive on how we can be living for Christ today.

BIBLE STUDY NOTES

READ ACTS 7:54-60

PERSONAL REFLECTION

In what way does Stephen's death emulate the death of Jesus?

The end of our Scripture is Stephen's forgiveness to the crowd. What makes forgiving both difficult and necessary?

Do you feel like Christians rely on the Holy Spirit in their lives?

