

Jesus For All

Week 6: Serving and Suffering

Series:

- Week 1: Living for Something Bigger (Acts 1:1-11)
- Week 2: The Arrival of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:1-21)
- Week 3: Sermons and Gathering of the Church (Acts 2:22-47)
- Week 4: Persecution, Preaching, and Prayer (Acts 3-4:31)
- Week 5: Sharing and Purging (Acts 4:32-5:11)
- Week 6: Serving and Suffering (Acts 6-7)
- Week 7: The Truth and Baptism (Acts 8:26-40)
- Week 8: Encounter with God (Acts 9:1-31)
- Week 9: Good News for Gentiles (Acts 10-12)

Scripture:

Acts 6-7

Motivation (Why You Need to Know It):

As the church was growing, they experienced growing pains and persecution.

Information (What You Need to Know):

Multiplying churches experience growing pains...

▪ There was discontentment in the church

Acts 6:1 (NLT) But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.

- Two groups of people were clashing in the church
 - ✓ Hebrew-speaking believers – Jews who remained near Jerusalem (prided themselves in where they lived, what they spoke, and where they worshiped)
 - ✓ Greek-speaking believers – Jews scattered among the Gentiles (envious of Hebrew-speaking Jews, who made them feel like outsiders)
- The Greek-speaking Jews felt that their widows were being neglected in the food distribution
- The growth of the church required an adjustment of “systems”

- There needed to be a delegation of leadership

Acts 6:2 (NLT) So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, “We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program. **3** And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility.”

- The leaders made the church aware of the need

1 Corinthians 12:7 (NLT) A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.

- The Apostles felt like their role was prayer and teaching the Word of God

- Others’ were selected to handle the distribution of food

Acts 6:5 (NLT) ...they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (an earlier convert to the Jewish faith). **6** These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them.

- There was a continued dedication to the truth

Acts 6:7 (NLT) So God’s message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem...

Stephen’s story is followed all the way into Acts 7...

- He performed miracles

Acts 6:8 (NLT) Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people.

- He spoke in the synagogues (the place where dispersed Jews gathered to worship and read the OT Scriptures since they didn’t have access to the temple)

- He was falsely accused and arrested

Acts 6:11 (NLT) So they persuaded some men to lie about Stephen, saying, “We heard him blaspheme Moses, and even God.” **12** ...So they arrested Stephen and brought him before the high council. **13** The lying witnesses said, “This man is always speaking against the holy Temple and against the law of Moses. **14** We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy the Temple and change the customs Moses handed down to us.”

* Jesus never spoke about destroying the temple building, but rather His body

John 2:19 (NLT) “All right,” Jesus replied. “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” **20** “What!” they exclaimed. “It has taken forty-six years to build this Temple, and you can rebuild it in three days?” **21** But when Jesus said “this temple,” he meant his own body. **22** After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered he had said this, and they believed both the Scriptures and what Jesus had said.

- He speaks the truth about Israel's ancestors and the present rejection of Jesus
 - ✓ History of Abraham (Acts 7:2-8)
 - ✓ History of Joseph (Acts 7:9-16)
 - ✓ History of Moses (Acts 7:17-34)
 - ✓ History of Israel's rejection of God (Acts 7:35-50)
 - ✓ Israel's rejection of Jesus

Acts 7:51 (NLT) “You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? That’s what your ancestors did, and so do you! **52** Name one prophet your ancestors didn’t persecute! They even killed the ones who predicted the coming of the Righteous One—the Messiah whom you betrayed and murdered.”

Application (What You Need To Do):

Where did this boldness get Stephen?

Acts 7:57 (NLT) ...They rushed at him **58** and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. His accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul. **59** As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” **60** He fell to his knees, shouting, “Lord, don’t charge them with this sin!” And with that, he died.

But, this persecution forced believers out of Jerusalem, but they would end up taking the Gospel to other Judea and Samaria.

Acts 8:1 (NLT) A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria.