

# Upside Down | the character of the Jesus movement

## A Vision for Tooth Grinders | Forgiving

Acts 6:8-15; 7:51-60  
August 13, 2017

**Review:** How has talking things through with God clarified how you are to serve? What small ways did you find to turn towards others this week?

**Introduction:** If you follow Jesus, you're a part of a movement. You're in with others. The movement of Jesus is about the people. Jesus invites us individually but deploys us corporately. House by house, Luke tells us, the Lord added to their number those who were being saved (Acts 2:46-47). It wasn't about the buildings; it was about the people. The biblical word for 'house' (oikos) meant family. Jesus added to their numbers when his followers lived like his family with one another and with their neighbors. The movement wasn't defined by their ideas or rules but by the way they lived together, by the way that Jesus lived in their shared life. The book of Acts invites us to stop coming to church and start being the church. Summer in Seattle offers a wonderful opportunity: Our neighbors are coming out of their houses. Will we welcome them into his? If we do, maybe they'll say what the Greeks said, "These people who have been turning the world upside down have come here also..." (Acts 17:6).

This week one of the newly appointed deacons, Stephen, becomes the target of those who oppose Jesus.

**Pray:** Lord Jesus, prepare our hearts and minds to receive your word as a gift. Grant us courage to explore the full meaning of the call you extend to us to follow you Amen

**Read:** Acts 6:8-15; 7:51-60

### Discussion:

1. How did those who disagreed with Stephen try to silence him? What charges did they bring against him?
2. Read through Stephen's statement in his defense in Acts 7:1-50. Look for how he responds to the specific accusations made against him. Does Stephen speak truthfully about Moses, God, the Law and the Temple?
3. In Acts 7:25 and 7:35 how was Moses received by his people? How does this compare with the Jewish Council's opinion of Jesus and Stephen?
4. What is Stephen's understanding of the importance of the Temple? See also Isaiah 66:1-2 (which Stephen quotes) and Solomon's prayer of dedication of the Temple in 1 Kings 8:27.
5. What accusation does Stephen make against his accusers? What is the reaction of the council?
6. Look for ways that God has taken care of Stephen even though the outcome looks bad in human terms. (See Luke 12:11-12; Matthew 28:20b; Luke 11:4)
7. How has God taken care of you even while not changing your difficult circumstances?
8. With whom do you identify in this story- the teeth-grinding accusers or Stephen?

### Application:

What causes you teeth grinding anger? Will you bring that anger before God in prayer asking for understanding and peace? God promises both. See James 1:5 and John 14:27 for a start.

**Pray:** Lord strengthen and equip us to serve you in Spirit and truth this week. Amen