

## TABLE TALK

FAMILY DISCUSSION GUIDE for July 10-July 16, 2022

WEEKLY READINGS: Acts 6:7-15; Acts 7:1-8:1; Luke 12:8-12; Revelation 3:5; Psalm 71:13-17; James 1:5

### ACTS IN 30 Week 7: *Stephen's Spirit-Led Life and Legacy*

"The Book of Acts makes it very plain that the mature Christian does not concentrate on the gifts – but on the Giver. Transformation into the likeness of Jesus is God's supreme goal for us. **To be full of the Spirit is to be Christlike.** And nowhere is this more clearly portrayed than in the death of Stephen, who radiates these qualities as he dies, because he is full of the Holy Spirit. (God) wants to make us mature in our Christian discipleship. By His presence, His power, and His gifts..."

-Dr. Michael Green, *Thirty Years that Changed the World: The Book of Acts for Today*

**FOCUS: READ Acts 6:7-15**      **Stephen - a Servant of the Poor - Becomes Stephen - a Great Preacher of the Gospel**

*"Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen. But they could not stand up against **the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.**" (Acts 6:9-10, NIV)*

**BIG IDEA 1** – The more we speak up for Jesus and tell of His goodness, we will face opposition from time to time. Stephen's ministry began as he volunteered to help serve in the food distribution program (Acts 6:5-6). As he was being faithful to that ministry, the Holy Spirit blessed him, and he performed great miracles which made many unbelievers angry. When they tried to debate him, Stephen would refute them with **Spirit-led wisdom** that often left them humbled and ashamed.

**Q1- Have you told unbelievers about Jesus before? If so, how did it go? If not what are some takeaways from Stephens life?**

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**FOCUS: Acts 7:51-8:1a**      **Stephen Becomes the Very First Martyr for Jesus**

*"As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He fell to his knees, shouting, "Lord, don't charge them with this sin!" And with that, he died. Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen."* (Acts 7:59-8:1a, NLT)

**BIG IDEA 2** – Because of the bold preaching, Stephen was murdered by the Chief Priests and religious rulers for his faith...becoming the very first "martyr" for Jesus in history. The word, "**martyr**," stems from the Greek word for "**witness**" and describes someone who would willingly face death than deny their faith. An estimated 70 million martyrs have died for the Christian faith over the last 2,000 years (For a list of martyrs from Acts to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, see John Foxes, "*Book of Christian Martyrs of the World*"). Currently, an estimated 360 million Christians worldwide suffer persecution and discrimination because of their faith each day (see [www.opendoors.org](http://www.opendoors.org) and [www.VoiceoftheMartyrs.com](http://www.VoiceoftheMartyrs.com)). Before he dies, Stephen sees a vision of Jesus and asks the Lord to **forgive those who are persecuting him**. Stephen echo's the very words of Jesus on the Cross in Luke 23:34 as Christ forgives those killing Him in His final breaths.

**Q2- Which would be harder in your opinion – dying for Jesus as a martyr or living for Jesus in the face of daily opposition? Is it hard for you to forgive those who dismiss, deny, or disregard your faith walk with Jesus sometimes? Why or why not?**

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**FOCUS: Luke 12:8-12**      **Jesus Promised The Holy Spirit Will Give Us the Words to Speak**

*"For the **Holy Spirit** will teach you at that time what you should say."* (Luke 12:12, GNT)

**BIG IDEA 3** – Stephen went from being a volunteer at the "food bank" to preaching one of the best sermons in the entire Bible (Acts 7). Stephen did not depend upon his own education to do this - but on **the Holy Spirit who gave him the wisdom** to speak (Acts 6:10). This fulfills a promise from Jesus that His followers would receive the Helper – the Holy Spirit – who would give them the words to say while witnessing for Him at the proper time (Luke 12:12). Don't let your lack of theological training hinder you from sharing Jesus with people. James 1:5 says if we "lack wisdom" in any area that we should, "ask!"

**Q3 – Why is it important for us to lean on the Holy Spirit's guidance and wisdom when sharing our faith with others?**

**Have you asked the Holy Spirit for wisdom in an area before? If so, describe the situation. If not, what's holding you back?**

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