



The Acts of the Spirit

GATHERING THE CHURCH

ACTS 6:8-15

"THE ACCUSATION"

SEPTEMBER 10, 2023

AT A GLANCE

We're all following someone, and our lives reflect the people we follow. If we're really following Jesus, our lives will reflect the same values and priorities, face the same kinds of challenges, and draw on the same hope and resources.

CONTEXT

The Book of Acts is the theological history of the church. In the previous weeks, we explored how God's people (the church) have become where heaven and earth meet. The church is growing rapidly, and with it, opposition from the outside and obstacles from within. The apostles are resolved to continue preaching about new life in Jesus, healing people in His name, AND leading this new community to be a radical expression of that new life where they meet people's needs with integrity.

SERMON SUMMARY

Pastor Jeff preached this week about Stephen as an example of a faithful follower of Jesus. His life parallels much of Jesus' life and ministry:

- a man full of the faith, wisdom, and the Spirit
- empowered by God to perform amazing signs and wonders
- the religious leaders dispute with him but he answers them all
- they raise up false witnesses against him
- he is accused of speaking against the law, the customs, and Moses
- the false charge that Jesus said he would destroy the Temple is used against him
- he doesn't respond in anger or self-defense but is calm and peaceful before his accusers

Luke intends us to see in Stephen a model of faithful followers of Jesus – that as we follow Jesus our lives will also reflect Jesus' priorities, character, experiences, and confidence in the Father.



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Read Acts 6:8-15



This document can be used for either personal or group reflection.

Group facilitator: you do not need to ask every question but can select the best ones for your group dynamic.

DISCUSSION

Expand Our Awareness

Pastor Jeff shared a quote from author and life coach Jim Rohn: "You are the average of the five people you spend the most time with."

- Do you believe this is true? Why or why not?
- How have you experienced this? What people or influences does your life reflect?

In what ways have you made conscious decisions about the values, priorities, or direction of your life?

- Whom have you chosen to intentionally learn from and/or emulate?
- Why did you choose those people? Why did you want to be like them?

We have some measure of control over the direction of our lives, but a lot what influences us is the product of others' choices or external forces.

- What experiences or people have influenced you in ways that you didn't choose?
- How has God used painful or difficult situations to grow you?

Extract the Truth & Explore Your Experience

Re-Read Acts 6:8-15

Pastor Jeff said that we see Stephen, as a faithful follower of Jesus, mirroring Jesus' life in three large movements:

1. Stephen makes an unexpected impact (vv 8-10)
2. Stephen encounters intentional opposition (vv 11-14)
3. Stephen experiences God's empowering presence (v 8, 15)

Pastor Jeff suggested that these events from Stephen's life picture the life of faithful followers of Jesus.

- Do you agree that Luke intends us to see this as a pattern for our lives?



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Pastor Jeff said that Stephen experienced power through the Spirit because he stepped out in faith and was available for God to use him.

- Do you agree that's a way to experience God's power? Why or why not?
- Where have you seen God work through you in ways you hadn't expected?

God's amazing impact through Stephen also brought opposition.

- Should we expect opposition in following Jesus? If we don't experience difficulty, does that mean we're not being faithful followers?
- When have you encountered hostility as you were following God and serving others?
- How can we distinguish between suffering for Jesus' sake, for simply living in a broken world, and for being the cause of our suffering ourselves?

In the opposition, Stephen also had an amazing experience of God's power and presence.

- How does Stephen experience God's empowering in this passage?
- How have you dealt with or responded to hostility you've received as a follower of Jesus?

Experience Transformation

If Stephen's life points to ways our lives should also parallel Jesus, how does that confirm, challenge, or expand your thinking about what your life should look like?

Faithful Followers make an impact, attract opposition, and experience God's presence.

- Which of these feels most normal or natural to you? Why?
- Which might God be calling you to grow in?

Engage the World

- What needs do you see around you that you could step into (in your home, family, neighborhood, work, or school)?
- How can acceptance of the reality of opposition in following Jesus give you courage?
- How can you encourage someone else who is suffering in following Jesus?
- How can God use your experience or knowledge of him to make a difference in someone else's life?

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Pray

End by praying for the following:

- Following Jesus and reflecting him in your life
- For God to use you to make an impact in others' lives
- Courage to step out in faith, regardless of opposition
- Love for enemies empowered by the awareness of God's love for you
- Experiencing the awareness of God's presence in your daily routines
- Personal needs

PREPARE FOR NEXT WEEK:

Read Acts 7:1-53