

SMALL GROUP STUDY GUIDE

NOV. 23/24 - ACTS 7 - STEPHEN DIES FOR HIS FAITH

OPENING QUESTION

When was the last funeral or memorial service you attended? Who was it for? How did you feel as you participated?

READ TOGETHER

Acts 6:8-8:4 to get a feel for this whole story.

BIG IDEA

Christ-followers should understand death in a way no one else on Planet Earth does.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Read Acts 6:8-10: What was it about Stephen that resulted in his winning the debate with the members of the Synagogue of Freed Slaves?
2. Read Acts 6:11-15 and then read Matthew 5:10-12: In what way is Stephen a New Testament version of what the Old Testament prophets faced? In what way is he the fulfillment of what Jesus is hinting at in Matthew 5?
3. In Acts 7:1, the high priest asks Stephen for his response to the accusations made against him. His response in verses 2 through 53 is the longest defense of Christianity in the New Testament. Take the time to read the entirety of that response. What point do you think Stephen is trying to make? (focus back on verses 46 to 53 when you are done)
4. Read Acts 7:54: How do the Jewish leaders respond to what Stephen says?
5. Read Acts 7:55-60: Compare Stephen's actions with the religious leaders' reaction. What do those leaders miss that Stephen "gets" that is going on in this scene?
6. Read Acts 8:1-4: What happened as a result of Stephen's death? How do you see this as being part of God's plan to create a ripple effect in the early days of the Church?

CHALLENGE

Each day this week take time during one of your meals to pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ around the world. Pray that God would give them wisdom and protection.

PRAYER

At RockPointe, we have international workers who live and work in difficult places. One such person is Kristi Hopf, a RockPointer serving in Niger, West Africa. 80% of Niger is the Sahara Desert and it is ranked 86th out of 86 countries (i.e. dead last) on the UN's Human Development Index. When you add to this the fact that Niger is 90-plus percent a Muslim country, you know that Kristi serves in a difficult place. Take time as a group to pray for her today. Pray for courage, wisdom, strength and protection.

NEXT STEP

For those of you desiring to go deeper in understanding martyrdom around the world, you would profit from checking out two very valuable websites (and ministries) on this topic. Check out Voice of the Martyrs (at www.persecution.com) and Open Doors (at www.opendoorsusa.org). Read through some of the current stories about persecution and martyrdom and allow them to guide your prayers today.

BECOMING
PART OF THE
RIPPLE
EFFECT

