

Stephen Acts 6-7

Stephen was someone whose *task* was helping people but his *calling* was to tell people about Jesus. That might be you. Very often we can focus on the task that God has for us and not even think about His call on our lives to speak for Him.

Stephen is a normal guy. He was asked by the Church to serve widows. He was called by God to be a witness for Jesus. He embraced his calling and we can learn from him.

Stephen gives us an example of a man in a very unique situation. This is NOT a prescription of how to share your faith or how to talk to people about Jesus. This IS a description of what Stephen did when he was thrown into a very difficult situation. The relevance for us and the encouragement for us is to see what the Holy Spirit did in Stephen. If you are a Christian, the same Holy Spirit resides within you and can empower you to speak for Jesus.

Here are some key Bible verses for today's lesson:

Whenever they bring you before synagogues and rulers and authorities, don't worry about how you should defend yourselves or what you should say. For the Holy Spirit will teach you at that very hour what must be said. Luke 12:11-12 (HCSB)

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8 (HCSB)

We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. 2 Corinthians 5:20 (NIV)

Evangelism is not one size-fits all. This is not a prescription. This is a description. Acts 7 describes what Stephen said to a specific group of people at a specific time. There seems to be two main themes in Stephen's speech which serve as an indictment of Israel:

1. Israel has rejected God's messengers – persecuted some; killed others.
2. Israel has rejected God – pursued idolatry – golden calf.

In your life, you will never face the same audience as Stephen faced that day in Acts 6-7. So your words need to be different. What will you say? How do you introduce the topic of spiritual things? Here's a plan, not THE plan but simply, a plan. It helps to have a plan....

Your story, my story, His story

Your story is you listening to that other person.
My story is you sharing some piece of who you are.
His story is you telling someone about Jesus.

Since there are no grades in grace, remember – you don't have to get an A.
You don't have to be perfect, just obedient.

Step into this great adventure of being an ambassador for Jesus Christ.

Home Group Discussion Questions:

1. What impresses you the most about Stephen?
2. What challenges you the most about this story?
3. As you consider this story about Stephen, who is someone you know that needs to know about Jesus?
 - Someone in your home
 - Someone at work or at school
 - Someone you know because your kids play on the same team or have the same teacher
 - Someone in your neighborhood or community
 - A friend or family member
4. Where are you on the scale of nice, friendly and intentional?
What would it take to move you toward being more intentional?
5. Have you ever tried to get someone to tell you some of their story? How did you do that? How did it go? Have you ever tried to tell someone a piece of your story? For the purpose of leading into God's story of saving you?

Family Discipleship:

Read Acts 6:8-15 and Acts 7. (It's long, you might want more than one person to read it)

God asked Stephen to say some harsh things to the Sanhedrin. He did the right thing and obeyed. He was stoned because of it.

When do we have to do the right thing? What if it is hard? What if someone else doesn't like it?

Who helped Stephen do the right thing? Who helps us?

Next week: Acts 8:1-4