

FOOD TIME: (30-45 minutes) – Remember to give some direction for this time.

MEETING TIME: (45 minutes)

We enter into the seventh chapter of Acts and we see a bold sermon given by Stephen. He was one of the chosen seven in chapter six and he is going out and spreading the name of Jesus. He comes across some strong opposition to this and is sought after by the leaders in the temple. What we need to look at here for the focus this week is the boldness and confidence of Stephen even in the face of death. Throughout chapter seven, we see him reference the Old Testament and how it can relate to Jesus, but there are hardened hearts and Stephen is brought out of the city. We are going to look at the end of this chapter and we are going to look at what Stephen's attitude is toward both the Lord as well as those who are looking to end his life.

READ Acts 7:54-60

54 When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth. **55** But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, **56** and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" **57** "Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; **58** and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. **59** And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." **60** Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not charge them with this sin." And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

FACILITATE Discussion Questions

1. What does Stephen's reaction in verse 54 and 55 tell us about his relationship with God?
2. Has there been a difficult moment you have walked through when you felt calmness from God? Explain
3. How is the way that Stephen forgives the men stoning him an example as to how we should forgive?
4. Is there someone or a situation where you need to find the heart to not just forgive, but to ask the other person for forgiveness? Discuss

PRAY- Take the last 10 minutes to pray about the needs of the group.

APPLICATION- Stephen and his heart for the Lord is inspiring. Even in the face of death, he still walks boldly and confidently in the name of Jesus. At that point of death, he is not looking to save himself or to compromise what he knew is the truth. Instead he looks to honor and glorify Him even in death. Imagine someone stoning you and the last thing that you do is to ask God to forgive them for what they have done. It can be so difficult to forgive someone when we have been hurt. It can be even harder when we forgive someone who is not even sorry for what they have done. But that forgiveness shows others what living for the Lord is truly like. That no matter what happens, we can recognize that God is in control and that we can only look to Him and look to bring glory to His name in everything that we do. As an application this week, I want you to look at those who may have hurt you and to look into your heart and see if you are truly looking to forgive that person as Christ has forgiven us. **Matthew 18: 21-22-** "Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?' Jesus said to him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'" The Lord calls on us to forgive no matter what, so the call is to find that heart to forgive others in order to bring glory to God.