

VILLAGE

CHURCH

Bible Study Notes

Intro Question:

1. What is one thing you're glad you did in life?

Aim/Prayer: to God's work through persecution and his faithful people.

Read: Acts 6:8-8:8

Questions about the passage:

1. What is a quick summary of what has happened so far in Acts?
2. Who is Stephen, who is opposing him and in what way?
3. What do you notice about Stephen's answer? Do you think he was wrong to respond the way he did?
4. What do you think it means that he was 'full of the Holy Spirit'?
5. What are the results of Stephen's death?

Questions for us:

1. What does this episode remind us about human nature & human culture?
2. How does Stephen's audience affect his gospel answer and what does that suggest to us about how we should respond to people's questions?
3. What are some other ways God has used terrible events to spread the gospel? Has ever done that in your life?
4. What is one thing you need to be reminded of from this moment in Acts?

Pray: through the passage, for each other, for Village Church and for our local community.

Homework: pray for visitors coming this Sunday to baptisms.

Remind: Celebration Sunday 19th of October.

VILLAGE

CHURCH

Bible Study Notes

The Book of Acts is all about what happened in the few years after the death and resurrection of Jesus. In his final command, Jesus said to his followers, go and make disciples of all nations. So, that's what they do. But not alone. God's Holy Spirit is with them to grow his Church in number and in maturity.

This week, we pick up where we left off last year when Stephen, a leader in the Church, is killed for his gospel proclamation about Jesus.

Questions about the passage:

- *What is a quick summary of what has happened so far in Acts?*

Encourage people to share what they know - feel free to take some time to look back.

- *Who is Stephen, who is opposing him and in what way?*

Everything we know of Stephen and his opponents is in Acts.

- *What do you notice about Stephen's answer? Do you think he was wrong to respond the way he did?*

Encourage people to take their time, note the content of Stephen's response & the structure of it. Why does he quote what he quotes considering his audience. We might wrestle with Stephen's words/perceived tone in 7:51-53, however, it's very similar to how Jesus speaks to the Pharisees in say Matthew 23. Is there a place for righteous anger?

- *What do you think it means that he was 'full of the Holy Spirit'?*

There are a few options here. Firstly, it could be Luke (the author of Acts) describing the Holy Spirit's power at work in Stephen. Surely, it would have taken great faith to stand up to this crowd with the possibility of death. Secondly, it could be describing how Stephen felt. But actually, I think most likely is that it's a combination of the two above with the addition that Luke is signaling the 'Christ-likeness' of Stephen (see Luke 4:1).

- *What are the results of Stephen's death?*

A great persecution breaks out against the Church, however, this also causes the disciples to be scattered and preach the word wherever they go. The persecution of God's people results in the spreading of the gospel and the fulfilling of his commands. Now the gospel has gone to Samaria and brought great joy.

VILLAGE

CHURCH

Bible Study Notes

Questions for us:

- *What does this episode remind us about human nature & human culture?*

Humans are stiff-necked toward God. They naturally reject even the best evidence of his truth and faithfulness. People are not naturally reasonable nor open. Only the softening of the Spirit can change human hearts and cultures.

- *How does Stephen's audience affect his gospel answer and what does that suggest to us about how we should respond to people's questions?*

Stephen's answer is very Jewish. If you go and compare it to Paul's in Acts 17:16-34, you notice some significant differences. Both, however, remind people of what they believe and why it actually points to Jesus.

- *What are some other ways God has used terrible events to spread the gospel? Has ever done that in your life?*

Encourage people to think and reflect on how God turns things to good. Try not to just go to the big events of history but also to peoples lives.

- *What is one thing you need to be reminded of from this moment in Acts?*

Again, encourage people to be reflective. Maybe it's Stephen's boldness, maybe it's God's work through human evil, maybe it's something else?