

**Stephen: A Faith that  
Advances God's Kingdom**

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**WHO DO  
YOU KNOW  
WHO LIVES  
OUT HIS OR  
HER FAITH  
BOLDLY?**

**The  
POINT >** Bold faith helps advance the kingdom of God.

## > ACTS 6:3-15

<sup>3</sup>Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. <sup>4</sup>But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” <sup>5</sup>And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. <sup>6</sup>These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

<sup>7</sup>And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

<sup>8</sup>And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. <sup>9</sup>Then some of those who belonged to the synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called), and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians, and of those from Cilicia and Asia, rose up and disputed with Stephen. <sup>10</sup>But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. <sup>11</sup>Then they secretly instigated men who said, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and God.” <sup>12</sup>And they stirred up the people and the elders and the scribes, and they came upon him and seized him and brought him before the council, <sup>13</sup>and they set up false witnesses who said, “This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, <sup>14</sup>for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us.” <sup>15</sup>And gazing at him, all who sat in the council saw that his face was like the face of an angel.



# THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

## FACT:

If we're ever tempted to think that teens can't make a big difference in the world, we need to remember that teens invented the trampoline, the television, and a method to detect pancreatic cancer.<sup>1</sup>



## LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // CHURCH

The church isn't a place or a building but is made up of the people who belong to the family of God. Under the Old Covenant, God dwelled in the temple or the tabernacle, but today, He dwells in His people and works through them to advance His kingdom.

The summer before my senior year, I moved to a new high school. One of the first people I connected with was a guy named Troy who would become one of my best friends. Troy and I were both followers of Jesus, but he was different than anyone I'd met before. First, Troy shared that at only seventeen years old, he'd been called to preach and committed his life to vocational ministry. On top of this, Troy had wanted to start a Bible study, and within a couple weeks of beginning our senior year, we began a study group and had twenty to thirty of our classmates showing up every week. Finally, Troy had a vision to do outreach and evangelism in some pretty rough areas of our city. We often shared the gospel with people who needed to hear the hope of Jesus in our city. And the fruit we saw was incredible! I got to be a part of this only because some seventeen-year-old kid named Troy was bold enough to live out what the Bible says.

We can all have the same kind of boldness as Troy. In fact, this is what faith is—belief that powerfully impacts the ways we live. If the Bible says it, then we have the choice to live it. This is simply how God works.

## ACTS 6:3-7

**1** Why was it important for the disciples to devote themselves to prayer and the Scriptures?

**2** How do you believe God is calling you to serve the church?

*When we wholeheartedly trust Jesus and commit to following after Him, the Spirit will empower us to fulfill God's call on our lives.  
#BSFLRisk-Takers*

## ACTS 6:11-15

**6** Why did Stephen face such harsh opposition?

## ACTS 6:8-10

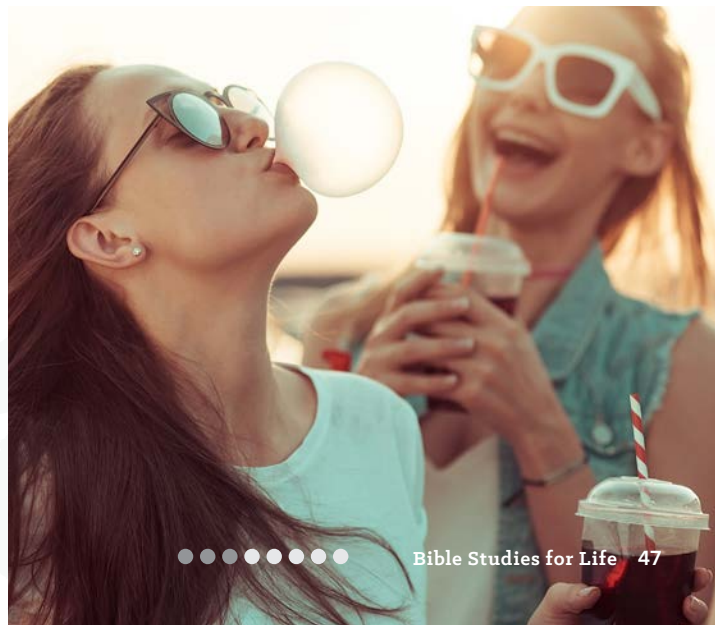
**3** In your own words, what does it mean that Stephen was full of grace and power?

**4** Why are God's Word and prayer essential in the lives of every believer?

**5** How does your life demonstrate a commitment to Jesus like Stephen's?

**7** When have you faced opposition because of your commitment to Jesus?

**8** How specifically would God have you follow Stephen's example of faith?





# LIVE IT OUT



## LEVELS OF BIBLICAL LEARNING // CHURCH

*The church isn't a place or a building but is made up of the people who belong to the family of God. Under the Old Covenant, God dwelled in the temple or the tabernacle, but today, He dwells in His people and works through them to advance His kingdom.*

Stephen lived boldly for Jesus, even at the cost of His life. God's calling for the church today is the same—that we carry on the mission of Jesus, even when it might cost us a great deal, knowing that the Spirit is in us and strengthens us to live well.

## >CHRIST

Even during the final moments of his life, Stephen lived and loved like Jesus. Boldly declaring the gospel isn't always easy, and living humbly and sacrificially does not come naturally to us. However, when we pursue Jesus, our hearts are changed and we will be motivated to follow Jesus's example.

**9** Where do you see opportunities to reflect Jesus at your school or in your neighborhood?

**10** This week, take the initiative to do at least one of these.

GOD

JESUS

HOLY SPIRIT

BIBLE

SALVATION

CREATION

**CHURCH**

PEOPLE

FAMILY

COMMUNITY  
& WORLD



## > COMMUNITY

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When taking a stand for something, it's easier to do it with others than alone.

**11** Who do you see taking a stand for his or her faith at your school?

**12** How can you stand together for the gospel?

## > CULTURE

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Stephen was bold in living out his faith, even in a culture that was opposed to his message.

**13** How have you experienced cultural opposition for living out your faith?

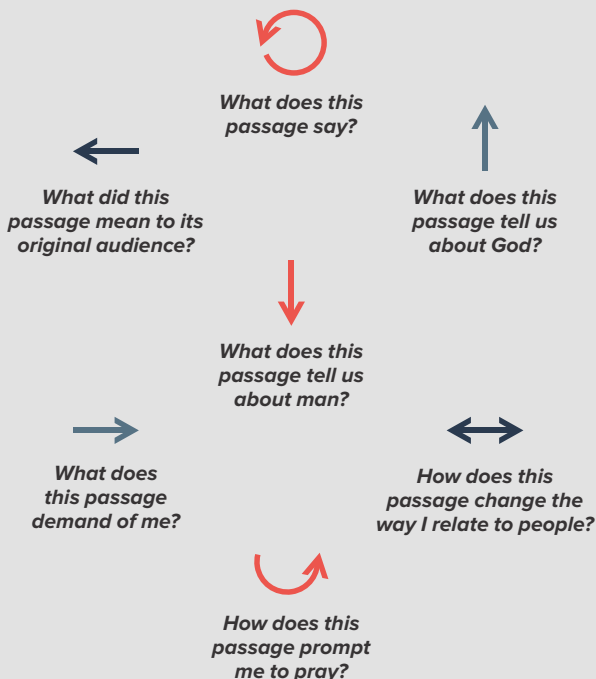
**14** This week, how can you live out the boldness of Stephen?



# DAILY DEVOTIONS



## The 7 Arrows of Bible Reading



## Day One

## 2 CORINTHIANS 3:7-8

The Old Testament law was a great blessing to the people of God. In Romans 3:1-2, the apostle Paul said that Israel was in a position of great advantage because they'd been entrusted with the words of God. The law was, in fact, indescribably glorious because it revealed (though not fully) the nature and character of God. However, the law also had its weaknesses. The Old Testament law revealed the guilt of sinful people and provided no way to experience forgiveness for sin (Rom. 8:3). The law was never God's final answer to the problem of sin. Therefore, it was set aside. Despite the law's glory, God had planned for something much more glorious which would redeem people from the curse of sin. The law was a blessing, but Jesus is an even better blessing who reveals God clearly and perfectly and saves those who trust and follow Him.

➤ **What was the purpose of the Old Testament law?**

➤ **In what ways is Jesus better than the law?**

## Day Two

# 2 CORINTHIANS 3:9



The Old Testament law was a gift and a blessing to God's people. However, it didn't provide for the forgiveness of sins. Hebrews 10:4 teaches that it was impossible for the blood of animal sacrifices to take away sins, and instead, the law served to reveal just how desperately short all people fall from God's standards. Despite this weakness, the law was truly glorious, as it revealed the nature and character of God. But the glory of the Old Covenant doesn't compare with the New Covenant which offers forgiveness in Jesus. Many people are tempted to try to earn God's favor through a life of good works. This can't happen and is, in a way, trying to go back to an Old Covenant reality. The New Covenant offers something much better—Jesus did the good works we never could, and His righteousness is applied to us if we trust and follow Him.

- **What weaknesses were present in the Old Testament law compared with the New Covenant?**
- **Why is the New Covenant much better than the Old Covenant?**

## Day Three

# 2 CORINTHIANS 3:10

When we brought our adoptive daughter home, about all she would eat was cheap fast food and microwavable chicken nuggets. In her mind, there was nothing better. She'd never experienced anything else. However, over time, we exposed her not only to healthier foods but meals that were well seasoned and full of complex flavors. And eight years later, she now hates fast food and frozen junk. She's experienced something much better. When it was all God's people had known, the law was good and glorious. However, the New Covenant is so much better that the law seems to have no glory at all. Of course, objectively, this isn't true—the Old Covenant law truly was glorious. But by comparison, the glory of the New Covenant vastly outshines the old. Because of Jesus, we are now invited to live in this New Covenant reality.

- **When have you come to realize that something you previously appreciated wasn't so great after all?**
- **Who makes it possible for us to live in the New Covenant reality?**

## Day Four

# 2 CORINTHIANS 3:11

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Even the smallest light seems bright in a dark room. In the context of a dark and sinful world, the Old Covenant law shined radiantly. However, it wasn't God's final answer to the problem of sin, and the light of the law was a fading light. Whereas the Old Covenant was a temporary measure as God was working to carry out His plan, Jesus is the final and perfect answer to the world's brokenness. Under the Old Covenant, people were required to continually strive to fulfill its demands, but this was absolutely impossible. Through His perfectly righteous life, Jesus fulfilled the law's demands, and through His death, Jesus paid the price for the redemption of sinful people. In Christ, the law has been fulfilled and is now set aside as the way to God. Now, we come to God through faith in Jesus, and His covenant with us will never pass away!

➤ **How did Jesus fulfill the requirements of the Old Covenant when we never could?**

➤ **How does it impact you to know the New Covenant will endure forever?**

## Day Five

# 2 CORINTHIANS 3:12

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Hope is tied to a specific view of the future. It can be easy to focus on the present and give little thought to what's up ahead. After all, today has all kinds of things that need our attention. But hope refuses to let us get our minds stuck in the now and focuses appropriately on eternity, which is secure in Christ according to the promises of God. When we focus on all the struggles we face and the problems in this world, we can be tempted to be afraid or live in a way that is closed off in order to protect ourselves. This isn't the way followers of Jesus are called to live. Instead, we're called to live with hope and confidence, knowing that God is in control and will accomplish His eternal purposes, not only in the big picture, but also in our lives in very specific ways. When we have this kind of perspective, we can live boldly in pursuit of God's calling.

➤ **In your own words, what is hope?**

➤ **What is the connection between hope and living boldly for Jesus?**