

# THE BOOK OF *Acts*

March 17, 2024

|| Group Discussion Guide ||

## THE STONING OF STEPHEN

Acts 7: 54-60

1

The council is enraged when they hear Stephen's speech. The same word is used to describe them after hearing Peter and the apostles in Acts 5:33. What is the council responding to in each of these speeches? What does their response reveal about their hearts and motives?

2

The council wants to kill the apostles in chapter 5, but Gamaliel intervenes. There is no intervention when they want to kill Stephen in chapter 7. What should we think when God's people aren't rescued? What might we be tempted to feel in those moments? How can we think through God's sovereignty when comparing times of deliverance versus times of suffering?

3

The fact that Stephen is "full of the Holy Spirit" is mentioned here (7: 55) as well as in 6:5. What does this emphasize about him?

4

What does it mean for a believer to be full of the Holy Spirit? How would that impact a believer's day to day life? How would it be essential in a time of intense trial?

5

What is the significance of Stephen's vision of "the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God" (v. 56)? Why might Stephen have been granted this vision?

6

Verses 57 and 58 describe a series of very active verbs: the council “cried out,” “stopped their ears,” “rushed together,” “cast him out,” and “stoned him.” What kind of picture does this paint of the council? What can we discern about their hearts based on their actions?

7

The Old Testament specifies rules about the use of stoning as a form of capital punishment. It was used for certain sins, including murder (Leviticus 24:17), idolatry (Deuteronomy 17:2-5), blaspheming the name of the Lord (Leviticus 24:16), necromancy (Leviticus 20:27), and various sexual sins (Deuteronomy 22:24). Guilt was to be established on the testimony of two or three witnesses, who were to cast the first stones (Deuteronomy 17:6-7). Do the actions of the council match the description in the Old Testament? What does their choice of stoning Stephen indicate about what they believe about him?

8

What parallels can we find between Jesus’ crucifixion and Stephen’s stoning? What kind of language does Stephen use for his last words? How does his death as the first Christian martyr reflect Jesus’ words on discipleship in Matt. 16:24-25?

