

GROWING PAINS AND GOSPEL ADVANCE DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

ACTS 6:1-7


OPENING UP: When we read about Stephen in Acts 6-7 we are spurred to know and love God more. Who do you know that makes you want to pursue God better? What are the qualities you see in that person that encourage you in your spiritual walk?


1 What does Stephen's experience in Acts 6-7 teach us about the ways in which the Holy Spirit empowers for ministry? What qualifications in Acts 6:1-8 equipped him to face persecution?

2 Look over the overall content of Stephen's sermon in Acts 7. What impresses you most about it?

 Could you narrate the Old Testament story culminating in Jesus if someone asked you to? As a group exercise, see if you can work together to tell the story of the OT that leads to Christ.

3 In confronting the Jews view of their "holy places," what challenges did Stephen bring to the way they would have understood the central role and significance of the temple?

 Discuss how Stephen's sermon should inform our attitudes toward "holy places." In what ways can we put too much emphasis on "holy" buildings and systems while belittling or neglecting what God is doing outside our "handmade" structures?

 What does it look like to value the God's working in hearts over what we can see and build on our own?

4 **What is your initial reaction to Stephen's willingness to forgive his murderers?** See also Luke 23:34.

♥ *What most often holds you back from forgiveness? Would you consider yourself quick to forgive, or someone who struggles with resentment and grudges?*

🗨️ *If Stephen were here, what advice do you think he'd give to someone who struggles with forgiveness?*

5 **Someone once said, "Stephen set out to be like Jesus, but sometimes Christlike living leads to Christlike dying."** How does that strike you? How does Stephen's trial and death echo the pattern of Jesus' trial and death?

🗨️ *Do you think Christians today in our culture are ready to die for their faith? Why or why not?*

♥ *What would need to change in your life to be more ready to suffer or die for your faith?*

6 **How did God directly minister to Stephen as he faced the angry leaders and his own death?** (Acts 7:55-56, 2 Timothy 4:17-18, John 16:33) What comfort and encouragement does that give us when it comes to speaking boldly of Christ?