

Series: Centrifugal Faith

Scripture and Background Information for October 11-17.

To prepare for your group discussion each week, group members should use the **Community Group Discussion Guide** to complete the **GOD'S WORDS** and **MY WORDS** columns using the scripture below.

This week we continue our series **Centrifugal Faith**. Luke tells us how the gospel spread out from Jerusalem, over Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. He shows that Jesus continued to work through the Holy Spirit in his disciples by reaching the nations. Although facing opposition, the news of Christ spread out and changed many lives.

Background for Acts 7:1-60:

Today's text gives us an account of the first martyr, Stephen. After many people began to believe in Christ, even many priests, the church faced strong opposition from Israel's religious leaders.

We heard of Stephen in chapter 6. He was one of the deacons, chosen to support the apostles with administrative tasks. After he began to preach, his opponents caught him and brought him to court with false witnesses (6:8-15). Chapter 7 shows us Stephen's court defense. Remember, the false witnesses stood up and accused Stephen of blaspheming against God, Moses, the law, and the temple (6:11-14). In his defense, Stephen addresses all these points, showing that he did not blaspheme, but that the religious leaders blasphemed against God by rejecting Christ (7:2-53). In his defense, Stephen creates a pattern of rejection in Jewish history. He tells the leaders that as the fathers rejected "the chosen by God," so did the religious leaders (7:51-53). When the leaders heard his defense, they were outraged and in anger stoned Stephen.

Some tools to engage with the text:

1. **Give your group a summary of 7:1-53, and work through the verses 7:54-60.**
2. Why is Stephen using the history of Israel to defend himself?
3. When working through the text, look at the pattern Stephen is establishing. Mark all the forms of "rejection," to see his argument of line.
4. How was Stephen's mood different from the ones of his accusers? How did Christ change Stephen's life?

Notice, chapter 7 starts with "the God of glory appeared," and ends with "saw the glory of God." Every person who commits himself to God will finally "see" His glory!

Scriptures for upcoming weeks:

October 18-24

Acts 9

October 25-31

Acts 10