

TAKEAWAY

EVERYONE, EVERYWHERE



Part Thirteen: Acts 6:8-8:1

At Maybridge we want to be a church of disciples who make disciples – we hope this takeaway session encourages practical outcomes in the lives of the individuals in your group. The focus of group discussion should be on becoming 'doers of the word' and not just hearers or people who enjoy a good discussion!

SHARE

Spend some time sharing, how the group have been getting on with the try outs from the previous few sessions:

- What did you try and what did you learn from it?
- Anything you like to continue or build into a habit?
- What gets in the way of you trying something practical and why?
- Pray for one another as you look to be equipped and empowered by the Holy Spirit to be 'doers of the word'...

INTRODUCTION

Like Christians through the ages, we believe the Bible to be full of timeless truth that can be applied anytime, anywhere. Acts shares the account of the early church as they take the gospel message of Jesus, which is *for everyone everywhere, to everyone everywhere*.

Chapter 6 opened a new section of the book of Acts. The Apostles have modelled wise leadership in response to an internal conflict within the church. The account we unpacked in the last session showed that the early church was not concerned only with 'spiritual' ministry, but from the start was concerned about intentionally and practically serving the poor and vulnerable.

In this session, the chapter now turns to Stephen, one of the Seven chosen to help distribute food, who was also a gifted evangelist. His boldness provoked opposition from the Jewish community and led to his arrest and martyrdom, yet God used Stephen's telling of the gospel story to continue to propel the message of Jesus beyond Jerusalem and eventually to the wider world...

SHARE

- Is there a particular place you like to pray, or somewhere you feel most connected to God?
- When has a story – a novel, film, testimony or conversation shared by a friend – most impacted you? What made it so impactful?

READ

Acts 6:8-8:1

DISCUSS

In Acts 6:8-15, Stephen is called before the Jewish Elders. What specific accusations are brought against him? How do these charges (blaspheming Moses, God, the Temple, and the Law) set the stage for his entire defence?

Stephen could have argued the charges away as obviously false, or he could have avoided them and used the opportunity to speak about Jesus himself. Instead he begins a history lesson with Abraham in Mesopotamia, Joseph in Egypt, and Moses in Midian. Why do you think he emphasises that God appeared to and worked through these leaders *outside* of the Promised Land and before the Temple even existed?

In Acts 7:44-50, Stephen contrasts the mobile Tabernacle with the permanent Temple built by Solomon. He quotes Isaiah, stating that *"the Most High does not dwell in houses made by human hands."* What point is he trying to make to a council obsessed with the physical Temple?

Is it possible for us today to turn physical buildings, places, religious traditions, or institutions into "idols" that restrict how we think God can move? What might that look like in a modern context?

In 7:51, Stephen calls out those who 'always resist the Holy Spirit'. How might we ensure our deep theological convictions don't turn into rigid, unteachable legalism?

In Acts 7:51-53, Stephen suddenly shifts from a history lesson to a direct accusation: "*You stiff-necked people... you always resist the Holy Spirit!*" Why do you think he changed his tone so sharply?

As Stephen is being stoned, he looks up and sees Jesus standing at the right hand of God. His final words closely mirror Jesus' words on the cross ("*Lord, do not hold this sin against them*"). How is it humanly possible to show that level of grace in your final moments, and how can we cultivate that heart today?

Stephen reminded his audience that God is a God on the move—acting in Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Midian. How can we better recognise and support the work of the Holy Spirit *outside* the traditional four walls of our specific local church or denomination?

Stephen exposed people who worshiped the Temple because it provided them with security, status, and predictability. If your career, finances, or safety net were suddenly disrupted, would your faith feel shaken? Where are you secretly drawing your security from?

Stephen spent a significant time waiting tables and serving widows faithfully in obscurity (Acts 6) before he ever preached a sermon or faced a crowd. How content (be honest!) are you serving God in the hidden, unglamorous areas of life—like changing nappies, doing spreadsheets, or helping an elderly neighbour—where no one is watching or praising you?

It is easy to love people who love us. Stephen prayed for people who were actively killing him. Who is the 'enemy' or the difficult person in your life right now (a toxic boss, an aggressive neighbour, or a family member who mocks your faith) whom God is calling you to actively bless, serve, or forgive?

Look at how Stephen spoke to and about those who opposed him—full of truth, but empty of malice. If someone looked at your private texts or social media comments when you are venting about politics, culture, or people you disagree with, would they see the character of Stephen?

TRY OUT

- Who came to mind in response to the question about a difficult person in your life right now? What is one practical way you can actively bless or serve them this week? Report back next week.
- Commit to pray for our brothers and sisters around the world who are persecuted for their faith in Jesus. Open Doors has lots of resources to help you pray at [opendoorsuk.org/resources/prayer](https://media.opendoorsuk.org/document/pdf/Prayer%20Diary.pdf?_gl=1*eu9tql*_gcl_au*MTA2MTA5OTk1MC4xNzkwNDk4MjI0). View their prayer diary online at: https://media.opendoorsuk.org/document/pdf/Prayer%20Diary.pdf?_gl=1*eu9tql*_gcl_au*MTA2MTA5OTk1MC4xNzkwNDk4MjI0

PRAY

- Pray for anything that has come up in your discussion and ask for the Holy Spirit's help in boldly sharing the gospel of Jesus and living out what you've discussed and learnt together.
- Pray for the persecuted church.