

ACTS: Advance – “Exposing Idolatry” (Acts 7:17-53)

For the week of January 17, 2016

Testimony

Have a volunteer share their testimony (5-10 minutes) if there are still members who have not had an opportunity to share.

Tell the Story

Summarize or tell the story of Acts 7:17-53. Then read the passage. As a group discuss any missing details from the telling of the story. Finally, rebuild the story as a group.

1. What is Stephen's ultimate response in verses 48-50 to the charge that he spoke against the temple? How does what he says about Abraham, Joseph, Moses and David help reinforce this point?
2. Stephen had to remind his hearers that God was not confined to a building, that “holy ground” was wherever the holy God is present. What are the implications of this truth for you individually and for all of us as a church? What does it look like to worship God outside the walls of RiverLakes Community Church? Give some examples!

3. Stephen turned the tables on his opponents and claimed that they were the ones who were disobeying the law since they missed the point of it and wanted a righteousness made by their own efforts (v. 41; Romans 2:28-29). Why is outward obedience to the law not enough (see Ezekiel 36:26-27)?
4. Israel's history as recounted by Stephen is the history of repeated disobedience to God. But the flipside of this is that it is also the history of God's extreme mercy and patience toward them. Have you ever felt that you have exhausted God's patience and mercy? Read 1 Timothy 1:15-16. What do you think Paul would say to you?

5. Stephen does more than defend himself, he goes on the offensive in verses 51-53. Stephen is saying that they are the ones who have not listened to the Law of Moses. Stephen pronounced them guilty on four counts. What were they?

Count 1 –

Count 2 –

Count 3 –

Count 4 –

Are any of these four counts applicable to people today? Explain.

6. Stephen's life could be summed up in the words by Paul in Colossians 3:2-3. Does Stephen motivate you to be a believer that strives to be committed to the Lord even in the face of death; faithful to preach the gospel boldly; knowledgeable of God's truth; and willing to be used by God for His plan and purpose?

Pray

- Pray for our lives: Praise God for His divine guidance in our individual lives. Pray for our church family to impact the nations with His gospel.
- Pray for our community: Pray for our many outreach ministries reaching the Bakersfield/Oildale community.
- Pray for our world: Pray for our many missionaries reaching others for Christ in other countries.

In Case It's Not Clear

Stephen was clear and resolute. Similarly, in a later era evangelist George Whitefield preached to a New England church three evenings in a row on "You must be born again." The message was so vigorous that the elders finally came to him and asked, "Mr. Whitefield, why do you keep preaching, 'You must be born again'?" Whitefield responded, "Because you must be born again!" Stephen wanted to get his message across: "You have sinned – you need a Savior!"