



# WORK OF THE SPIRIT

## Acts Chapters 6 and 7

Lesson 5

### FIRST DAY: Review and Overview

1. Which aspect of last week's lesson or lecture touched your heart?
2. Often we are baffled by the way bad things happen to righteous people. It has been said that we will never understand the events of earth this side of heaven. Certainly, the same can be said of Stephen's martyrdom. Stephen was a young man brimming with spiritual potential. He was *full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people*. He also spoke with irresistible wisdom and was full of the Holy Spirit. Stephen was also willing to serve. He was just the type of dynamic young man the early church needed.

When Stephen was falsely accused, he used the occasion to rehearse the history of Israel, showcase Israel's reputation for spiritual blindness, and boldly declare the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Yet God allowed Stephen the privilege of being the very first martyr of the Church. The greatness of this honor can only be understood in the realm of heaven. As Stephen was dying, he looked up and saw Jesus *standing at the right hand of God*, ready to welcome him into heaven. Read the divisions below and highlight specific aspects of Stephen's character and irresistible wisdom:

- a. Acts 6:1-15
  - b. Acts 7:1-19
  - c. Acts 7:20-50
  - d. Acts 7:51-60
3. Knowing that the Lord loves you and desires to minister to you through His Word, take a few moments to pray. Write your prayer here.

*We will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.*

Acts 6:4

**SECOND DAY:** Read Acts 6:1–15

1. As the *number of the disciples* multiplied, their growth inevitably led to issues within the newly developing Church. According to Acts 6:1, what was the first *complaint* that *arose*?
2. The apostles realized that it was not *desirable* that they *leave* their calling in order to attend to this. What was their calling? Acts 6:2
  - a. What did they suggest as a solution? Acts 6:3
  - b. Consider the three qualifications for the *seven men* who would be chosen. Share why each is important.
3. What would the apostles *give* themselves to instead? Acts 6:4
  - a. Why do you think they made this distinction of ministry?
4. From Acts 6:5–6 summarize the response to the apostles' suggestion.
5. According to Acts 6:7, what resulted from this practical ministry?
6. Use Acts 6:8–15 to answer the following questions:
  - a. What do you learn about Stephen in Acts 6:8?
  - b. According to Acts 6:9, members of the *Synagogue of the Freedmen* began to argue with Stephen. Record the result. Acts 6:10
    - (1) What does this convey about the Holy Spirit?
  - c. What kind of *blasphemous words* was Stephen accused of saying? Acts 6:11, 13–14
    - (1) What happened to him because of this? Acts 6:12b
  - d. Note and comment on Stephen's countenance in the midst of opposition. Acts 6:15
7. What stands out the most to you about Stephen?

**THIRD DAY:** Read Acts 7:1-19

1. When brought before the Jewish *council*, Stephen was given an opportunity to address their accusations of blasphemy. He began by highlighting key figures and events in Israel's history. Use Acts 7:1-19 to briefly summarize Stephen's account concerning the following:

a. Abraham (verses 2-8a)

(1) In Acts 6:13 Stephen was accused of speaking against *the law*, which includes Abraham and the patriarchs of Israel. How did Stephen's defense refute this notion?

b. Jacob, Joseph, and the *patriarchs* (verses 8b-19)

(1) Stephen referred to the life of Joseph to draw out parallels with the life of Jesus. What similarities do you see?

2. Stephen used the most revered aspects of Jewish history and tradition to make his case before the *council*. Why do you think he did this?

a. Compare Stephen's defense with Jesus' promise in Luke 21:12-15. Share your thoughts.

**FOURTH DAY:** Read Acts 7:20–50

1. After touching on the lives of Abraham and the *patriarchs*, Stephen turned to the life of Moses. Briefly highlight the life and ministry of Moses from Acts 7:20–43.
  - a. In Acts 7:37 Stephen quoted Deuteronomy 18:15. What do you find interesting about this?
  - b. Review Acts 7:23–28, 35, 38–41 and remark on the attitude of the Israelites toward Moses.
  - c. Stephen also used the life of Moses to draw parallels to the life of Jesus. What similarities do you see?
2. Why do you suppose Stephen spoke at length about the life of Moses? See Acts 6:11.
3. Stephen also mentioned the history of God's *tabernacle*. Summarize his account. Acts 7:44–47
  - a. *However*, what did Stephen declare about God? Acts 7:48
    - (1) How does the prophecy from Isaiah 66:1–2 cited in Acts 7:49–50 confirm this truth?
  - b. Stephen pointed out that the Jews' reverence for the temple had caused them to lose sight of God Himself. What things can cause you to lose sight of God?
    - (1) What safeguards can you take against this danger?
4. Why were Stephen's accusers wrong?
  - a. What do you find most compelling about Stephen's defense thus far?

**FIFTH DAY:** Read Acts 7:51–60

1. As he concluded his address, what did Stephen call the members of the *council*? Acts 7:51a
  - a. Why did he call them this? Acts 7:51b
    - (1) What does this convey about the actions of the Jews throughout their history?
      - (a) How is this a warning for you?
2. Read Acts 7:52–53 (NLT) and remark on how the actions of the Jews demonstrated a continued resistance to the Holy Spirit: *Name one prophet your ancestors didn't persecute! They even killed the ones who predicted the coming of the Righteous One – the Messiah whom you betrayed and murdered. You deliberately disobeyed God's law, even though you received it from the hands of angels.*
3. Using Acts 7:54–59 answer the following questions:
  - a. How did the council react *when they heard these things*? Acts 7:54
    - (1) Contrast Stephen's demeanor in Acts 7:55 with that of his accusers in Acts 7:54, 57. What do you see?
  - b. Describe what Stephen experienced:
    - (1) physically (verses 57b–59a)
    - (2) spiritually (verses 55–56, 59b)
4. What did Stephen proclaim? Acts 7:59b
  - a. Record Stephen's last words. Acts 7:60
    - (1) How do Stephen's words echo the cry of Jesus in Luke 23:34?
      - (a) What does this denote about Stephen?
5. How does the martyrdom of Stephen inspire you?

**SIXTH DAY: Review**

1. From the following passages note the role of the Holy Spirit in Stephen's life:

a. his selection as a deacon (Acts 6:3-6)

b. his ministry (Acts 6:8-10)

c. his address to the council (Acts 6:15-7:53)

d. his martyrdom (Acts 7:55-60)

2. How is Stephen's testimony an inspiration to you?

*But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God,  
and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.*

Acts 7:55