

# STEPHEN: A HEART FOR GOD

Ordinary People in God's Extraordinary Work: Acts, Part 2 · November 2, 2025

Acts 6:8-7:60; Psalm 139:13-14; Various · Pastor Matt Erickson

*"Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people." (Acts 6:8)*

## What's Worth Dying For?

- The background of persecution for the early church (Acts 4:1-31)
- The situation confronting Stephen (Acts 6:8-15)
- The events that follow Stephen's story (Acts 8:1-3)

## What's Worth Dying For is What's Worth Living For

- Stephen's character and calling (Acts 6:1-6)
- Stephen knows and tells Scripture's story in light of Jesus the Messiah (Acts 7:1-50)
- Stephen calls his hearers to respond (Acts 7:51-53)

## When What's Worth Living For Becomes Risky

- Faithfulness is sustained by the vision of God: Stephen sees Jesus (Acts 7:55-56)
- Faithfulness leads to forgiveness: Stephen forgives his attackers (Acts 7:60)
- Faithfulness does not necessarily lead where we would like: Stephen is killed and persecution increases (Acts 7:57-8:3)
- Faithfulness leads to fruitfulness: The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church (Acts 8:4)

## What Is Worth Living and Dying For?

- An invitation to give our lives in pursuit of Christ
- An invitation to encounter Christ's pursuit of us

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. When have you been asked to do something that seemed beyond you? How did you grow through this experience?
2. This week we begin a new sermon series, "Ordinary People in God's Extraordinary Work," the second part of our journey through Acts. Today we explore the story of Stephen in Acts 6:8-7:60. Whether on your own or with others, begin your study in prayer, asking God to speak to you, and then read that passage aloud.
3. How is Stephen described in his original calling in Acts 6:1-6?
4. How would you summarize Stephen's ministry and the accusations against him in

6:8-15? What would you say is the underlying concern about Stephen and the early Jesus-followers?

5. In Acts 7, Stephen responds to his accusers by retelling the story of God's people in light of Jesus as Messiah. What are some themes from the lives of Abraham, Joseph, and Moses that Stephen connects with the life of Jesus?
6. In one sense, the problem here is not with God's law or the Temple but with God's people. How does Stephen describe the people in 7:39-44?
7. How does Stephen connect those past responses with his present-day hearers' response to Jesus in 7:51-53?
8. It is easy to point our finger at people in the past but miss our own temptation to resist God. What might God be calling to your attention about your own hardness of heart to God's ways?
9. What is happening with Stephen in the final section (7:54-60)?
10. What is one thing you sense God calling to your attention personally through this week's study? If you are with a small group, discuss that with one another and then pray about what you shared. If you are on your own, write it down, pray about it, and consider sharing your thoughts with someone this week.

## DIG DEEPER

### Exploring Faith

- How does seeing Stephen's commitment to Jesus impact your journey to understand and believe?
- Stephen obviously believed in Jesus enough to face death, what do you think it would take for you to come to that kind of faith in something?

### Growing in Faith

- Stephen suffers for his faith in Christ in a very dramatic way. What are some everyday ways you have suffered for your faith? Where might God be inviting you to take a loving but strong stand for your faith?

### Centered in Faith

- Many times, others are looking for someone to lead the way in standing for Christ. What might it look like for you to stand as a witness for Christ in your spheres of relationships?
- Who will you share your faith in Jesus with this month?

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