

# GROWTH + GROUPS

NAVIGATE LIFE TOGETHER

## Maranatha Chapel Sermon Based Study Guide SB 10.25.2020

### CROWNED BY GOD – ACTS 6

#### Receiving the Message and Relating to the Study

What insights, principles, or observations stood out to you from this week's message? Discuss with your group.

Pastor Ray shared with us that the next few chapters of Acts focus on an amazing young man named Stephen. Stephen's life was marked by fullness of the Holy Spirit, Wisdom and faithfulness. Jim Elliot once wrote in his journal, "I seek not a long life, but a full one, like you, Lord Jesus." This story before us is about a young man who, like Jim Elliot, lost his life at an early age. Stephen was the 1st Martyr of the Christian Church. There are two words for Crown in the N.T. "Diadema," which means "a royal crown," and gives us the word Diadem. Then there is another Greek word for crown, Stephanos, the "Victor's Crown," which gives us the name Stephen. You can inherit a Diadem crown, but the only way to get a Stephanos is to earn it! Rev 2:10 says "Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." Stephen was faithful in both Life and Death. He is an example of a faithful Servant of the Lord. Let's get into our study...

**As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.**

1. What struck you most or spoke to you from Pastor Ray's message this last weekend?
2. What story of martyrdom, either ancient or modern, has been most inspirational to you?
3. What qualities do you think make someone willing to be a martyr?

#### Digging Deeper in God's Word: Life Lessons

##### **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 6:1-7**

1. What complaint did the Grecian Jews make? (6:1)
2. What did the apostles—the Twelve—do in response to criticism? (6:2-4)
3. Why did the Twelve choose prayer and teaching over caring for the poor? (6:2-4)
4. What did the Twelve tell the other believers to do? (6:3)
5. What was the effect of the appointment of certain people to serve the widows? (6:7)
6. How did the church fare after the apostles delegated the serving of food to others? (6:7)

##### **HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ACTS 6:8-16.**

1. What attributes of Stephen are evident in these verses?
2. What do you consider the decisive factor in Stephen's ability to best his opponents in this discussion /debate (v. 10)? What implication does this have for us?

## *Prepare! in 2020*

Wisdom, faith, grace, power, and the Spirit's presence marked Stephen as an exceptional Christian who was well equipped for his role. Because of God's favor and power, Stephen consistently performed great wonders and signs among the people. To this point, only the apostles had performed such deeds. The term wonders refers to miracles that drew observers' awe and amazement. Signs were miracles that gave evidence of God's presence and activity and conveyed spiritual truths. God was working through Stephen in unusual and powerful ways, but the synagogue's members tried to refute the gospel Stephen proclaimed.

3. What were the charges brought against Stephen?
4. Explain the false witnesses' contemptuous reference to Jesus and their charge against Him.
5. What do you think the Sanhedrin members saw in Stephen's face that evoked a comparison with an angel's face (v. 15)?

Stephen's courage and fearlessness in standing by his Christian convictions aroused intense hostility. Unable to best him in debate, members of the Freedman's Synagogue induced men to charge Stephen falsely. The false accusers stirred up three groups: the people in general; the elders, who were respected leaders and represented the Sadducees; and the scribes, most of whom were Pharisees. The group took Stephen to the Sanhedrin, the Jews' high court.

### Applying God's Word

What did you learn from this study and how does this personally speak to you? Discuss with your group.

**The Early Church was now experiencing 'growing pains.' It has manifest in a division between the Jews and the Hellenists (Both Jewish). Grecian does not mean they were Greeks, they were Jews who followed Hellenist culture. They took Greek names & spoke Greek but they were treated as 2nd class citizens by the Hebrew speaking Jewish believers. Problems give leaders several opportunities. For one thing, they give opportunity to examine our ministry and discover changes that need to be made. In times of success it is easy to maintain the 'status quo,' but this can be dangerous. "New Wind Must be Poured into New Wine Skins!" This Season of our world gives us an opportunity to examine our lives and make necessary changes. The Apostles realized they were spending so much time serving tables they were neglecting prayer and the ministry of the Word of God! Moody said it is better to put 10 men to work than to try and do the work of 10 men!**

1. Pastor Ray stated that "the love of God flows through those who are filled with the Holy Spirit." What does it mean to be filled with the Holy Spirit like Stephen??
2. Stephen was also filled with godly wisdom. Why is it so important to have divine wisdom in the days we are living in?
3. Pastor Ray quoted Zech 4:10 "For who hath despised the day of small things?" What does this mean to you and how does it apply to our personal ministry?

**PRAYER** - Close with a prayer of encouragement for your group, challenging them to pursue boldness, godly wisdom and fullness of the Holy Spirit this week. Thank God for the examples of Stephen and others who show us how to live with zeal for the gospel.

*"If the ax is dull, And one does not sharpen the edge, Then he must use more strength; But wisdom brings success." (Eccl 10:10)*