

Personal Study Guide & Life Group Questions

Acts 6:1-8:3

LIFE GROUP QUESTIONS:

1. Share something that took place in your life since the last time you were together as a Life Group.
2. Looking back over your sermon notes, what was your biggest take home from the messages from Bill or John or the reflection questions or your personal study?
3. In your early years, what did you aspire to be? Who did you emulate or idolize?
4. On an emotional level, have you ever hated someone or been hated so much that you resorted to "sticks and stones"? What did you do (instead)?
5. What is one of the most traumatic, upsetting thing that happened to you in your formative years? Can you see anyway that God used it for good?
6. Peter's speech led to mass conversion (Acts 2) while Stephen's led to his death. What does that teach you about "success" in one's service to God?
7. What cultural or ethnic prejudices were you brought up with? How has the Gospel broken through those prejudices?
8. If you researched some modern-day martyrs in your personal study, briefly share the story of one of them.
9. Has your personal influence declined or increased since you became a Christian? How so?
10. Take some time to pray for the members of your group.

PERSONAL STUDY:

Because we had an opportunity to have a special guest this Sunday, Bill did not teach on Acts 6:1 to Acts 8:3.... the complaint that came up about the feeding of widows, the solution the Apostles decided on, Stephen being seized, or his speech before the Sanhedrin, or his death. Take some time now to read Acts 6:1 to Acts 8:3.

To this point in the Book of Acts, Satan's attacks on the church came on many different fronts. He attempted many forms of direct opposition and intimidation, and he tried to corrupt the church from within. These strategies were all unsuccessful in stopping or slowing the work of the church. Now Satan hoped to "divide and conquer" by raising one group of Christians against another.

The Hebrews were those Jews more inclined to embrace Jewish culture and were mostly from Judea. The Hellenists were those Jews more inclined to embrace Greek culture and mostly were from the from all over the Roman Empire.

The early church took its responsibility to help support widows seriously because they often had no other support. A 'table' at that time meant a place where a money changer did his collecting or exchanging of money. The deacons were elected to oversee the distribution of monies and provisions to the needy among the fellowship.

Nowhere in Acts 6 are these men called deacons, but most consider they were the first to fulfill the office of deacon. The word deacon simply means "servant". Look up 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and note the qualifications of a Deacon. Would you qualify?

Note Acts 6:2-4. What were qualities they looked for in picking the Deacons and what were the Elders to do?

Stephen's speech is a condensed overview of Genesis and Exodus, the first two books of the Bible. The death of Stephen unleashes a persecution against the Jerusalem Church and Saul is introduced as leading the attack on the followers of Jesus. Jot down some things that stick out to you as you read this passage?

Immigrant Jews often formed their own synagogues in Jerusalem. How is their opposition like and unlike the opposition the Apostle's faced from the Sanhedrin in Acts 5:27-29?

What might be behind these accusations against Stephen? See Acts 5:21-24 and John 2:13-21. From Acts 6:13-14, how would you write up a formal charge against Stephen?

And we thought we had a historian in Nate Feldmeth. What does Stephen's speech, or history lesson, reveal about his respect for the Mosaic Law? What parallels does he draw between Moses and Jesus and how does this relate to the charges against him in Acts 6:13-14?

How does the quote in Acts 7:37 begin to turn the tables on the accusers regarding who is really rejecting Moses?

From Acts 7:44-50 what is the point about the Temple and God's presence? How is he turning the table on his accusers once again? Using the internet or a Bible Dictionary, research "Tabernacle" or "tent of testimony" and its use during the time the Israelites were wandering in the desert.

Check out Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:4. What does Stephen mean by the phrase "uncircumcised hearts and ears"? In this context, what is Stephen really saying about the Sanhedrin's regard for Moses and the Law?

What does he accuse them of in Acts 7:51-53? How does this charge reveal why he gave his history lesson in the first place?

Google modern-day Christian martyrs and spend a few minutes learning about the lives of some of them. Be prepared to share about one of them in your Life Group.

Acts 8:1-3 begins phase two (Judea and Samaria) of God's plan (Acts 1:8) How would you sum up the Jerusalem phase in the first seven chapters of Acts?

Can you think of an area in your life that you'd like to be more strategic and intentional about in terms of growth? Does anything come to mind in terms of a step you could take to become more strategic and intentional in that area?

Consider sending an Email or text to some members of your life group with a word of encouragement, a verse of Scripture, or assurance of your prayers about something they shared in Life Group the last time you were together.