

POWER HOUR

3/24/2024

Lesson Text:
Acts 6:7-15

Background Scripture:
Acts 6

Devotional Reading:
Deuteronomy 28:1-14

“LIVING IN FAITH”

NLT TRANSLATION

Learning Facts: To state the charges against Stephen and their basis.

Biblical Principle: [To critique the tactics used by Stephen's opponents.](#)

Daily Application: To evaluate various ways of responding or reacting when you face opposition because of your stance for Jesus today.

Acts 6:7-15 NLT

7 So God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too. **8** Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people. **9** But one day some men from the Synagogue of Freed Slaves, as it was called, started to debate with him. They were Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and the province of Asia. **10** None of them could stand against the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke. **11** So they persuaded some men to lie about Stephen, saying, "We heard him blaspheme Moses, and even God." **12** This roused the people, the elders, and the teachers of religious law. So they arrested Stephen and brought him before the high council. **13** The lying witnesses said, "This man is always speaking against the holy Temple and against the law of Moses. **14** We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy the Temple and change the customs Moses handed down to us." **15** At this point everyone in the high council stared at Stephen, because his face became as bright as an angel's.

HOW TO SAY IT

Cyrenians	Sigh-ree-nee-unz.	diakonos (Greek)	dee-ah-ko-nawss.
Sadducees	Sad-you-seez.	Sanhedrin	San-huh-drun or San-heed-run.
Zerubbabel	Zeh-rub-uh-bul.		

LESSON CONTEXT: First-Century Church

After Jesus' ascension, the number of believers increased and were "added" to the numbers in Jerusalem (Acts 2:47b; 5:14; 6:1). The expanding number of believers led them to develop habits for their gatherings and expectations for how they would treat each other (see Acts 2:42–47a; 4:32–35).

During that time, almost all believers were ethnically Jewish. However, not all had the same cultural upbringing. Some had lived in the Greek-speaking (Hellenistic) portions of the Roman Empire, while others lived in Jewish regions of Palestine. The differences between these groups of first-century Jews led to conflict regarding the treatment of widows (Acts 6:1). As a result, the apostles faced challenges while trying to oversee the church (Acts 6:2).

To ease the load for the apostles, they selected seven men to handle specific tasks (see Acts 6:3–4). The book of Acts mentions two of these seven men in further detail: Philip (Acts 8:4–40) and Stephen (Acts 6:8–8:1). In some ways, the role of these seven men was analogous to the position of deacon (see 1 Timothy 3:8–13). The word deacon comes from the Greek noun *diakonos*, which is not used in Acts 6. However, a variation of that word does appear in Acts 6 and is translated as "ministry" (Acts 6:4). The term describes some aspects of the work of the apostles.

QUESTION(S)

- How do you follow the Spirit's leading in spreading the Word to make disciples in your neighborhood?
- What steps will you take to ensure that your speech is filled with wisdom?
- How do your actions, attitudes, and expressions indicate to others that you are a follower of Christ?

CONCLUSION

Divine Service

What should the Christian's response be to attacks and insults to faith? Such attacks might include name-calling, harsh remarks, or judgment regarding our use of time, energy, and resources. These abuses might even come from coworkers, friends, or family members.

The verbal attacks on Stephen led to a physical attack that resulted in his death. It is unlikely that we will experience the same end as Stephen. However, his manner of living can inform our behavior—whether or not attacks on our faith result.

Stephen was a student of Scripture, as demonstrated by his speech before the Sanhedrin

(Acts 7:2–54). Not only did he know the facts of Scripture, but he also knew how Jesus fulfilled all of Scripture. This knowledge led him to display confidence and hope during his interaction with the Sanhedrin. He proclaimed the gospel with the hope that they would believe in Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah.

Most of all, Stephen faced his final crisis with peace and poise. He displayed a sense of peace that comes from a knowledge of God's will and power. The false accusations did not deter Stephen; he trusted that it was all a part of God's plan.

Consider the example of Stephen the next time you pray. Ask the Lord for wisdom, power, and peace. When we practice and display these attributes, we can better serve the Lord, especially in the face of criticism or attacks from the world.

PRAYER

Heavenly Father, You are the God of wisdom, power, and peace. Give us the wisdom to know how to navigate a world that increasingly despises You. Show us the power of Your Spirit at work in and through us. Fill us with peace to face whatever circumstances we might face. We pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

God's wisdom, power, and peace will overcome the harshest opponents.

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week's lesson is "*The Resurrection: Key to Faith*" and summarizes the women's encounter at Jesus' empty tomb. Study Mark 16.