

THE **crossing** **small groups**

Seeing the Unseen Acts Chapters 6 & 7 Sermon Discussion Guide

Purpose of Discussion: To allow the **reality of God's bigger story** to change the way we respond more and more to the everyday circumstances of our own lives.

Icebreaker: Share a situation in your life that took an unexpected turn and ended in a way you did not anticipate. (your answer can be positive or negative)

Setting up the discussion: If you'll remember from last week, Stephen entered the picture as one of the men chosen to head up the team of believers focused on caring for the practical needs of the widows and marginalized individuals within the growing church.

Discussion

Although Stephen was only one of a team of men chosen to meet the needs of widows within the church, he seems to have been set apart in a few significant ways. Dave mentioned that he was the first "non-apostle" to perform miracles. Also, while the disciples instructed the growing church to choose seven men who were all known to be full of the Spirit and Wisdom (Acts 6:2-4), scripture seems to set Stephen apart as a man particularly "full of faith and of the Holy Spirit." (Acts 6:5, 8)

Read:

Acts 6:2-4

² So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³ Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

Acts 6:5, 8

⁵ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit... ⁸ Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people.

1. Stephen has just begun the work of caring for widows and others in Jerusalem – and we can assume bringing people into the church through performing great wonders and signs among the people – when his life was cut short. How might Stephen’s death have caused those in this newly growing church to feel?
2. How might we feel and react in less helpful ways when circumstances around us take an unexpected turn?
3. As Stephen grew in faith and wisdom, he seemed to be seen as a threat to other Greek-speaking Jews. Where in your own life do you see your faith bumping up against the beliefs or thinking of others?
4. Dave emphasizes that when those opposing Stephen could not win the argument with facts and ideas, they responded in what Dave called “a total limbic meltdown.” In other words, their emotions were fully in charge and they followed their rage to the point of taking his life. And yet in the face of all this emotion and violence, Stephen remained calm, confident, courageous...because he “looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.”

Stephen was repeatedly described as “full of wisdom.” How can we gain wisdom like Stephen to help us grow in wisdom and respond out of God’s bigger story, rather than reacting to the events around us?

Read:

[Isaiah 55:8-11](#)

⁸ “For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
neither are your ways my ways,”
declares the LORD.

⁹ “As the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.

¹⁰ As the rain and the snow
come down from heaven,

THE **crossing** **small groups**

and do not return to it
without watering the earth
and making it bud and flourish,
so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater,
¹¹ so is my word that goes out from my mouth:
It will not return to me empty,
but will accomplish what I desire
and achieve the purpose for which I sent it.

5. How can this passage out of Isaiah encourage and strengthen us to think vertically and live out the reality of God's bigger story for our lives?

Optional Dig Deeper Question: Acts 7:51 has Stephen telling his opponents they are resisting the work of the Holy Spirit. Do you feel convicted by this passage? In what ways might you be doing the same thing? In what ways might you need to grow in trusting God's bigger story for your life?

Sharing and Prayer:

If the group is comfortable sharing specific areas of struggle with each other, take time to pray for each other in the specific circumstances, asking God for an increased trust in His plan for their lives and a peace in the midst of uncertainty that can only be the presence of the Holy Spirit in them.