



THE BOOK OF

ACTS

GROUP DISCUSSION | Week 6: The Catalyst

SERIES OVERVIEW

In this series, we examine the remarkable spread of the Gospel and the Kingdom of God from Jerusalem, to Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth...and how we fit into the story God is continuing to write through His Church.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE:

Think of this discussion guide as a springboard. Use what's helpful to your group!

CONNECTION

We talk a bit today about Stephen's job. Where was your first job and what did you do? How long did you work there? What do you remember liking most? Least? Share with the group.

TRUTH

Read Acts 6:1-2. What was the problem facing the early church? Why do you think that was such a big deal?

Continue reading Acts 6:3-6. How did the apostles propose to solve the problem? What were the qualifications they were looking for? Why were those attributes paramount for the job they were looking to delegate?

Philip shared that "even though Stephen's *position* was "waiting tables," his *purpose* was Gospel expansion." In short, Stephen didn't get his value from his job title. That's relevant for us because when we associate our worth with our work, titles define our value instead of God. How have you seen that play out in your life? When have you placed more value in your work/role/title than you should? Why is that dangerous?

Philip summarized how Stephen was seized and put on trial; how did his words and actions lead to his arrest?

Chapter 7 details the speech Stephen gave to the Sanhedrin, the Jewish Supreme Court. (Feel free to either read it, parts of it, or to summarize.) Essentially, Stephen told Israel's history dating back to Abraham, but culminated the presentation with the harsh reality that these accusers were in the wrong. Why was this surprising and offensive? How did Stephen describe the history of God's dealings with the Israelites, and what was the significance of this for his audience?

Read Acts 7:51-54. What was their response? Why do you think they responded that way?

Finally, read Acts 7:55-60. How did Stephen respond to his accusers and what was the outcome of his trial? What did Stephen see in his vision before he died, and what does this vision reveal about his faith and the status of the early church? Philip pointed out a couple parallels between the final words spoken of Stephen and Jesus at their respective deaths, but what other parallels do you see in these stories (accusation, trial, defense, death, witness, etc.)?

Luke briefly makes note that Saul was there approving Stephen's death. How does that tidbit add to the story of Acts?

APPLICATION

A catalyst, by definition, is a person or thing that precipitates, or causes, an event. Philip referred to Stephen and his death as the catalyst God used to move the Gospel from Jerusalem "to Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth." What sort of "catalytic" moments have you experienced in life? (A relationship, a move, a diagnosis, a death, a job, etc.) How did God use that moment to move in and through your life?

As Jesus said in Luke 16:10, "Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much." Understanding the importance of being faithful in the small tasks, Philip posed the question, "Will you do your chores for the cause of Christ?" What sort of "chores" are you responsible for in your life? At work? How can you do 2-3 of those *for Christ* this week?

We, like Stephen, can remain faithful in the face of adversity by relying on the power of the Holy Spirit and trusting in the love of God. Stephen's passion for sharing the truth and his unwavering commitment to his faith serve as an inspiration to us all. His audience was clear, but who - in your life - do you actually need to share Jesus with?

PRAYER

Spend some time praying for boldness to share the Gospel when opportunities arise - despite persecution - on any level.