

A SEVEN-WEEK CHALLENGE FOR THE BOOK OF ACTS WEEK TWO

Chapter Five of the Book of Acts – Trouble and Joy

Section One: Vocabulary Activities (including an analogy game and a crossword puzzle) for these words: awareness, proceeds, conceive, corpse, sect, Sadducees, perplexed, strictly, enraged, Pharisees, disperse, census, draw away, perish, and overthrow.

Section Two: Questions to Investigate in Chapter Five—

What happened to a couple who lied to the church?

What happened when the apostles did not obey the ruling, high council?

Who stopped the council members from killing the apostles?

What did the apostles do after they were beaten?

Chapter Six of the Book of Acts – Servant Leadership and False Charges

Section One: Vocabulary Activities (including an Odd Man Out Game and a short tale) for these words: widow, neglect, fitting, reputation, steadfastly, ministry, convert, synagogue, dispute, recruit, blasphemous, and stir up.

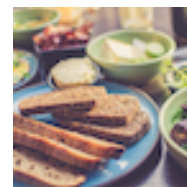
Section Two: Questions to Investigate in Chapter Six—

Is serving tables as important as teaching?

What are spiritual gifts and why do Christians have them?

What false accusations were made against Stephen, one of the Seven?

How did the accusations misuse Jesus' words and the Mosaic Law?



Chapter Seven of the Book of Acts – Stephen's Bold Testimony

Section One: Vocabulary Activities (including an analogy game and a crossword puzzle) for these words: Abraham, famine, abandon, mistreat, avenge, wilderness, abode, stiff-necked, uncircumcised, resist, persecute, betray, gnash, consent, and devout.

Section Two: Questions to Investigate in Chapter Seven—

What did Stephen prove about the ruling council and the nation's forefathers?

Why did the council become enraged?

What vision was given to Stephen?

What happened to Stephen?

Chapter Eight of the Book of Acts – Availability

Section One: Vocabulary Activities (including an analogy game and a modern little tale) for these words: paralyzed, sorcery, Samaria, obtain, portion, wickedness, bitterness, testify, bondage, gospel, eunuch, implore, slaughter, shearer, humiliation, and hinder.

Section Two: Questions to Investigate in Chapter Eight—

What did Philip, one of the Seven, do in Samaria?

Why was Simon the Magician severely scolded?

What wonderful thing happened on the lonely desert road?

Where did Philip end up?



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I. **Treasure Hunt: In Acts 5:1-11 and 17-42, mark the vocabulary words listed in #2.** Also notice the ten words from Week One: *apostle, address, take hold of, wonder, charge, forefather, exalt, repent, witness, and suffer.*

Acts 5:1-11, ¹ A certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold some property ² and kept back part of the price, with his wife's awareness. He brought the remainder of the proceeds and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³ Then Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan been able to fill your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the price of the land? ⁴ While it remained in your ownership, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was the money not under your control? How is it that you conceived of doing this thing? You have lied not to people, but to God." ⁵ Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and died. And great fear came upon all that heard about it. ⁶ Then the young men wrapped his corpse, and they carried him out and buried him.

⁷ Ananias' wife, not knowing what had taken place, came in about three hours later. ⁸ Then Peter addressed her: "Tell me whether you sold the land for this price." She answered, "Yes, for that amount." ⁹ Then Peter said, "How is it that you and your husband agreed to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." ¹⁰ She fell down immediately at his feet and died. The young men came in and found her dead, so they carried her out and buried her by her husband. ¹¹ And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard about these happenings.

Acts 5:17-42, ¹⁷ The high priest rose up and all those with him, who belonged to the sect of the Sadducees. They were filled with jealousy. ¹⁸ Taking hold of the apostles, they put them in the public prison. ¹⁹ But during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, brought them out, and said, ²⁰ "Go, stand in the temple, and speak all the words of this Life to the people." ²¹ Hearing this, they entered the temple about daybreak and taught. Then the high priest and his associates arrived and called the whole high council of Israel together. They sent to the prison to have the apostles brought to them. ²² But the officers who were sent did not find them in the prison. They returned and reported, "We found the prison safely shut and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened the doors, we did not find anyone inside." ²⁴ Now when the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests heard these words, they were very perplexed, wondering what this could be. ²⁵ Then a person came and told them, "Look, the men you put in the prison are standing in the temple, teaching the people." ²⁶ The captain with the officers went to the temple and brought the apostles, but without violence, for they feared the people would stone them. ²⁷ After they brought the apostles, they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them, ²⁸ saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, but look how you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."

²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰ The God of our forefathers raised Jesus, whom you killed, hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him with his right hand to be a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel and

forgiveness of sins. ³² We are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him.”

³³ When the members of the council heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. ³⁴ But one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, held in honor by all the people, stood and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. ³⁵ He said, “You men of Israel, think carefully about what you do to these men. ³⁶ For before these days, Theudas rose up, making himself out to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined with him. When he was killed, all who had obeyed him were dispersed, and it came to nothing. ³⁷ After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away people after him. He also perished, and all of his followers were scattered. ³⁸ Now I advise you to let these men alone, for if this teaching or this work is of men, it will be overthrown. ³⁹ But if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them and could be found fighting even against God.”

Acts 5:40-42, ⁴⁰ The council agreed with Gamaliel. When they had called the apostles back in, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus. Then they let them go. ⁴¹ Therefore, the apostles left the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name. ⁴² And every day, in the temple and at home, they did not stop teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

2. **Read Acts 5:1-11 and Acts 5:17-42 in your own language. Then play this quick matching game.** Time yourself. Can you do it in three minutes?

- | | |
|--------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. awareness | A. Think, imagine |
| _____ 2. proceeds (noun) | B. A religious group with beliefs different from others |
| _____ 3. conceive | C. A sect among the Jews that believed in the possibility of a resurrection from death and held to traditions |
| _____ 4. corpse | D. Sternly requiring a rule to be followed |
| _____ 5. sect | E. Knowledge, realization, being mindful of |
| _____ 6. Sadducees | F. To remove from power |
| _____ 7. perplexed | G. Earnings, profits |
| _____ 8. strictly | H. A sect among the Jews that cooperated with Rome and did not believe in spirits or the resurrection of the dead |
| _____ 9. enraged | I. Taking a count of the number of people in an area |
| _____ 10. Pharisees | J. Puzzled, confused |
| _____ 11. disperse | K. Very angry |
| _____ 12. census | L. To die |
| _____ 13. draw away | M. To scatter, to spread out over a large area |
| _____ 14. perish | N. Dead body |
| _____ 15. overthrow | O. To cause to follow a different person or thing |

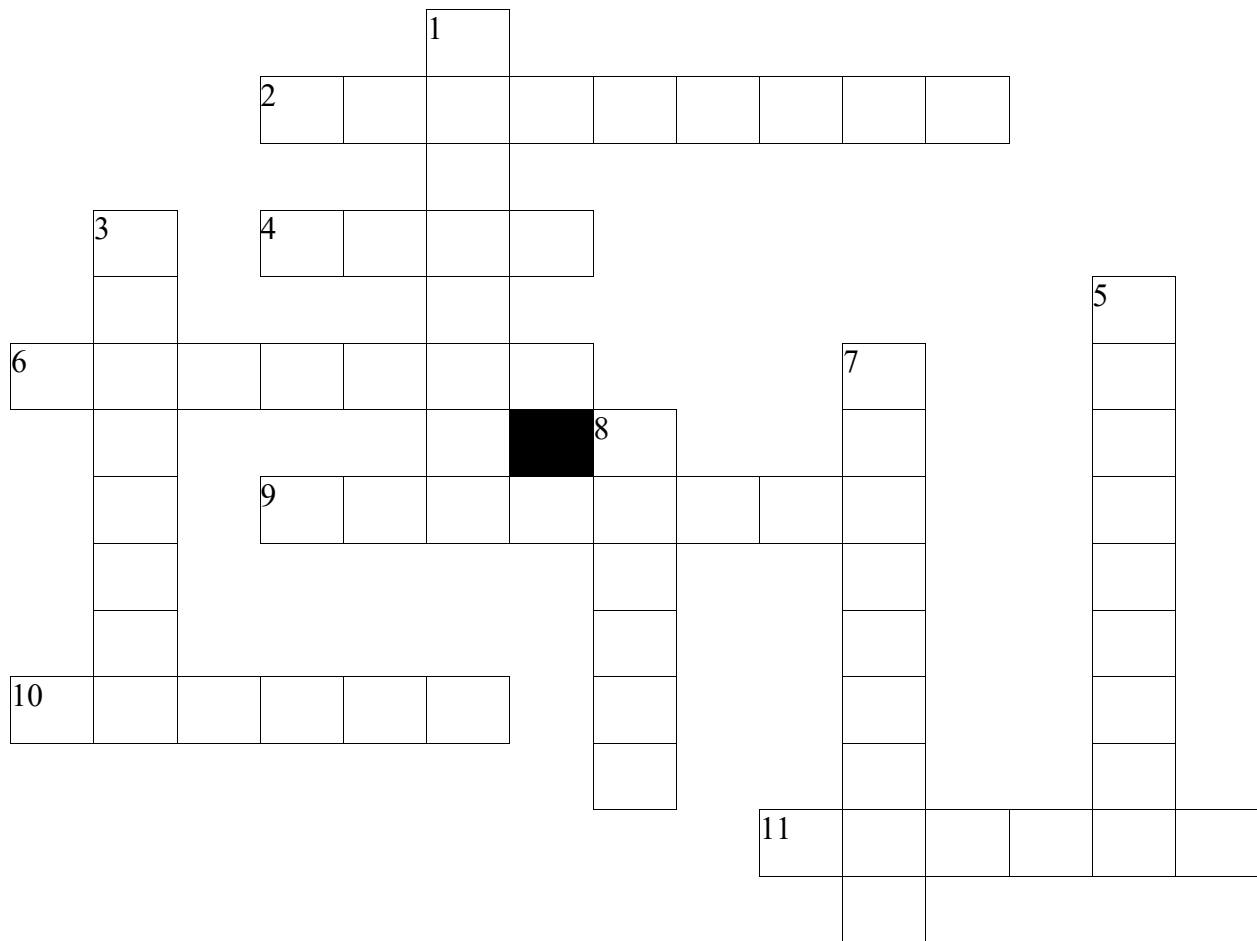
(Answers are at the end.)

3. **Try to use the new words to fill in the blanks without looking at #2 above.**

- Sapphira agreed with Ananias' lie in spite of her _____ of the real price.
- The couple secretly kept part of the sale's _____ for themselves.
- Peter asked Ananias how he could have _____ of lying about the price.
- The young men wrapped Ananias' _____ before the burial.
- The Jewish council had _____ charged the apostles not to speak about Jesus.

- f. The council members were _____ by the apostles' miraculous release from prison.
 g. The council members were _____ because the apostles preached to them about Jesus.
 h. The _____, who didn't believe a resurrection could happen, were especially upset.
 i. Gamaliel, a _____ in the Jewish council, gave the other members good advice.
 j. Two rebels Gamaliel talked about had wanted to _____ the government.
 k. These two rebels _____ many people from the right way.
 l. One of the rebels had led an uprising during the time of the Roman _____.
 m. When each of the rebels _____, their followers were scattered.
 n. Because Jesus had been crucified, Gamaliel expected the apostles to _____.
 o. Both _____ in the council heeded Gamaliel's advice, but still had the apostles beaten.
(Answers are at the end.)

4. **Use eleven of the new words to complete this crossword puzzle.**



Across

2. Puzzled
 4. A group with different beliefs from others
 6. Very angry
 9. To spread out over a large area
 10. Taking a count of the number of people
 11. A dead body

Down

1. Earnings, profit
 3. Think, imagine
 5. Knowledge, being mindful of
 7. To remove from power
 8. To die

Crossword Puzzle only: Copyright © 2021 WordMint LLC. All Rights Reserved. WordMint's Terms of Service permits the creator to freely distribute his/her created materials for any purpose.

5. Analogy Game:

Think about how the first pair of words are related, and then fill in the blank with one of the new words to relate the last pair in the same way.

- a. Club is to Boy Scouts as _____ is to Sadducees or Pharisees.
- b. Happy is to glad as puzzled is to _____.
- c. Rejoice is to cry as survive is to _____.
- d. Battle is to fight as _____ is to count.
- e. Laundry is to wash as _____ is to bury.
- f. Draw is to a painting as _____ is to a plan.
- g. Studying is to knowledge as selling is to _____.
- h. Steal is to wealth as _____ is to government.
- i. Crooked is to honest as ignorance is to _____.
- j. Being helped is to thankful as being cheated is to _____.
- k. Ascend is to descend as gather is to _____.

(Answers are at the end.)

Answers for the Matching Game: 1-E, 2-G, 3-A, 4-N, 5-B, 6-H, 7-J, 8-D, 9-K, 10-C, 11-M, 12-I, 13-O, 14-L, 15-F (If you matched the words in three minutes or less, your awareness of the usage of English words is praiseworthy.)

Answers for the fill-in-the-blank exercise: a.) awareness b.) proceeds c.) conceived d.) corpse e.) strictly f.) perplexed g.) enraged h.) Sadducees i.) Pharisee j.) overthrow k.) drew away l.) census m.) perished n.) disperse o.) sects

Answers for the Analogy Game: a.) sect b.) perplexed c.) perish d.) census e.) corpse f.) conceive g.) proceeds h.) overthrow i.) awareness j.) enraged k.) disperse

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I. A Sin in the Church

Acts 5:1-11, ¹ A certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold some property ² and kept back part of the price, with his wife's awareness. He brought the remainder of the proceeds and laid it at the apostles' feet. ³ Then Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the price of the land? ⁴ While it still belonged to you, was it not your own? And after it was sold, was the money not under your control? How is it that you conceived of doing this thing? You have lied not to people, but to God." ⁵ Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and died. And great fear came upon all who heard about it. ⁶ Then the young men wrapped his corpse, and they carried him out and buried him.

⁷ Ananias' wife, not knowing what had taken place, came in about three hours later. ⁸ Then Peter addressed her: "Tell me whether you sold the land for this price." She answered, "Yes, for that amount." ⁹ Then Peter said, "How is it that you and your husband agreed to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look, the feet of those who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out." ¹⁰ She fell down immediately at his feet and died. The young men came in and found her dead, so they carried her out and buried her by her husband. ¹¹ And great fear came upon the whole church and upon all who heard about these happenings.

Acts 5:8 clearly shows that Ananias and Sapphira were lying about giving the whole amount. But Peter had lied about knowing Jesus and was given a second chance. The Jews who crucified Jesus were given a second chance. Why weren't Ananias and Sapphira given a second chance?

A. The cause of the lie

1. Acts 4:36-37, ³⁶ Joseph, whom the apostles called Barnabas (meaning son of encouragement), a Levite from the country of Cyprus, ³⁷ had a field which he sold. He brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet. It seems likely that the couple wanted to be admired in the way Barnabas was. What was wrong with this idea?
2. The lie was on purpose and planned. It wasn't from a sudden urge or fear. Think about three children's acts of breaking a vase: a) One was an accident because the child was nervous. b) Another was done while wrestling with his brother. c) The third one happened like this: The parent said not to touch the vase. The child then picked the vase up and threw it down on the floor. How would most parents respond to the last one?

B. Insights about God's action in this unusual situation

1. This was the only church. All Christianity that followed depended on its survival and purity. It was very important for people to be able to trust the honesty of the apostles' words about Jesus. Lying at this time could be especially damaging.
2. These Christians had been given strong proof of Jesus' resurrection. Jesus said in **Luke 12:48**, ". . . to whom much is given, of him much will be required;"
3. They were removed from earth, but not sent to hell. Death on earth is not an end to life.

C. If telling a lie and being hypocritical caused us to die, we'd all be dead. How blessed we are to receive forgiveness and second chances every day! **I John 1:8-2:2**, ⁸ If we say that we have

no sin, we fool ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹ If we confess [admit to God] our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness . . . ¹ My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone sins, we have one who defends us before the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. ² He is the sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world.

II. Acts 5:12-16 describes how the apostles healed many people of their diseases and were highly regarded by the ordinary people in Jerusalem.

III. The Apostles' Powerful Words and the Council's Anger

Acts 5:17-39, ¹⁷ But the high priest rose up and all those with him, who belonged to the sect of the Sadducees. They were filled with jealousy. ¹⁸ Taking hold of the apostles, they put them in the public prison. ¹⁹ But during the night, an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors, brought them out, and said, ²⁰ "Go, stand in the temple, and speak all the words of this Life to the people." ²¹ Hearing this, they entered the temple about daybreak and taught.

Then the high priest and his associates arrived and called the high council of Israel together. They sent to the prison to have the apostles brought to them. ²² But the officers who were sent did not find them in the prison. They returned and reported, "We found the prison safely shut and the guards standing at the doors, but when we opened the doors, we did not find anyone inside." ²⁴ Now when the captain of the temple guard and the chief priests heard these words, they were very perplexed, wondering what this could be ²⁵ Then a person came and told them, "Look, the men you put in the prison are standing in the temple, teaching the people." ²⁶ The captain with the officers went to the temple and brought the apostles, but without violence, for they feared the people would stone them. ²⁷ After they brought the apostles, they had them stand before the council. The high priest questioned them, ²⁸ saying, "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, but look how you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this man's blood upon us."

²⁹ But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. ³⁰ The God of our forefathers raised Jesus, whom you killed, hanging him on a tree. ³¹ God exalted him to his right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. ³² We are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."

³³ When the members of the council heard this, they were enraged and wanted to kill them. ³⁴ But one in the council, a Pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of the law, held in honor by all the people, stood and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. ³⁵ He said, "You men of Israel, think carefully about what you do to these men. ³⁶ For before these days, Theudas rose up, making himself out to be somebody. A number of men, about four hundred, joined with him. When he was killed, all who had obeyed him were dispersed, and it came to nothing. ³⁷ After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away people after him. He also perished, and all of his followers were scattered. ³⁸ Now I advise you to let these men alone, for if this teaching or this work is of men, it will be overthrown. ³⁹ But if it is of God, you will not be able to overthrow them and could be found fighting even against God."

A. Let's think about why the council became enraged at the apostles' words:

1. The apostles had not o_____ their command. In fact, they said *God's* command was *different* from the council's command.
2. They had delivered Jesus to death, but they didn't want to be blamed for it.
3. The apostles claimed that God had _____ Jesus from the dead. They said they were eyewitnesses of His resurrection and that the _____ supported these facts.
4. The apostles said that Israel (and these leaders) needed to r_____.
5. The apostles' description of Jesus at the right hand of God was an echo of what Jesus had said when he was arrested and put on trial in front of this same council.

Matt. 26:64-65, ⁶⁴ Jesus answered, “. . . I tell you, from now on, you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”

⁶⁵ Then the high priest tore his garments, saying, “He has spoken blasphemy . . .”

Jesus had quoted from a prophecy about the Messiah: **Daniel 7:13-14,** ¹³ . . . one like a son of man came with the clouds of heaven. He came even to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him before him. ¹⁴ And he was given dominion, glory, and a kingdom so that people of all languages and all nations should serve him.

B. The Council's blindness

1. Let's recall the evidence the council had that Jesus was truly the Messiah.
 - a. The miraculous _____ of the lame man, and Jesus' miracles during his lifetime.
 - b. The apostles' boldness and their strange escape from _____.
 - c. The eyewitness _____ testimony of the resurrection and the empty tomb.
 - d. The Old Testament prophecies that Jesus fulfilled.
2. Why didn't they accept so much evidence? Basically, they didn't want to.
 - a. Jesus' teaching and lifestyle didn't agree with their ideas about God and the Messiah.
 - b. Jesus and the apostles had hurt their pride by correcting them and drawing crowds.
 - c. The apostles had not been highly educated and were not part of their groups.

IV. Keeping On Going!

Acts 5:40-42 ⁴⁰ The council agreed with Gamaliel. When they had called the apostles back in, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus. Then they let them go. ⁴¹ Therefore, the apostles left the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the Name. ⁴² And every day, in the temple and at home, they did not stop teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ. How could they possibly find joy?

The apostle Paul explained this well in **II Corinthians 4:13-17,** ¹³ Having the same spirit of faith, according to that which is written, “I believed, and therefore I spoke,” we also believe, and therefore we also speak. ¹⁴ For we know that he who raised up the Lord Jesus will also raise us up with Jesus . . . ¹⁶ Therefore, we do not faint. Although our outward man is decaying, our inward man is renewed day by day. This kind of joy is made possible by the Holy Spirit's work. Despite their suffering, the apostles continued to share God's message!

V. Making Memories – like photographs for our mind

What is a key truth from Acts 5 that you want to remember?

Mark one important verse in Acts 5 that will help you remember what happened in this chapter.

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Section One:

Vocabulary Activities for Acts 6
Servant Leadership and False Charges

1. **Treasure Hunt: In Acts 6, mark the twelve vocabulary words listed in #2.** Also notice these previous words: *wonder* (noun), *elder*, *scribe*, and *witness*.

Acts 6:1-7, ¹ In those days, when the number of the disciples [Christians] was multiplying, the Greek-speaking Jews complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were neglected in the daily serving [of food]. ² The Twelve called the large number of disciples together and said, “It is not fitting for us to neglect giving out the word of God to serve tables. ³ Therefore, brothers, choose from among yourselves seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this work. ⁴ But we will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word.” ⁵ This plan pleased the whole gathering. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and also Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a Jewish convert from Antioch. ⁶ They brought these before the apostles. After praying, the apostles laid their hands on them.

⁷ The knowledge of the word of God increased. The number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem, and a large number of the [Jewish] priests became obedient to the faith.

Acts 6:8 –15, ⁸ Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. ⁹ But certain Jews from a synagogue called the Synagogue of the Freedmen . . . rose up and disputed with Stephen. ¹⁰ They were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. ¹¹ Then they recruited men who said, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.” ¹² They stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes, and then seized Stephen and brought him before the high council. ¹³ They set up false witnesses, who said, “This man does not stop speaking against this holy place [the temple] and the law, ¹⁴ for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us. ¹⁵ All who sat in the council looked steadily at Stephen and saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

2. **Read Acts 6 in your own language. Then play this quick matching game.** Time yourself. Can you do it in two minutes?

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| _____ 1. widow | A. A building for Jews to worship in besides the temple |
| _____ 2. neglect | B. People’s general opinion about someone or something |
| _____ 3. fitting | C. A woman whose husband has died |
| _____ 4. reputation | D. A person who has changed his beliefs (noun); to change someone’s beliefs (verb) |
| _____ 5. steadfastly | E. To upset or aggravate; to energize |
| _____ 6. ministry | F. Describing bad actions or words against God |
| _____ 7. convert | G. Service, care |
| _____ 8. synagogue | H. Suitable, right |
| _____ 9. dispute | I. Not take care of |
| _____ 10. recruit | J. To get someone to take part; to enlist; to involve |
| _____ 11. blasphemous | K. In a firm, unchanging, or loyal manner |
| _____ 12. stir up | L. To disagree (verb); an argument (noun) |

(Answers are at the end.)

3. **Try to use the new words to fill in the blanks without looking at #2 above.**

- a. The Greek-speaking _____ complained about unfair practices in the church.
 - b. They were being _____ in the daily serving of food.
 - c. Seven deacons were chosen to have a _____ to the widows by overseeing the distribution.
 - d. These seven men had good _____ and were full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.
 - e. One of the Seven was a _____ to Judaism, probably before he believed in Jesus.
 - f. Since Jesus himself had trained the Twelve, it was not _____ for them to stop teaching.
 - g. The Twelve (original disciples) continued _____ in prayer.
 - h. Jews in the _____ of the Freedmen argued with Stephen about Jesus.
 - i. The Holy Spirit gave Stephen wisdom, so the synagogue's Jews did not win the _____.
 - j. The council listened to the false witnesses who had been _____ to trap Stephen.
 - k. The false witnesses accused Stephen of _____ statements.
 - l. The Sadducees were _____ by the accusation of changing the Mosaic Law.
- (Answers are at the end.)*

4. **Odd Man Out Game**

Three words in each set have almost the same meaning. The Odd Man Out has a different meaning and does not belong to the set. Find all the words that are Odd Men Out without looking at the definitions in #2. You may use your dictionary if needed.

- a. Widow, husband, bachelor, nun
 - b. Neglect, overlook, miss, abuse
 - c. Fitting, suitable, unchangeable, right
 - d. Ministry, agent, service, care
 - e. Reputation, standing, repute, attitude
 - f. Steadfastly, faithfully, persistently, powerfully
 - g. Synagogue, worship, chapel, temple
 - h. Dispute, argument, war, disagreement
 - i. Recruit, enlist, bribe, involve
 - j. Blasphemous, cursed, irreligious, profane
 - k. Stir up, upset, aggravate, twist
- (Answers are at the end.)*

5. **Just for fun and practice, use each of the new words to complete this little tale.** Two words will be used twice

- a. Once upon a time, a feud between two Scottish clans began with a small _____ over a goat. A _____ in the McDonald clan said the McIntire clan had stolen her only animal. She had _____ to close the gate one night, and the goat had disappeared. One of the McIntire families had a goat that looked like hers, but the whole clan _____ claimed that none of them had taken her animal. Because the clan had a _____ for honesty, most of the villagers believed them.
- b. A few days after the goat disappeared, a rabbi saw a loose goat eating grass behind the _____. It was clear to everyone except to the widow and her family that it was the missing animal. With many tears, the widow _____ some hot-tempered clan

members to take her side. They _____ the rest of the McDonald clan so that they all began to hate the McIntire clan. Then, the members of both clans said it was not _____ for them to be together at any time. The adults even told their children that the name of the other clan was as bad as a _____ word.

- c. But one day, a member of the McIntire clan got tired of the feud. While the widow was out of town, he decided to repair the widow's sagging roof as a _____ to her. When she returned home and saw the roof, the good deed _____ her from hatred to thankfulness. The feud ended when she said she had been more than repaid for the goat by that man's kindness.
- d. The widow did not admit that the goat behind the synagogue had been hers, but the rabbi and villagers persuaded her to give it a home. So the widow ended up with a goat and a good roof over her head. After that day, often when a _____ broke out, someone would say, "Don't let him get your goat." Since that idiom means for someone not to get too _____ by anyone else, the two who were arguing would remember the stupid feud, nod their heads, and agree to remain friends—at least, most of the time.

(Answers are at the end.) (Note: This is not how the phrase, Don't let him get your goat, began.)

Answers for the Matching Game: 1-C, 2-I, 3-H, 4-B, 5-K, 6-G, 7-D, 8-A, 9-L, 10-J, 11-F, 12-E (If you matched the words in two minutes or less, you have steadfastly studied English. ☺)

Answers for the fill-in-the-blank exercise: a.) widows b.) neglected c.) ministry d.) reputations e.) convert f.) fitting g.) steadfastly h.) Synagogue i.) dispute j.) recruited k.) blasphemous l.) stirred up

Answers for the Odd Man Out Game: a.) husband – others are usually unmarried b.) abuse c.) unchangeable d.) agent e.) attitude f.) powerfully g.) worship h.) war i.) bribe j.) cursed k.) twist

Answers for the fill-in-the-blank tale: a.) dispute, widow, neglected, steadfastly, reputation. b.) synagogue, recruited, stirred up, fitting, blasphemous. c.) ministry, converted. d.) dispute, stirred up.

Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version, with the English updated to modern usage. The NET Bible® was consulted from time to time to confirm or adopt apt words or phrases.

Investigating Acts 6 Servant Leadership and False Charges

I. Leadership in Serving

Acts 6:1-7, ¹In those days, when the number of the disciples [Christians] was multiplying, the Greek-speaking Jews complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were neglected in the daily serving [of food]. ²The Twelve called the large number of disciples together and said, “It is not fitting for us to neglect ministering the word of God to serve tables. ³Therefore, brothers, choose from among yourselves seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may appoint over this work. ⁴But we will continue steadfastly in prayer and in the ministry of the word.” ⁵This plan pleased the whole gathering. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and also Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a Jewish convert from Antioch. ⁶They brought these before the apostles. After praying, the apostles laid their hands on them.

⁷The knowledge of the word of God increased. The number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem, and a large number of the [Jewish] priests became obedient to the faith.

A. The Problem and Solution

1. Why were there problems among these Christians?
(If a church had all perfect members, could we belong to it?)
2. The apostles used good practices in leadership. How did they keep unity in the church?

B. The First “Deacons”

1. Many churches today elect or appoint “deacons” to lead in managing the finances and services of the church. The seven men in Acts 6 were to manage the delivery of funds and food to the Christians in need. What three qualifications did the men need to have? (They also had Greek names, so they were Greek-speaking Jews who would watch out for the neglected widows.)
2. The whole church chose the deacons. Then, the apostles prayed and laid their hands on the Seven. Laying hands on people was a Jewish practice of identifying persons for a special task and also for showing support for them.
3. In **Acts 21:8**, Luke, while traveling with Paul, mentioned these seven men years later. ⁸**The next day, we left and came to Caesarea. Entering the house of Philip the evangelist, who was one of the Seven, we stayed with him.** We will see more about Philip later, but Stephen is our next focus. Acts 6 tells us these men were willing to serve.

C. Using Our Spiritual Gift for Service

1. Here is one of the lists of spiritual gifts in the Bible. They are different from natural talents. **Romans 12:6-8,** ⁶**We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us. If the gift is prophecy, let us prophesy according to the amount of our faith. ⁷If it is ministry, let us give ourselves to our service; he that teaches, to his teaching; ⁸or he who exhorts, [encourages people to be good and counsels] to his exhorting. He who gives, let him do so with generosity; he who governs [also administers], with steady effort; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.** If you are a Christian, you received one or more spiritual gifts when you put your faith in Christ. Perhaps you enjoy helping someone in trouble, or giving advice, teaching about Jesus, giving money to send out

missionaries, or serving meals. If you have a strong desire to meet a need, that desire may exist because of your gift(s).

2. Is any gift more necessary than the other gifts?

I Corinthians 12:21, 22, 27, ²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you.” . . . ²² Rather, those members of the body which seem to be weaker are absolutely necessary . . . ²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each member has his part in it. Why might it sometimes take more faith to “serve tables” than to teach?

3. **Ephesians 4:11-13** tells the purpose for spiritual gifts. It is ¹² **to equip the believers for deeds of service, for the building up of the body of Christ [the church]¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, becoming mature and living by the standard of the fulness of Christ.** Are the gifts to use for ourselves or for others? What is Christ’s great desire for Christians according to these verses?

II. False Accusations against Stephen

Acts 6:8 –15, ⁸ Stephen, full of grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. ⁹ But certain Jews from a synagogue called the Synagogue of the Freedmen . . . rose up and disputed with Stephen. ¹⁰ They were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke. ¹¹ Then they recruited men who said, “We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.” ¹² They stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes, and then seized Stephen and brought him before the high council. ¹³ They set up false witnesses, who said, “This man does not stop speaking against this holy place [the temple] and the law, ¹⁴ for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs which Moses delivered to us. ¹⁵ All who sat in the council looked steadily at Stephen and saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

A. The first accusation was that Stephen had taught that Jesus would destroy the temple. False witnesses had first used this against Jesus in his trial. Notice how Jesus’ words were changed. **John 2:19, ¹⁹ Jesus answered, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.”**

Matthew 26:59-61, ⁵⁹ Now the chief priests and the whole council sought false witness against Jesus so that they could put him to death. ⁶⁰ They did not find it although many false witnesses spoke. But afterward two came ⁶¹ who said, “This man claimed, ‘I am able to destroy the temple of God and to rebuild it in three days.’”

Jesus had not been talking about a building, but about his own body.

B. The second accusation was that Stephen was teaching that Jesus would “change the customs Moses delivered to us.” This accusation about the Law of Moses especially angered the Sadducees. They accepted only the section of the Old Testament written by Moses.

Let’s look at what the Christians taught about the Mosaic Law, which contained not only moral laws, such as the Ten Commandments, but also laws about sacrifices and food and social laws.

1. People cannot go to heaven by obeying this Law. We all sin and fall short, so we need to accept Jesus as our Savior. Salvation is a gift from God based on Jesus’ death for our sins. **Galatians 3:24, ²⁴ So the [Mosaic] law was our tutor to bring us to Christ so that we might be justified by faith.** How does the Law help bring people to Jesus Christ?
2. Jewish Christians could continue to obey the Law, but not in order to earn salvation. The apostle Paul wrote in **I Corinthians 9:20-22, ²⁰ To the Jews I became as a Jew so that I**

might win Jews. To those who are under the [Mosaic] law, I became as though I were under the law—not being myself under the law—in order to win those under the law. ²¹ To those without the [Mosaic] law, I became as not having the law—not being without God’s law, but being under Christ’s law—in order to win those without the law. ²² . . . I have become all things to all men so that I may by all means save some. What are some ways Christians today can become “all things to all men” while upholding truth?

C. How does Acts 6:15 show God’s power in Stephen’s life while he was being falsely accused?

III. Making Memories

What is a key truth from Acts 6 that you want to remember?

Underline or highlight one important verse in Acts 6 that will help you remember what happened in this chapter.

Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version, with the English updated to modern usage. The NET Bible® was consulted from time to time to confirm or adopt apt words or phrases.

1. **Treasure Hunt: In Acts 7 and Acts 8:1-3, mark the fifteen vocabulary words listed in #2.**

Also notice these previous words: *suffering, reject, wonder, footstool, forefather, enraged, steadfastly, and witness.*

(The following is much of the answer Stephen made to the Council about the false charges.)

Acts 7:9-14,⁹ “The patriarchs [the Israelite tribes’ ancestors, i.e., Joseph and his brothers], because of their jealousy of Joseph, sold him into Egypt. But God was with him.¹⁰ He rescued him from his troubles and gave him favor and wisdom with the Pharaoh, king of Egypt. The Pharaoh made Joseph governor over Egypt and over all his household.¹¹ Now there was a famine over all Egypt and Canaan [an area including Israel], bringing great suffering. Our ancestors found no food.¹² But when Jacob [Joseph’s father] heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent Joseph’s brothers there the first time.¹³ Then during their second visit, Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph’s family became known to Pharaoh.¹⁴ So Joseph invited his father Jacob and his relatives, seventy-five people in all, to come to him there . . .”

Acts 7:17-25,¹⁷ “But as the time approached for the fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham, the number of the Israelite people multiplied in Egypt,¹⁸ until there arose another king over Egypt who did not know about Joseph.¹⁹ This ruler took advantage of our people and was cruel to our forefathers, forcing them to abandon their babies so that they would not live.²⁰ Moses was born at that time, and he was pleasing to God. He was brought up for three months in his father’s house,²¹ and when he was abandoned, Pharaoh’s daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son.²² Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds.²³ But when he was about forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his fellow countrymen, the children of Israel.²⁴ Seeing one of them being mistreated, he defended him and avenged the man by killing the Egyptian.²⁵ He thought that his own people would understand that God was delivering them by his hand, but they did not understand . . .”

Acts 7:35-39,³⁵ “This is Moses, whom his people rejected, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’ Through the angel who appeared to him in the bush, God sent Moses to be both a ruler and a deliverer.³⁶ He led his people forward, having worked wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years.³⁷ This is the same Moses, who told the children of Israel, ‘God will raise up a prophet like me from among your fellow Israelites.’³⁸ This is he who was in the assembly in the wilderness with our ancestors and with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and he received living messages to give us.³⁹ Our ancestors would not be obedient to Moses, but rejected him and turned back in their hearts to Egypt.”

Acts 7:46-50,⁴⁶ “David, who found favor in the sight of God, asked to find an abode for the God of Jacob.⁴⁷ But Solomon built him a house [the first temple].⁴⁸ However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands, as the prophet [Isaiah] recorded:

⁴⁹ ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is the footstool for my feet. What manner of house will you build me?’ says the Lord, ‘or what is the place of my rest?’⁵⁰ Did not my hand make all these things?’”

Acts 7:51-58, ⁵¹“You stiff-necked men, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit, just as your forefathers did. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your forefathers not persecute? They killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered. ⁵³ You who received the law as it was given through angels have not kept it.”

⁵⁴ Now when they heard these things, they were enraged, and they gnashed their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ Stephen said, “Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”

⁵⁷ But they cried out with a loud voice and covered their ears. All together, they rushed upon him. ⁵⁸ They forced him out of the city and stoned him, and the witnesses laid their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul.

Acts 7:59-60, 8:1-3, ⁵⁹ As they were stoning Stephen, he called on the Lord, saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰ He knelt and cried with a loud voice, “Lord, do not count this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep, ¹ and Saul was consenting to Stephen’s death. There arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and except for the apostles, they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. ² Devout men buried Stephen and deeply mourned for him. ³ But Saul worked to destroy the church; entering into house after house, he dragged out men and women and put them in prison.

2. Read Acts 7 and Acts 8:1-3 in your own language. Then play this quick matching game.

Time yourself. Can you do it within three minutes?

- | | |
|------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. Abraham | A. To cause harm to a former friend or associate |
| _____ 2. famine | B. Stubborn, unwilling to listen or change |
| _____ 3. abandon | C. Not to yield or agree to something; to withstand |
| _____ 4. mistreat | D. The place someone lives; a dwelling place |
| _____ 5. avenge | E. A wild region where almost no people live |
| _____ 6. wilderness | F. Impure, having wrong, unholy motives (in this context) |
| _____ 7. abode | G. A great shortage of food |
| _____ 8. stiff-necked | H. To harm in order to pay back a wrong; to take revenge |
| _____ 9. uncircumcised | I. To agree to something; to give permission |
| _____ 10. resist | J. To stop caring for or supporting, to desert, to leave |
| _____ 11. persecute | K. Having deep religious commitment |
| _____ 12. betray | L. To treat badly, especially because of different races or beliefs |
| _____ 13. gnash | M. To be unkind or cruel to someone or something |
| _____ 14. consent | N. To grind (one’s teeth) |
| _____ 15. devout | O. The Jewish patriarch who began the nation of Israel |

(Answers are at the end.)

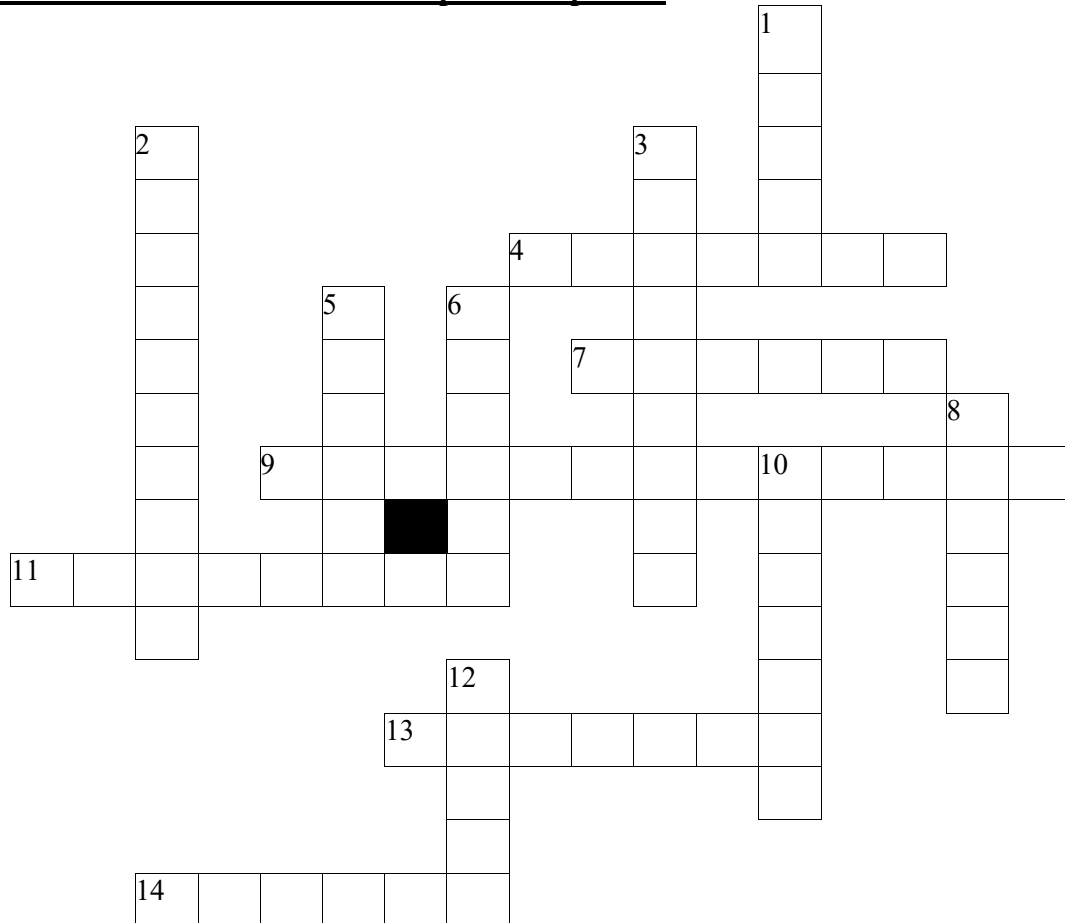
3. Try to use the new words to fill in the blanks without looking at #2 above.

- Stephen was a _____ Christian, who served God with his whole heart.
- He spoke to the council about God’s promise to _____, the nation’s founder.
- Joseph rescued his family from a _____ although his brothers had sold him as a slave.
- Long after Joseph lived, the Egyptians forced the Israelites to _____ their male babies.
- Moses saw an Egyptian _____ one of his countrymen.

- f. He killed the Egyptian in order to _____ the cruelty, but his people rejected him at first.
 g. Later Moses led his people out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and in the _____.
 h. God blessed the temple with his presence, but he does not need a temple for his _____.
 i. The _____ council members did not agree that they had sinned.
 j. Stephen called the council members' hearts " _____ " because of their sin.
 k. He said the members, like their forefathers, always _____ the Holy Spirit
 l. He asked them if there had been any prophet their forefathers had not _____.
 m. Stephen told the council they had _____ and murdered the Messiah.
 n. The council members became so angry that they _____ their teeth.
 o. Saul watched Stephen's stoning, showing that he _____ to his death.

(Answers are at the end.)

4. **Use fourteen of the new words to complete this puzzle.**



Across

4. A Jewish patriarch
 7. To cause harm to a friend
 9. Having wrong, unholy motives
 11. To be unkind to someone
 13. To stop caring for
 14. A great shortage of food

Down

1. To grind (one's teeth)
 2. A wild, uninhabited region
 3. To treat badly due to a different race or beliefs
 5. To pay back for a wrong
 6. Not to agree to something
 8. Having deep religious commitment
 10. To agree to something; give permission
 12. A place someone lives

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5. **An Analogy Game: Use twelve of the new words to fill in the blanks.**

Uncircumcised, persecuted, and mistreat will not be used.

- a. Rose is to flower as cabin is to _____.
- b. George Washington is to American patriot as _____ is to Jewish patriarch.
- c. Slap is to hands as _____ is to teeth.
- d. Smile is to frown as yield is to r_____.
- e. Laugh is to chuckle as give permission is to _____.
- f. Taiwan is to island as Sinai Desert is to _____.
- g. Love is to hate as forgive is to _____.
- h. Interested is to bored as open-minded is to _____.
- i. Feast is to plenty as _____ is to lacking.
- j. Curious is to question as _____ is to worship.
- k. Heed is to ignore as care for is to _____.
- l. Patriot is to help as spy is to _____.

(Answers are at the end.)

Answers for the Matching Game: 1-O, 2-G, 3-J, 4-M, 5-H, 6-E, 7-D, 8-B, 9-F, 10-C, 11-L, 12-A, 13-N, 14-I, 15-K (If you matched the words in three minutes or less, I can't resist congratulating you!)

Answers for the fill-in-the-blank exercise: a.) devout b.) Abraham c.) famine d.) abandon e.) mistreating or mistreat f.) avenge g.) wilderness h.) abode i.) stiff-necked j.) uncircumcised k.) resisted l.) persecuted m.) betrayed n.) gnashed o.) consented

Answers for the Analogy Game: a.) abode b.) Abraham c.) gnash d.) resist e.) consent f.) wilderness g.) avenge h.) stiff-necked i.) famine j.) devout k.) abandon l.) betray

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Investigating Acts 7 Stephen's Bold Testimony

I. Stephen's Answer to the Accusations

A. Stephen was allowed to speak to the ruling, high council after the false witnesses had accused him of having taught against the temple and Moses. In **Acts 7:1-8**, Stephen began with God's choice of Abraham and told how God made promises to him long before fulfilling them.

B. Next Stephen spoke about Joseph, a descendant of Abraham.

Acts 7:9-14, ⁹“The patriarchs [the Israelite tribes' ancestors, i.e., Joseph and his brothers], because of their jealousy of Joseph, sold him into Egypt. But God was with him. ¹⁰ He rescued him from his troubles and gave him favor and wisdom with the Pharaoh, king of Egypt. The Pharaoh made Joseph governor over Egypt and over all his household. ¹¹ Now there was a famine over all Egypt and Canaan [an area including Israel], bringing great suffering. Our ancestors found no food. ¹² But when Jacob [Joseph's father] heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent Joseph's brothers there the first time. ¹³ Then during their second visit, Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to Pharaoh. ¹⁴ So Joseph invited his father Jacob and his relatives, seventy-five people in all, to come to him there . . .”

1. Did Joseph's brothers accept Joseph's leadership at first?
2. Also, they didn't know who Joseph was until their second visit to Egypt. Stephen was pointing out the history of their ancestors' failure to recognize and accept deliverers, the greatest of whom would be the Messiah, who would fulfill God's promise to Abraham.

C. Stephen then dealt with the charge against him about Moses.

Acts 7:17-25, ¹⁷“But as the time approached for the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham, the number of the Israelite people multiplied in Egypt, ¹⁸ until there arose another king over Egypt who did not know about Joseph. ¹⁹ This ruler took advantage of our people and was cruel to our forefathers, forcing them to abandon their babies so that they would not live. ²⁰ Moses was born at that time, and he was pleasing to God. He was brought up for three months in his father's house, ²¹ and when he was abandoned, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. ²² Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds. ²³ But when he was about forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his fellow countrymen, the children of Israel. ²⁴ Seeing one of them being mistreated, he defended him and avenged the man by killing the Egyptian. ²⁵ He thought that his own people would understand that God was delivering them by his hand, but they did not understand . . .”

Acts 7:35-39, ³⁵“This is Moses, whom his people rejected, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’ Through the angel who appeared to him in the bush, God sent Moses to be both a ruler and a deliverer. ³⁶ He led his people forward, having worked wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and in the wilderness for forty years. ³⁷ This is the same Moses, who told the children of Israel, ‘God will raise up a prophet like me from among your fellow Israelites.’ ³⁸ This is he who was in the assembly in the wilderness with our ancestors and with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and he received living messages to give us. ³⁹ Our ancestors would not be obedient to Moses, but rejected him and turned back in their hearts to Egypt.”

Here is Stephen's answer to the charge about Moses:

1. Moses had received the Law and had predicted a future great _____, who would also be a Deliverer. The council would have understood that Stephen was telling them that Jesus was that Deliverer, predicted by the very one responsible for the Mosaic Law.
2. The Jews had a history of not listening to Moses. Stephen had been accused of speaking against Moses and the Mosaic Law, but Stephen was making it clear that it was the council who actually was rejecting Moses' words just as their ancestors had twice.

D. Following this, Stephen dealt with the temple accusation.

Acts 7:46-50, ⁴⁶“David, who found favor in the sight of God, asked to find an abode for the God of Jacob. ⁴⁷ But Solomon built him a house [the first temple]. ⁴⁸ However, the Most High does not dwell in houses made with hands, as the prophet [Isaiah] recorded:

⁴⁹ ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth is the footstool for my feet. What manner of house will you build me?’ says the Lord, ‘or what is the place of my rest? ⁵⁰ Did not my hand make all these things?’”

In Acts 6, we saw how Stephen's false accusers had twisted Jesus' words and said Stephen had spoken, like Jesus, about destroying the temple. Here Stephen spoke well of the temple, but pointed out that God was not limited by the man-made temple.

E. Finally, Stephen applies his message to the hardhearted religious leaders.

Acts 7:51-53, ⁵¹“You stiff-necked men, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit, just as your forefathers did. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your forefathers not persecute? They killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One [Messiah/Christ], whom you have now betrayed and murdered. ⁵³ You who received the law as it was given through angels have not kept it.”

II. The Council's Reaction

Acts 7:54-58, ⁵⁴ Now when they heard these things, they were enraged, and they gnashed their teeth at him. ⁵⁵ But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶ Stephen said, “Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” ⁵⁷ But they cried out with a loud voice and covered their ears. All together, they rushed upon him. ⁵⁸ They forced him out of the city and stoned him, and the witnesses laid their cloaks at the feet of a young man named Saul.

Why were they so angry?

1. Stephen had based his words on the _____. They couldn't ignore them.
2. They were being accused of the worst _____ they could ever commit.
3. Stephen's vision proved what Jesus had said to this same council. **Matt. 26:64, ⁶⁴ Jesus answered, “. . . Nevertheless, I say to you, from now on, you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power and coming on the clouds of heaven.”**

III. The Results

Acts 7:59-60, 8:1-3, ⁵⁹ As they were stoning Stephen, he called on the Lord, saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” ⁶⁰ He knelt and cried with a loud voice, “Lord, do not count this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep, ¹ and Saul was consenting to Stephen's death. There arose on that day a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem, and except for the apostles, they were all scattered throughout the regions of

Judea and Samaria. ² Devout men buried Stephen and deeply mourned for him. ³ But Saul worked to destroy the church; entering into house after house, he dragged out men and women and put them in prison.

A. Stephen's attitude and words were almost the same as his Lord's words as he died on the cross. Jesus had said, **"Father, into your hands I commit my spirit"** (Luke 23:46) and **"Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"** (Luke 23:34).

B. Until this time, the Christians had escaped when imprisoned and avoided death.

1. What do you think the Christians were wondering when God allowed this powerful follower of Jesus to be killed? Do we ever question Christians' deaths?
2. Here are some good, long-term results of Stephen's death:
 - a. Stephen's witness and death gave more evidence about Jesus to the religious leaders, especially to a Pharisee named Saul, who is a chief focus of Acts from chapter 9.
 - b. The persecution that began with Stephen's death forced Christians to go to other places and begin to carry out their mission to "go into all the world."
 - c. Stephen himself earned the heavenly reward of a martyr (Matthew 5:11-12). In Stephen's dying vision, Jesus was standing to receive him.
 - d. Stephen's certainty about Jesus as the resurrected Messiah still speaks to us today.

C. The apostle Paul wrote in **Romans 8:35-39**, ³⁵ **Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will trouble, or suffering, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword?** ³⁶ **Even as it is written, 'For your sake we are killed all day long; we were thought of as sheep to be slaughtered.'** ³⁷ **No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us!** ³⁸ **For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers,** ³⁹ **nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation, can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!**

D. **Psalm 23**, the most famous psalm, shows two truths about the lives of God's followers.

¹ **The Lord God is my shepherd; I have what I need.** ² **He enables me to lie down in green pastures [fields]. He leads me beside still waters.** ³ **He restores my soul. He guides me in the right paths for his name's sake.** ⁴ **Yes, although I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me. Your rod and your staff comfort me.** ⁵ **You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil. My cup runs over.** ⁶ **Surely goodness and lovingkindness shall follow me all the days of my life, and I will live in the house of the Lord forever.**

What do you see about an abundant life and also about possible trouble or danger in Psalm 23? Which wins in the end? Why?

III. Making Memories

What is a key truth from Acts 7 that you want to remember?

Mark one important verse in Acts 7 that will help you remember what happened in this chapter.

Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version, with the English updated to modern usage. The NET Bible® was consulted from time to time to confirm or adopt apt words or phrases.

1. **Treasure Hunt: In Acts 8:4-40, mark the sixteen vocabulary words listed in #2.** Also note the words these previous words: *proclaim, lame, apostle, perish, repent, authority, and prophet.*

Acts 8:4-8, ⁴ Therefore, those who had been forced to scatter went around preaching the good news of the word. ⁵ Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed Christ there. ⁶ Large numbers of people paid attention with one mind to what Philip was saying when they heard and saw the miraculous signs which he did. ⁷ For unclean spirits came out of many people, crying out with loud voices, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸ And there was much joy in that city.

Acts 8:9-25, ⁹ There was a certain man there named Simon, who earlier had used sorcery in the city and had amazed the Samaritans, making them think he was someone great. ¹⁰ All the people had paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is that Power of God which is called Great.” ¹¹ They had paid careful attention to him because he had amazed them with his sorceries for a long time. ¹² But when they believed the good news Philip preached concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³ Simon himself also believed, and after being baptized, he stayed close to Philip. When he saw the signs and great miracles being performed, he was amazed.

¹⁴ Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵ When they came down, they prayed that these Samaritans might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶ for as yet, the Spirit had come upon none of them. They had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ Now when Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹ saying, “Give me this power also so that whomever I lay hands on may receive the Holy Spirit.”

²⁰ But Peter said to him, “Your silver perish with you because you thought to obtain the gift of God with money. ²¹ You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. ²² Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray for the Lord to perhaps forgive the thought of your heart, ²³ for I see that you are bitterly jealous and are in the bondage of sin.”

²⁴ Simon answered, “Pray for me to the Lord, that none of the things you have said happens to me.”

²⁵ After testifying and speaking the word of the Lord, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.

Acts 8:26-40 ²⁶ But an angel of the Lord told Philip, “Get up and go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza—a desert area.” ²⁷ Philip got up and went. He came across a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He was in charge of all her treasury and had come to Jerusalem to worship. ²⁸ He was returning home and was sitting in his chariot, reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ The Spirit said to Philip, “Go near, and attach yourself to this chariot.” ³⁰ Philip ran to the eunuch and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet. Philip asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹ He answered, “How can I unless someone guides

me?” And he implored Philip to come up and sit with him. ³² Now the scripture passage which he was reading was this:

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³³ In his humiliation, justice for him was taken away.

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³⁴ The eunuch said to Philip, “Tell me, I beg you, of whom is the prophet speaking? Of himself or of someone else?” ³⁵ Then Philip, beginning from this scripture, preached the message of Jesus to him. ³⁶ As they went on their way, they came to some water. The eunuch said, “Look, here is water. What hinders me from being baptized?” ³⁸ He commanded the chariot to stand still. Both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water, and Philip baptized him. ³⁹ When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away. The eunuch, who did not see Philip any longer, went on his way rejoicing. ⁴⁰ But Philip was found at Azotus. As he traveled through the area, he preached the gospel to all the cities until he came to Caesarea.

2. **Read Acts 8:4-40 in your own language. Then play this quick matching game.** Time yourself. Can you do it in three minutes?

- | | |
|-----------------------|--|
| _____ 1. paralyzed | A. To get, gain |
| _____ 2. sorcery | B. To state a truth one knows; to give evidence |
| _____ 3. Samaria | C. Captivity, slavery |
| _____ 4. obtain | D. To kill; to butcher an animal; to massacre |
| _____ 5. portion | E. Anger, especially at being mistreated, deep resentment |
| _____ 6. wickedness | F. Witchcraft; (black) magic; wizardry |
| _____ 7. bitterness | G. A man who no longer has certain male organs |
| _____ 8. testify | H. The teaching and good news of Jesus Christ |
| _____ 9. bondage | I. A person who cuts the wool off an animal |
| _____ 10. gospel | J. Being unable to move all or part of the body |
| _____ 11. eunuch | K. To cause a difficulty resulting in a delay; to hold back, |
| _____ 12. implore | L. Disgrace, shame, having been dishonored |
| _____ 13. slaughter | M. A city and area of land in the central part of Israel. |
| _____ 14. shearer | N. To beg, plead, ask fervently |
| _____ 15. humiliation | O. A part or piece of something |
| _____ 16. hinder | P. Evil, sinfulness |

(Answers are at the end.)

3. **Try to use the new words to fill in the blanks without looking at #2 above.**

- God used Philip to heal many _____ and lame Samaritans, which amazed Simon.
- Simon had practiced _____ before learning about Jesus.
- Simon offered to pay money to _____ the Holy Spirit’s power.
- Peter told Simon that he needed to repent of his w _____.
- Simon’s jealousy caused his heart to be full of _____.
- Unforgiveness and jealousy can cause people to be in _____ to these sins.
- Samaria occupied the central _____ of Israel.

- h. The Christians cared about the people in _____, but most Jews disliked them because many of the Samaritans' ancestors had married with non-Jews and worshiped idols.
- i. After correcting Simon, Peter and John continued to _____ about Jesus in Samaria.
- j. Then they also preached the _____ in Samaritan villages on their return trip.
- k. The unusual nature of God's command did not _____ Philip from obeying it.
- l. The _____ was reading one of Isaiah's prophecies about the Messiah.
- m. Isaiah had told how the Messiah would be _____, treated almost like an animal.
- n. The prophet also compared the Messiah's silence to that of a sheep with its _____.
- o. The eunuch _____ Philip to help him understand the prophecy.
- p. Philip explained why the Messiah was denied justice during his _____ before his judges and on the cross.

(Answers are at the end.)

4. An Analogy Game: Use fourteen of the vocabulary words to fill in the blanks.

- a. A customer is to a barber as a sheep is to a _____.
- b. Carefree is to worried as freedom is to _____.
- c. A pie is to a piece as the whole is to a _____.
- d. In fairytales, good fairies are to magic as evil witches are to _____.
- e. Save is to rescue as beg is to _____.
- f. Success is to praise as failure is to _____.
- g. Oklahoma is to Texas as _____ was to Judea.
- h. Joy is to sorrow as contentment is to _____.
- i. Find is to lose as help is to _____.
- j. Chop is to tree as _____ is to animal.
- k. Kindness is to goodness as envy is to _____.
- l. Messiah is to anointed one as _____ is to good news.
- m. Lie is to falsehood as _____ is to fact.
- n. Discard is to throw away as _____ is to gain.

(Answers are at the end.)

5. Use the new words to complete this little tale. Two words will not be used, and one will be used twice.

- a. Ted Johnson hired George Wilson, a nearby farmer who owned several sheep, to be a _____ for his own large flock. George had been recommended by Ted's neighbor. The day after the shearing, Ted checked on his flock and found to his horror that a large _____ of his sheep were missing and his largest ram had been _____ with a bloody knife. Although he could not understand how a quiet man like George could do such _____, Ted told the county sheriff that George had killed one sheep and had stolen twelve others. The sheriff, who was Ted's friend, _____ a warrant for George's arrest. George _____ the sheriff not to take him to jail. He said the boy who assisted him all day could _____ to his innocence. The sheriff said to tell that to the judge.
- b. During the trial, George was nearly _____ by his fear of being found guilty. However, the jury did not convict him. After the trial, George was consumed with anger about the _____ of his arrest. The only thing that _____ him from beating up Ted was the fear of another arrest. He hardly ate or slept because of his

_____. Although he had attended church before his arrest, he stopped going and even foolishly thought about looking for someone who could use _____ to put a curse on Ted.

- c. George's worried wife tried to make him see that he was in _____ to his anger. She reminded him of the _____ and how Jesus had forgiven them, but that made him angry at her too.
- d. Two months later, the sheriff and Ted came to George's home to apologize. Ted's neighbor, who blamed both Ted and George for having married his former sweethearts, had turned out to be the guilty one. George started to kick the two men out of his house, but then he saw tears in his wife's eyes and realized _____ really had been controlling his life. He accepted the men's apologies, and later he did something harder. He apologized to his patient wife. He had to admit she was smart too. After all, she'd married him instead of Ted's neighbor.

(Answers are at the end.)

Answers for the Matching Game: 1-J, 2-F, 3-M, 4-A, 5-O, 6-P, 7-E, 8-B, 9-C, 10-H, 11-G, 12-N, 13-D, 14-I, 15-L, 16-K (If you matched the words within three minutes, these words will never hinder you! ☺)

Answers for the fill-in-the-blank exercise: a.) paralyzed b.) sorcery c.) obtain d.) wickedness e.) bitterness f.) bondage g.) portion h.) Samaria i.) testify j.) gospel k.) hinder l.) eunuch m.) slaughtered n.) shearer(s) o.) implored p.) humiliation

Answers for the Analogy Game: a.) shearer b.) bondage c.) portion d.) sorcery e.) implore f.) humiliation g.) Samaria h. bitterness i. hinder j. slaughter k. wickedness l.) gospel m.) testify n.) obtain

Answers for the little tale: a.) shearer, portion, slaughtered, wickedness, obtained, implored, testify. b.) paralyzed, humiliation, hindered, bitterness, sorcery. c.) bondage, gospel. d.) bitterness.

Scripture quotations are from the American Standard Version, with the English updated to modern usage. The NET Bible® was consulted from time to time to confirm or adopt apt words or phrases.

Investigating Acts 8 Availability

Background: Acts 6 told how Philip was chosen as one of the seven men (deacons) to help organize the distribution of food. These men were “full of God’s Spirit” and wise. Philip humbly served his fellow Christians and also became a preacher of the gospel. Luke knew the details about Philip’s actions because Paul and Luke spent a “number of days” with Philip (Acts 21:8).

I. Philip and the Magician in Samaria

Acts 8:4-8, ⁴ Therefore, those who had been forced to scatter went around preaching the good news of the word. ⁵ Philip went down to a city in Samaria and proclaimed Christ there. ⁶ Large numbers of people paid attention with one mind to what Philip was saying when they heard and saw the miraculous signs which he did. ⁷ For unclean spirits came out of many people, crying out with loud voices, and many who were paralyzed or lame were healed. ⁸ And there was much joy in that city.

Acts 8:9-25, ⁹ There was a certain man there named Simon, who earlier had used sorcery in the city and had amazed the Samaritans, making them think he was someone great. ¹⁰ All the people had paid attention to him, from the least to the greatest, saying, “This man is that Power of God which is called Great.” ¹¹ They had paid careful attention to him because he had amazed them with his sorceries for a long time. ¹² But when they believed the good news Philip preached concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. ¹³ Simon himself also believed, and after being baptized, he stayed close to Philip. When he saw the signs and great miracles being performed, he was amazed.

¹⁴ Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵ When they came down, they prayed that these Samaritans might receive the Holy Spirit, ¹⁶ for as yet, the Spirit had come upon none of them. They had simply been baptized into the name of the Lord Jesus. ¹⁷ Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit. ¹⁸ Now when Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given through the laying on of the apostles’ hands, he offered them money, ¹⁹ saying, “Give me this power also so that whomever I lay hands on may receive the Holy Spirit.”

²⁰ But Peter said to him, “Your silver perish with you because you thought to obtain the gift of God with money. ²¹ You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. ²² Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray for the Lord to perhaps forgive the thought of your heart, ²³ for I see that you are bitterly jealous and are in the bondage of sin.”

²⁴ Simon answered, “Pray for me to the Lord, that none of the things you have said happens to me.”

²⁵ After testifying and speaking the word of the Lord, Peter and John returned to Jerusalem, preaching the gospel in many Samaritan villages.

- A. God did miracles through Philip, and the Holy Spirit was given when Peter and John arrived.
1. God used some of the earliest Christians to miraculously heal people to prove the truth of their message. Simon, who either depended on tricks or evil spirits, was amazed to see this real power of God in Philip’s ministry.

2. In Acts 10, the first Gentile (non-Jewish) believers also received the Holy Spirit when Peter preached to them. What do you think was God’s purpose in having the Samaritans (half-Jews) and the Gentiles receive the Holy Spirit through the original Jewish disciples? Here’s a verse that helps to show the purpose: Jesus had said in **John 10:16**, **“I have other sheep which are not of this fold [sheep pen]. I must bring them also, and they will hear my voice. They will become one flock, with one shepherd [who is Jesus].”**

Even though Christians now belong to different Christian denominations (groups) and different cultures, all are united as members of God’s Kingdom—in one “flock.” Belonging to Christ is the most important citizenship and identity we can have!

3. Christians now receive the Holy Spirit when they put their trust in Jesus as their Savior, not through the touch of someone’s hands. **Romans 8:9**, **“But you are not in the flesh [under the old nature’s power] but in the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. But if any man does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his.**
4. Peter and John preached the gospel in Samaritan villages on their way home. What a big change from when John and his brother in Luke 9:51-55 had wanted to call down fire to destroy a Samaritan village that didn’t welcome Jesus!

B. Peter called Simon wicked for requesting to buy the power to give the Holy Spirit.

1. Let’s think about why Simon might have wanted to buy this ability.
What was Simon called **before** Philip came?
What must have happened to his reputation?
2. Here is another reason that Simon’s request was wicked. His request insulted the character of God and the apostles. What had Jesus and the apostles already suffered because of their deep care and love for others?
3. Simon’s earlier sorcery might have depended on the power of evil spirits. If so, no wonder Peter corrected Simon in such strong language!
4. Simon had a terrible idea, but do Christians ever have ideas based on similar values?
Are Christians ever jealous of other people’s success?
Are Christians ever materialistic (focusing mostly on money and position)?
Do Christians ever want to get the glory for something that God does?
We need God’s power to resist these attitudes that can come from our old natures.

II. Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch

Acts 8:26-40, ²⁶ But an angel of the Lord told Philip, “Get up and go south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza—a desert area.” ²⁷ Philip got up and went. He came across a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace, queen of the Ethiopians. He was in charge of all her treasury and had come to Jerusalem to worship. ²⁸ He was returning home and was sitting in his chariot, reading the prophet Isaiah. ²⁹ The Spirit said to Philip, “Go near, and attach yourself to this chariot.” ³⁰ Philip ran to the eunuch and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet. Philip asked, “Do you understand what you are reading?” ³¹ He answered, “How can I unless someone guides me?” And he implored Philip to come up and sit with him. ³² Now the scripture passage which he was reading was this:

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A. The eunuch was reading **Isaiah 53:7-8**, which is clearly about the Messiah/Christ. This was written in the Old Testament more than 500 years before Jesus. The rest of the chapter is also very clear, such as **Isaiah 53:6**, **⁶ All we like sheep have gone astray. Every one of us has turned to his own way, and God has laid on him [the Messiah] the sin of us all.**

1. The eunuch had been to Jerusalem to worship God, and he wanted to understand Isaiah’s words. Jesus promised in **Mathew 7:7**, **⁷ “Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.”** God uses the Bible, His Word, to speak to people’s hearts. Is there a Bible verse that has spoken to your heart recently?
2. Let’s think about Philip’s ministry on the desert road, and what it can say to us.
 - a. Leaving a successful ministry and taking a lonely desert road might have seemed _____ to some people. But Philip obeyed God.
 - b. First, Philip listened to the eunuch. Next, he questioned him to learn his situation. Then he explained the gospel—a good pattern to follow.

B. Philip was having a big ministry in Samaria. Many people were becoming Christians, but God sent him on a lonely road to one man who needed to hear the gospel. Can you remember a time when you were led by God to do something that seemed to take time away from important or enjoyable activities, but turned out beautifully?

C. Baptism is a symbol of trust in Jesus as one’s Savior. The eunuch was eager to take this step.

D. God didn’t leave Philip on the desert road. One step of obedience led to the next step. About twenty years later, Paul and Luke visited Philip and his family in Caesarea, a very important Roman port that you can read about: <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/vie-caesarea>

III. Making Memories

What is a key truth from Acts 8 that you want to remember?

Underline or highlight one important verse in Acts 8 that will help you remember what took place in this chapter.

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