

WORSHIP

SUGGESTED WORSHIP SONGS:

Amazing God, Can't Stop Singing, Alive In You, Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

WELCOME

What situations make it difficult for you to speak the truth? Have you experienced being attacked verbally or physically because you spoke the truth about God (e.g., the gospel)? How did you respond?

WORD

ACTS 7:54-60

⁵⁴Now when they heard this, they were cut to the quick, and they began gnashing their teeth at him. ⁵⁵But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; ⁵⁶and he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." ⁵⁷But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears and rushed at him with one impulse. ⁵⁸When they had driven him out of the city, they began stoning him; and the witnesses laid aside their robes at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹They went on stoning Stephen as he called on the Lord and said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" ⁶⁰Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Having said this, he fell asleep.

How many of you want to live your life to the full? The truth is, life is short. A full life is not about acquiring money, popularity, and power. It is knowing that you do not fear death and you look forward to meeting your Maker and Master with no regrets at the end of your earthly life.

The story of Stephen shows a life lived to the fullest extent. It's an example of how being Spirit-filled can bring the best form of success. At the end of his life, and in the midst of the onslaught of angry crowd, Stephen received a "standing ovation" from the Lord Jesus Christ himself (**Acts 7:55-56**). Though not an apostle, Stephen is proof that God can use ordinary people to make lasting impact, when this person is FULLY SURRENDERED to the Spirit (**Acts 1:8**). A Spirit-filled person like Stephen has...

1. GRACE AND POWER

The ordinary becomes extraordinary as God's Spirit works in and through us. We need to be filled by the Spirit so we can have **the power to DO WHAT IS RIGHT**. The grace of GOD will help you deal with difficult situations and to season your words with kindness and light even when you're under intense pressure. God's power is demonstrated in different ways. Stephen was full of grace and power (**Acts 6:8**) and he performed wonders and signs that today, are often seen through **TESTIMONIES OF CHANGED LIVES**. Only God can change the heart of people. If you want to see your life transformed and lived to the full, be filled with the Spirit.

2. WISDOM

We see the wisdom of Stephen in his defense, as he preached about their forefathers who TRUSTED and OBEYED GOD.

So Stephen testified about how God is all-powerful and He is not confined in the temple or in Jerusalem. God is always at work in the lives of His people, no matter where they are as demonstrated in the lives of Israel's forefathers:

ABRAHAM – in faith left his country not knowing where he would go in obedience to GOD, not tradition (**Acts 7:1-8**)

JOSEPH – his faith and obedience toward GOD remained steadfast in spite of betrayal by his, false accusations and being thrown into prison for it (**Acts 7:9-16**).

MOSES – The **first forty years** of Moses was spent in Egypt in a foreign culture. He was well-educated and set up for life as the adopted son of Pharaoh's daughter. In the **second forty years**, Moses lived an alien in Midian as an insignificant shepherd — a nobody. In the **third forty years**, he discovered that a nobody can be somebody when he was given a mission to set God's people free (**Acts 7:17-45**).

DAVID – David wanted to build the temple of GOD but his son Solomon was the one who did. Stephen, in wisdom, spoke the truth that God does not dwell in places made by human hands (**Acts 7:46-50**).

WORD (cont'd)

3. COURAGE

As we are filled by the Spirit, we are also able to face the inevitable — conflicts, oppositions, and even death as we speak and stand for God's truth. Unless you are filled by the Spirit of GOD, you will not be able to speak the truth or defend it successfully.

Stephen had the courage to address his accusers as a stiff-necked people and even called them law-breakers and murderers for what they did to Jesus Christ (**Acts 7:51-53**). This boldness in eventually led to his death by stoning and became the first martyr of the early church. Look, however, at the amazing peace of Stephen: He prayed to the Lord and asked for Him to receive his spirit (**Acts 7:59**), Stephen even cried out with a loud voice not to hold his accusers' sin against them (**Acts 7:60**).

People who don't know the Lord don't die well. They are full of fear and regrets. **Death, for Christians, is not the end. It's the beginning of eternity.** The way Stephen faced death in all likelihood, deeply affected Paul (*referred to in this part of Acts as Saul who have approved of the stoning of Stephen*), such that he faced his impending death with much readiness, holding firmly to the promised rewards (**2 Timothy 4:6-8**). Many times, you don't see the impact of your life — Stephen never knew how his death brought about the spread of the gospel beyond Jerusalem as God originally commanded the early church to do. Keep living life to the full, filled with the Spirit, so that you will be able to endure and be fruitful. May it be that at the end of our lives we will be able to see the kind of welcome from Jesus Christ, *that standing ovation*, that Stephen had experienced (**vv. 55-56**) Live life to the FULL. Be Spirit-filled!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

(Leaders: Please choose questions that are appropriate to the level of spiritual maturity of your members)

1. What did you like most about Stephen's defense or sermon? How's your attitude when facing conflicts and oppositions? Have you been more rooted lately in the Word?
2. Reflect upon your responses to tough situations and even your outlook in life. Are you living your life to the full? Ask the Holy Spirit to show you these things and allow you to repent and correct these.
3. What can you do to live your life to the full? Are there people in your life (family, school workplace) that need to hear about the hope you have in Christ?

WORKS

PRAY CARE SHARE IN ACTION

This week, pray for those who persecute you or at the very least give you a hard time whenever you share Christ with them. Continue to show care and be ready to speak God's truth, the gospel, to them even when faced with difficulties in doing so.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Upright and moral governance of Public Servants and a God-centered Philippines
- Repentance and Salvation

III. Church

- That CCF Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Elders, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Facilities

- Worship and Training Center
- Prayer Mountain

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends