

**Ice Breaker:**

Recall a time where you said you had to see something in order to believe it.

**Groups Discussion Questions:**

Read this passage from Acts together:

*4 The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. 2 They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people, proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. 3 They seized Peter and John and, because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. 4 But many who heard the message believed; so the number of men who believed grew to about five thousand.*

*5 The next day the rulers, the elders and the teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. 6 Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and others of the high priest's family. 7 They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?"*

*8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! 9 If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a man who was lame and are being asked how he was healed, 10 then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. 11 Jesus is*

*"the stone you builders rejected,  
which has become the cornerstone." [a]*

*12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved."*

*13 When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.*

What stood out to you and why?

Peter and John were not impressive people. According to verse 13, they were unschooled and ordinary. How does verse 13 relate to 2 Corinthians 4:7

*7 But we have this treasure in jars of clay, to show that the surpassing power belongs to God and not to us.*

How does this speak to you?

Read this passage from Acts together:

### The Choosing of the Seven

**6** In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. **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."

**5** This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. **6** They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

**7** So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

### Stephen Seized

**8** Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. **9** Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen. **10** But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

**11** Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God."

What kind of role was Stephen chosen for?

Why were seven people chosen for that role?

How did Stephen's role aid the apostles?

Why did some people not like Stephen?

Have you ever faced a situation like that? What happened?

Even though teaching the word was not Stephen's primary role, he still knew it. In Chapter 7, Stephen goes on to give a beautiful, powerful message proclaiming who Jesus is, starting with Abraham, and going all the way through the Old Testament to Solomon. Then he said this:

**51** *"You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! 52 Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— 53 you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it."*

Why or how do you think he was so bold?

Have you ever said something to the effect, "I am not a pastor so I don't have to know the Bible or hide the word in my heart."?

How would Stephen's story contradict that thinking?

At the end of the Message, Eric asked about several Characters. How did you answer these questions:

**Are you Peter and John?**

Do people recognize that you have been with Jesus?

Continue to spend time with Jesus because you love Him, and your life will point to Him.

### **Are you Stephen?**

Do people see the light and grace of Jesus reflecting from you?

Continue to serve and forgive and Jesus has shown you. Those who live and serve with the humility and love of Christ will “shine among them like stars in the sky”

### **Or Are you Saul?**

Have you trusted in your own eyes, and not realized that you were spiritual blind?

Repent. Ask as Saul did, “Lord Jesus, what do you want me to do?”

When Paul recounts the story of his conversion in Acts 20, we read that he answered Jesus:

“**10** “What shall I do, Lord?” I asked.”

Be open to His leading. Desire to see with God’s eyes.

### **Are you Ananias?**

Have you been given a vision by God that is frightening, but that you must believe in faith?

## **Prayer Requests**

## **Digging Deeper:**

Continue reading from Acts 7&8:

**54** *When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. 55* *But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56* *“Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”*

*57 At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, 58 dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.*

*59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.*

**8**

*1 And Saul approved of their killing him.*

How did Stephen reflect Christ in his death?

Stephen's prayer was answered in Saul/Paul's life. The very man who oversaw his murder, encountered Jesus days later. Who are your enemies?

How can you pray for them?

Do you believe God will change their hearts?