

# BOOK OF ACTS WEEK 8

## FLOURISHING GRACE SMALL GROUP CODE

### **Engagement:**

Each person will get out of their small group what they put into the group. Make sure everyone in the group gets a chance to engage. If you tend to talk more than others be sensitive to how much you may dominate the conversation. If you tend to talk less make sure you work to speak up in your **group**. Your voice is valuable to others in your group and community; growth can't happen without engagement.

### **Confidentiality:**

We long for our groups to be places of authentic community. The only way this happens is through vulnerable conversations in which we share personal parts of our lives and confess our sin together. Anything and everything that is shared in the group must stay in the group.

### **Speech:**

We must fight against gossip, grumbling, and complaining. Our speech should build up our group not burden our group (Ephesians 4:29). We also must keep our conversation focused when our group meets. Groups gather to study the word and connect together please avoid personal rabbit trails or off topic subjects.

### **It takes more than one day and one person:**

Small groups are about relationships. True relationships are not built by one person on one day a week. Step up to help your leader - they can't do it all alone. Everyone in the group should be serving the group - volunteer to host, volunteer to bring a snack, volunteer to give them a week off. Follow up and engage the members of your group during the week: one day a week does not build authentic community.

## PRAY

Around the group have each person share one prayer request for the week.

Open a time of prayer inviting one person or the whole group (if they feel comfortable) to pray for the needs of the group and for God to bless our students who are going to camp next week!

## BACKGROUND

Acts 6 & 7 is devoted to the story of one man; Stephen. Stephen has been known throughout history as the first martyr of the Christian faith. Stephen was a Hellenist which means a greek speaking jew. He is appointed by the apostles to take care of the Hellenistic widows in the early church. Both Stephen's native language and his strong character earn him the role among the first deacons. We learn in chapter 6 vs 8 that Stephen is filled with "grace and power". He is known among the people as unbelievably kind, gracious, and caring. Yet, he walks in the full power of the Holy Spirit. These characteristics surprisingly get him into trouble with one of the local synagogues. They become so frustrated by their inability to argue with him about the gospel that they devise a plan and ultimately kill him.

## OPEN

First, have a group member read **Acts 6 & 7** (yes, its a long one so listen up)

Have you ever had to confront someone

## REFLECT

What are some of the characteristics given to Stephen in 6:1-6?

Why do you think the apostles looked for young men with those characteristics to take serve tables and care for widows?

Why do those from the synagogue of the Freedmen devise a plot against Stephen? (6:8-15)

In Chapter 7:1-53 we have Stephens great speech. If you had to summarize this speech in just 3 words how would you summarize it? (It may be good to have someone in the group reread this section of the text)

What is Stephen ultimately communicating in his speech to those in the synagogue that day? (7:51-53)

The speech makes the people furious but it is what happens in verses 54 & 56 that ultimately lead to Stephens death. What happens and why do they kill him for it?

What are Stephens last words? (vs 59-60)

## APPLY

What are the volunteer positions in the church today that might be viewed as less important than others?

Why do you think this is?

How do you think Stephens role of serving tables would be viewed today?

What do these chapters teach us about how the Holy Spirit views/engages those who hold various roles within the Church? Does Stephen have less of the Holy Spirit than an apostle or elder? Does he demonstrate less wisdom or power?

When the local church is filled with people who are filled with the power of the Spirit and yet faithfully serve in any role what happens? (6:7)

How do we build a culture of Spirit Filled Service at Flourishing Grace?

What can we learn from Stephens speech? Left to ourselves, apart from the Holy Spirit, how do we respond to Gods leadership and care over our lives?

What is the greatest difference between Stephen and the men in the synagogue that day?

## CLOSE

What is one thing in this passage that stuck out to you personally and why?

**NEXT WEEK'S TEXT: Acts 8**