



Sermon Study Guide

Standing Firm When It Costs You Everything

The Bold Faith of Stephen

Big Idea

Following Jesus means choosing what is of most importance—God's truth and mercy—even when it costs us our comfort, safety, or life.

Understanding the Context

Stephen was one of the first seven men chosen to serve as deacons in the early Jerusalem church. At this time, the church was growing rapidly but also facing increasing opposition from religious leaders. Stephen's speech in Acts 7 is the longest in the book of Acts. In it, he summarizes Israel's history to show that God is not confined to a building (the Temple) and that religious leaders have a history of rejecting God's messengers. His "defense" was not a legal plea for safety, but a Spirit-led prophetic challenge to those resisting the Gospel.

Core Passage

Acts 6:8–15; 7:51–60

Core Principle

A life full of the Holy Spirit is marked by bold witness and radical forgiveness, mirroring the character of Jesus even in the face of persecution.

Day 1: Observe

Scripture Focus

Acts 6:8–15

Key Insight

Stephen is described as a man "full of grace and power." Even when faced with false accusations and a hostile council, his presence reflected the peace and glory of God (his face was "like the face of an angel").

Reflection Questions

1. What stands out most to you about Stephen's demeanor when he was under attack?
2. What does this teach me about how God empowers His servants during trials?
3. Do I tend to rely on my own "strength" or God's "grace and power" when I feel challenged?

Prayer Prompt

Lord, fill me with Your Holy Spirit today. Help me to reflect Your grace and peace, regardless of the circumstances I face.

Day 2: Understand

Scripture Focus

Acts 7:51–56

Key Insight

Stephen chose to speak the hard truth rather than a "safe" lie. His priority was the word of God, not his physical safety. Because he looked toward heaven, he saw the reality of Jesus' authority while the world around him was in chaos.

Reflection Questions

1. Why was it necessary for Stephen to be so bold with the council?
2. What "worldview" did Stephen have that allowed him to value God's word over his own life?
3. In what areas of my life am I tempted to "shrink back" from the truth to avoid conflict?

Prayer Prompt

Father, give me the wisdom to know what is truly important. Open my eyes to see the glory of Jesus so that I am not intimidated by the world.

Day 3: Examine

Scripture Focus

Matthew 5:10–12, 44–45

Heart Check Questions

1. When I am mistreated, is my first instinct to seek vengeance or to pray for mercy?
2. What fears or habits prevent me from being a bold witness for Christ?
3. Is there someone in my life right now that I consider an "enemy" whom I need to pray for?

Prayer Prompt

Father, may your Holy Spirit convict my heart where I have held onto bitterness. Teach me to love my enemies as Christ loved me while I was still His enemy.

Day 4: Practice

Scripture Focus

Acts 7:59–60

Application Questions

1. Stephen's prayer ("Lord, do not hold this sin against them") echoed Jesus on the cross. How can I practically show mercy to someone who has wronged me this week?
2. Who in my life needs to hear a "bold" but "grace-filled" word about Jesus?
3. How can I "trust the process" of God's work in a difficult situation I'm currently facing?

Practice Challenge

Identify one person who has been difficult or unkind to you. Commit to praying specifically for God to bless them and show them His mercy every day for the rest of the week.

Prayer Prompt

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your mercy toward me. Give me the strength to extend that same mercy to [Name] today.

Day 5: Live It Out

Scripture Focus

Proverbs 3:5–8

Reflection Questions

1. Looking back at Stephen's life, how has God changed my thinking about what it means to "win"?
2. What "reward" am I currently living for—the approval of people or the "well done" of God?
3. What is one specific commitment I will make to stand firmer in my faith this month?

Weekly Commitment

I will prioritize God's truth over my own comfort by speaking up for what is right, even when it is unpopular, and I will choose mercy over vengeance in my daily interactions.

Prayer Prompt

Lord, I trust Your process. Make my paths straight as I seek to serve You with all my heart.

Principles to Practice This Week

1. **Preach the Word Boldly:** Don't shrink back from sharing the Gospel when given the opportunity.

2. **Be Prepared for Defense:** Know why you believe what you believe and be ready to explain it with grace.
3. **Risk it All for Jesus:** Be willing to sacrifice reputation or comfort for the sake of the message.
4. **Choose Mercy Over Vengeance:** Follow the example of Stephen and Jesus by praying for those who mistreat you.
5. **Trust the Process:** Believe that God is working, even when you can't see the immediate results (just as Stephen didn't see Saul's eventual conversion).

"But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God." — Acts 7:55

As you go through your week, remember that you are never standing alone. Like Stephen, when you choose to stand for God, you have the presence of the Holy Spirit within you and the Savior advocating for you. Trust God's timing, rely on His grace, and let His love be the most important thing in your life.