

LIFE GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE

PRAY TOGETHER

Lord God, thank you for Stephen's example of courageous faith, steadfast witness, and remarkable forgiveness. As we reflect on his life and death, help us see you more clearly and understand the weight of the gospel. Give us compassion for our brothers and sisters who face persecution, faithfulness when following you is difficult, and courage to make you known through both our words and our actions. Amen.

ICE BREAKER

Think about a time when you were genuinely inspired by something or someone to the point that it actually changed something about how you think or live. What was it, and what has changed?

SERMON OVERVIEW

Pastor Aaron Crull explores Stephen's story in Acts 6–7, highlighting how Stephen's service, Spirit-filled faith, and courageous witness ultimately led to his martyrdom. In his final moments, Stephen sees Jesus standing at God's right hand, entrusts his spirit to Jesus, and asks God to forgive those killing him - mirroring Jesus' own words and demonstrating what it means to become like the Savior we follow.

The message then broadens the focus to Christians facing persecution today, challenging us to pray intentionally for them, gain perspective on our own faith, and live as bold witnesses to Jesus. Ultimately, people are willing to give their lives for Jesus because he is not merely a good addition to life but the solution to humanity's separation from God. Through his death and resurrection, Jesus offers forgiveness and freedom from sin and death - and calls his followers to make him known.

READ SCRIPTURE

• **ACTS 6:1–8; ACTS 7:54–60; MARK 14:61–62; LUKE 23:34, 46**

CONNECT RELATIONALLY

1. Stephen was chosen to help with a practical need in the church, but he was also known for his faith, wisdom, and being filled with the Holy Spirit. When you think about your own life, which of these qualities do you see in yourself, and which would you like God to keep growing in you?
2. When Stephen was put on trial, he could have focused on defending himself, but instead, he stood up for his faith. Why do you think he responded that way? Have you ever been in a situation where it was difficult to stand by what you believe? What helped you, or what might help you, stay faithful in moments like that?
3. As the crowd turned against Stephen, he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. What do you think that moment was like for Stephen? How might knowing that Jesus sees us and is present with us make a difference when we're facing fear, opposition, or a difficult season in our own lives?

GROW SPIRITUALLY

4. The sermon reminded us that many Christians around the world face threats, imprisonment, displacement, and even death because of their faith. What is your initial response when you hear these stories? How might becoming more aware of their experiences change your perspective on the freedom, opportunities, and challenges you experience as a Christian?

5. The quote from the book "The Insanity of God" pointed out that persecuted believers rarely ask for persecution to stop. Instead, they ask for faithfulness and obedience through it. How does that reframe the way you think about the purpose and power of prayer?

LIVE GENEROUSLY

6. Pastor Aaron contrasted viewing Christianity as something good to add to an already full life with recognizing Jesus as the solution to our deepest problem: our separation from God because of sin. What do you think is the difference between making room for Jesus in your life and building your life around Jesus? Where, if anywhere, do you sense that difference in your own life?

7. The sermon suggested that when something has not cost us very much, it is easy to assume it is not all that valuable. In what ways have you noticed that tendency in your own faith? Where has comfort or convenience dulled your sense of the gospel's weight?

8. Pastor Aaron ended the message by asking, "Why in the world are people dying for this?" When you consider what Jesus has done for you, how might that deepen your willingness to live as his witness? What is one specific step you could take this week to demonstrate your faith with greater courage, love, or intentionality?

TAKE ACTION

Based on our conversation today, how do you sense the Holy Spirit inviting you to take a next step in practical application? Please complete this statement, I am feeling convicted to take the following action (keep it simple):

Please invite each group member to share their action step, if they have one.

PRAY TOGETHER

Take a few minutes for each person to share a recent joy or praise, as well as something that's weighing on their heart and in need of intercession. Invite someone to pray over these requests. Be sure to share them with everyone in the group so you can continue praying for one another throughout the week.

ENGAGE TOGETHER



Go Trips! - Global mission trips are a big way we make Jesus known at Northview. When we go, we have an opportunity to serve others and share the Gospel, but God also does something in us. Serving alongside other believers, depending on one another, praying together, and experiencing another culture creates a bond that is difficult to replicate anywhere else. What would it look like for your group to take the next step in your discipleship journey and serve globally? Our global missions team is here to come alongside you and plan a trip that fits your group's schedule and season of life. Reach out today!