

My Witnesses - A Study of Acts Discussion Guide: Week 19 - Acts 7:54-60

Summary of this week's teaching: Last week we covered Stephen's Spirit-empowered sermon. This week we examined the Sanhedrin's quick and violent response. Rather than feeling conviction that led to repentance, the Jewish leaders were filled with rage and stoned Stephen to death. While we might not die in a martyr's death, each of us will experience physical death sooner or later. The scriptures speak extensively about how believers ought to view the death of our mortal bodies, encouraging us to view this event in light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ who has not only been raised from the dead but who has conquered death itself.

Connect: Relational questions to get conversations started.

1. Do you fear physical death? Why or why not?

Seed: The Bible, God's inspired Word, is very much like a seed - it contains everything we need to experience life. Please read the following passage of scripture as a group: (perhaps in two different translations) Acts 7:54-60, and 2 Corinthians 5:1-10.

1. What are common misconceptions that believers have about death and the afterlife?
2. What does the account of Stephen's martyrdom teach us about death and dying?
3. What do you understand the 2 Corinthians 5 passage to be teaching us? What questions does it bring up in your mind?

Roots: Like subterranean tree roots which extend in all directions searching out water, each believer needs to grow and develop spiritual roots that allow us to make personal connections with our God.

1. Why is it invaluable for believers to have understanding, comfort, and peace when it comes to death and dying?
2. How can such challenging aspects of life become places where we meet God?

Trunk: Without trunks, plants may be large, useful, and beautiful, but they are not trees. The same is true for our faith - without it we are not saved and cannot please God. These questions will help us grow our faith in Him.

1. Please read John 11:25-26. Do you personally know Jesus as your resurrection and life?
2. Please read Romans 8:38-39. Do you ever struggle to believe these words? Why or why not?

Crown: Crowns are the glory of a tree; the culmination of the roots and trunk working in harmony and can be seen for miles around. The crown of a tree represents the visible portion of our faithlife. These questions will encourage us to apply these principles into our everyday lives.

1. Please read Romans 14:7-9. What would it look like if you were to fully live out these verses? How can you, by God's grace, grow in these areas?
2. Please read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 and discuss the many ways to apply these verses to your lives.

