

November 13, 2011

## Willow Park South Small Group Questions *Acts 7:1-53*

- Please read *Acts 7:1-53* together at the beginning of your small group meeting.

In chapter 6, we see that Stephen had been accused of speaking blasphemous words against Moses and God (vs 11). Now in chapter 7, we see Stephen respond by telling a story—a condensed version of the history of Israel. He starts with Abraham at the beginning (in vs. 1–8). Then (in vs. 9–16) he dwells on Joseph and how the Israelites came to Egypt. Then he spends a long time on Moses (in vs. 17– 44). Then he closes with a brief reference to Joshua and David and Solomon (in vs. 45–50).

How is God trying to encourage us through Stephen’s summary of Israel’s history?

- He wants us to be encouraged by the story of his patience and long-suffering with a rebellious people. He is not eager to punish. He is eager to forgive and move on with repentant and humble people.

What is God trying to warn us about through Stephen’s summary of Israel’s history?

- He wants us to be warned that there is an end to his patience as well. There is a resistance to the Holy Spirit that goes so long and so far that God hands a person over into the power of his own sin.
  - **Acts 7:41-42** (ESV) *And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol and were rejoicing in the works of their hands. But God turned away and gave them over to worship the host of heaven.*

What was Stephen’s conclusion from Israel’s history? (Read vs. 51-53)

- **Acts 7:51-53** (ESV) *“You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”*

In verse 52, who does Stephen say the prophets and Jewish fathers were announcing through out the Old Testament scriptures?

- the “Righteous One” *Jesus Christ*.

How does it change the way we read the Old Testament when we understand that it all proclaims the coming of Jesus?

Why was Stephen right by turning the tables and saying that the Jewish religious leaders were not obeying the Law?

- Though they appeared to be obeying the rules of the Law, they in turn killed Jesus who was the fulfillment of the Law.

Like the Jewish religious leaders, is it possible for people today to live by the “rules” of Christianity but never have a genuine love for Jesus?

Why is it essential that we keep Jesus the focus of everything we do at the South?