

Small Group Meeting on Acts 6:8 – 7:60

Review (20mins)

Reflect together on your experiences over the last week. What has God been teaching you? Where have you been growing in your walk with Him? Had you set yourself a challenge in your discipleship? How is that going? Share those experiences with your small group.

Read (10mins)

Recap on the sermon from last Sunday. Try to give a summary to those who were not able to be present.

Acts 6:8 – 7:60

Read the Bible passage for this week, slowly and prayerfully. It might help to use your imagination to picture the scene. At the end of the text you will find helpful background information in our 'Setting the Scene' section.

As you read, look out for *shockers* and *blockers*.

Shockers – a phrase, word, image or something from the text that resonates, stands out or connects with you.

Blockers – something from the text that raises questions for you.

Setting the scene:

- Stephen who had been chosen as a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit (Ch 6 v.5) now faces opposition from the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. Their contention was focused on Stephen's teaching about the temple and Jewish worship.

- Stephen reminds them of their history and how God chose and redeemed and blessed his people through his covenant relationship with them. God established them as his people in the Promised Land and a temple was built by Solomon as a focal point for their worship. However, Stephen clearly states that “the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands” (7v.48). God cannot be contained. The significance of this is revealed as the story of the church continues.
- Rather than the glory of God residing in a temple, Stephen sees the glory of God in the person of Jesus who is standing at the right hand of God. In pointing to Jesus, Stephen is saying not only that God is bigger than the temple, but also that Jesus is the one who fulfils the goals of the temple, namely to bring people to God.

Reflect (20 mins)

After you have all had time to read the text, pause and be still to listen to God through the Scriptures.

Begin your reflection time by each naming your *shockers* and *blockers*. Listen carefully to each other, share your thoughts and reflect on this passage together.

You might also like to explore these questions:

Q1. How can we help each other not become so focused on the forms of our worship that we fail to focus on the One whom we worship?

Q2. We come from a different tradition and culture than 1st century Jews. However, when are we, or when have we been tempted to “resist the Holy Spirit”?

Q3. The word 'witness' comes from the Greek word 'martyr'. What are our thoughts and feelings about witnessing? What are we fearful about?

Respond (20mins)

As you draw near to the end of your session, consider how you might respond to your reading and reflection by "walking the talk". What are you going to be doing this week that will help you stretch the faith you have? It may be a challenge or activity that you are currently engaged with over many weeks. Be prepared to share how you are growing in that.

Some new challenge ideas

1. Think about where you normally pray. Could you pray in a different place or with different people, perhaps in a school, or a pub?
2. Look at the work of Open Doors, or Sat 7, or Release International and commit to pray for the church in places where there is severe persecution and where it is difficult to witness to Jesus. There is a group of people who pray for the persecuted church here at Christ Church. More details available via [Connection Point](#).

See also: www.sat7uk.org, www.opendoorsuk.org, www.releaseinternational.org

Group Prayer

As a group, pray for one another this week as you explore a deeper life with God through prayer. Pray that your times of prayer and your attempt to walk in the light of God's ways will increase and become more habitual throughout each day.