

*Walking in The Way Of Jesus; Radical Relationship Considering the path from the tomb to the world*

## **Common Men for Uncommon Ministry**

Reading through the book of Acts

Tim spoke a little bit last week about the numbers in the church multiplying and talked about what's going on.

### **Stephen and the Seven Chosen**

*Acts 6:2-7 NLT 2 So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, "We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program. 3 And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. 4 Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word." 5 Everyone liked this idea, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (an earlier convert to the Jewish faith). 6 These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them. 7 So God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.*

The Seven men are chosen, let's call them followers, servants, apprentice, deacons whatever we want. But we know that they were all relatively newer to the faith. We meet this man named Stephen and the bible says here **"a man full of faith and the holy spirit.**

Digging deeper: Stephen was also known as "The Man God Crowned". The name comes from the word stephanos, which means victor's crown in Greek.

### **Stephen is persecuted Acts 7**

Steven is framed and sent before the high council.

*Acts 6: 9-12 NLT 9 But one day some men from the Synagogue of Freed Slaves, as it was called, started to debate with him. They were Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and the province of Asia. 10 None of them could stand against the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke. 11 So they persuaded some men to lie about Stephen, saying, "We heard him blaspheme Moses, and even God." 12 This roused the people, the elders, and the teachers of religious law. So they arrested Stephen and brought him before the high council.*

Steven then goes on to address the history of Israel and contribution of past leaders to the high counsel. Ultimately Stephen is foreshadowing that they knew of a messiah coming and they had him killed!

Steven is then stoned but not before he stares up to the heavens and sees Jesus at God's right hand.

## What came from Stephens work and sacrifice?

God's blessings continued! The church was unified, multiplied, magnified. In this book Luke might be describing a climax moment for the ministry in Jerusalem. After the persecution of Stephen the church exploded. It is estimated that eight thousand Jewish priests attended the temple in Jerusalem and many of them began to trust in JESUS CHRIST! (Acts 6:7)

## Everyday People Doing Big Things

I find it fascinating to think about the Holy Spirit is literally speaking and giving these men courage, direction, motivation, passion, strength, and so much more. These are all things that we can't comprehend in everyday life anymore. The other amazing thing about this book is how it speaks of the Holy Spirit not only guiding Jesus's disciples. But it is guiding everyday people that have a strong faith in the redeeming power of Jesus. (Full of faith Acts 6:3) What would our world be like now if people felt the Holy Spirit and heard the Holy Spirit like the people in this book did. What would the church be like?

The Holy Spirit guided Peter and John and gave them the strength to perform miracles in Jesus' name. The Holy Spirit spoke to people, giving them courage to speak out against corruption and hatred. (Acts 3 & 4)

## The Holy Spirit Works Through People of Strong Faith.

The disciples, the people closest to Jesus that learned from him.

We start this book with the disciples, let's call them apprentices as Tim says. We learn that Jesus gives the promise of the Holy Spirit. In Acts 1:7 Jesus tells the disciples to take this and spread the word to the ends of the earth about what Jesus has done. They're going out to save more souls in Jesus' name. Release people from the bondage of the law and show them the redeeming power of Jesus.

Acts chapter 4 the religious leaders talk about Peter and John being ordinary men, not men of formal training. This book is full of ordinary people doing things in Jesus' name. Guided and given strength by the Holy Spirit. Many chapters in this book mention full of the Holy Spirit.

WOW WHAT A CONCEPT "FULL OF THE HOLY SPIRIT!!!"

## The Holy Spirit using everyday people.

Now we are back to chapters 6. The disciples know that their calling is higher; they have a calling to educate and preach to a world of hurting people. Their job is not to do menial tasks or to organize a food pantry as chapter 6 says. So from that we find that the Holy Spirit works in

everyday people. Chapter 6 tells us that seven men were chosen and these men were of strong faith. We know that these men were everyday men and from what we know about 3,000 and 5000 being saved in the chapters before most likely they are relatively new to the Christian faith. But they had strong faith and they trusted the Holy Spirit and that they were respected by others.

Everyday people, people new to the faith, people that are strong in their faith, and people growing in their faith. Steven is an example of this. The writers of this book felt that it was so important what Steven did as a believer they wrote more than one chapter mentioning him. Keep in mind that they mentioned in the Bible multiple times the strength and the power of the Holy Spirit in Steven and where he gained his strength and his courage from. Ultimately Steven gives his life defending Christianity. An everyday person gives their life defending Jesus' name and the Christian faith.

### The Redeeming power of the Holy Spirit.

The holy Spirit working through broken people.

Later in this book we meet a man named Saul. Saul is a bad dude. (Jewish Rambo) He's a man that was used to carry out nasty and ugly things against Christ followers. The worst of the worst in the eyes of many believers. Yet Jesus has a plan for him. Jesus speaks directly to him. (Acts 9:4) Shows him love and mercy. Ultimately Saul becomes one of our greatest writers in the Bible and one of the greatest men of faith. Not a disciple that followed Jesus every day, not some religious leader. God chose the most unlikely man.

Saul was an everyday person with a very bad past. Jesus did amazing things through Saul. We know that Saul is also Paul. He goes on to save many while being imprisoned and tortured for his faith. The whole time Paul is being led by the Holy Spirit for everything that he does. Going from City to City and telling more people about the redeeming power of Jesus. Sharing the love that Jesus had for him and that Jesus can love and save every one of them.

### The Holy Spirit in all of us

This can be every one of us. We are all called to something higher. The holy Spirit is trying to speak to us in everyday life. We just have to listen. We have to spend more time in his word. We have to be in a place where we are dependent on God and him leading our lives. The people in the time of the book of Acts had no other options. There was no one else that could save them.

I think we are in the same place now. We need each other, we need leaders to disciple us. And we need to remember that no matter where we have been or how dirty our past is, Jesus Christ came and died for each and every one of us. He has a plan for us and for his kingdom.