

Acts 1 Study and Discussion Questions

Lesson Two: Stephen's Martyrdom and the Resulting Diaspora – Acts 6-8, James

Read Acts 6.

- 1) List the characteristics of Stephen, stated and implied, in Acts 6.

- 2) What charges were brought against Stephen?

- 3) What practical responsibility could you assume or delegate in order that someone in your home or church might focus on his or her most important area of spiritual giftedness?

Read Acts 7.

- 4) Stephen gave the Sanhedrin a short history lesson. Re-examine his speech, looking for the statements and implied accusations that would have offended the Jewish leaders.

- 5) Review the accusations made against Stephen (Acts 6:11, 13-14). The high priest asked him, “Are these charges true?” (7:1) Did Stephen deny or affirm the truth of the accusations against him in his speech (offer support for your answer)?

- 6) Acts 6:3, 5 and 7:55 describe Stephen as a man who was full of the Holy Spirit.
 - a) What things are characteristic of a person who is filled with the Holy Spirit (see Luke 1:67-68, 10:21, Acts 4:31, 13:52, Galatians 5:22-23, and Ephesians 5:18-21)?

- b) Ephesians 5:18 commands that believers be filled with the Spirit. Any command suggests some participation on our part. In its context, this command also suggests that the filling of the Spirit is something that can occur repeatedly (differentiating it from receiving the Holy Spirit [or being baptized with the Holy Spirit], which is a one-time, permanent gift of God, given at the moment of our salvation). According to Romans 8:4-5, what must we regularly put to death in order to be filled with the Holy Spirit?
- c) Put yourself in Stephen's place. What temptations could have prevented you (and do sometimes prevent you) from responding as a person who is filled with the Holy Spirit and as Stephen did in Acts 7?

Read Acts 8.

- 7) Compare Acts 8:1, 4 with Acts 1:8. How did Stephen's death result in a partial fulfillment of the charge of Jesus?
- 8) Carefully consider Acts 8:14-17, 10:44-46, 11:19-23, and 19:1-7. What possible explanation can you glean from these passages about why, at least on a number of occasions, the receiving of the Holy Spirit was delayed from conversion and was accompanied by the visible sign of tongues?
- 9) What was different about Philip's evangelistic work in Samaria (8:5-8) from that described in 8:26-38? Christ's servants must be flexible. In what ways is the Lord asking you, His servant, to be flexible at the present?

Read James 1:1 – 3:12.

- 10) It is difficult to know exactly what prompted James to write his epistle. It is possible that the believers to whom he wrote were suffering trials brought on them by wealthy individuals (1:2, 9-12; 2:6-7; 5:1-8, 10). Make a list of the topics James covers in 1:1-3:12 and then explain how each topic could be helpful to a believer who was suffering at the hands of the wealthy. (As an example, the first set of verses is done for you. The chart continues on to the next page of the lesson.)

TOPICS COVERED IN JAMES 1:1 – 3:12	THE APPLICATION OF THE TOPIC FOR THOSE SUFFERING OPPRESSION BY THE WEALTHY
From 1:2-4, 12 = Trials and the positive outcomes that can result from perseverance	Those facing persecution by wealthy oppressors ought to persevere

From 1:5-7	Those facing persecution by wealthy oppressors ought to
From 1:9-11	Those facing persecution by wealthy oppressors ought to
From 1:13-15	Those facing persecution by wealthy oppressors ought to
From 1:19-27	Those facing persecution by wealthy oppressors ought to
From 2:1-4, 8-11 with 2:5-7	Those facing persecution by wealthy oppressors ought to
From 2:12-13	Those facing persecution by wealthy oppressors ought to
From 2:14-26	Those facing persecution by wealthy oppressors ought to
From 3:1-12	Those facing persecution by wealthy oppressors ought to

11) What important point about faith does James make in James 2:14-26? Would you say this contradicts Romans 1:17, Romans 4 (see especially verses 2-5, 13-15), and Ephesians 2:8, 9? How can the ideas be reconciled?

12) Looking back at the topics you listed in your answer to question 10, which one quality or action has recently proved the strongest evidence of your faith and which have you exhibited the least?

Read James 3:13 – 5:20.

13) Find words, phrases, or ideas that James used to contrast two ways of living in the following passages:

- a) 3:14-16 and 3:17-18
- b) 4:1-3 and 4:6-10
- c) 4:13, 16 and 4:14-15

- 14) Reread James 5:19-20. Perhaps these closing words reflect another reason James wrote his letter (to restore his readers to truth). Try to summarize ways he attempted to do this, based especially on your findings in Questions 10 and 13.
- 15) Which two Old Testament figures are named in James 5 (include verse numbers)? Which Biblical word summarizes what James says each man exemplified (a different word for each man)? For what would you like to be known?