



## SERMON DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Week of February 16, 2025

### Acts 7:1-16

**1** And the high priest said, “Are these things so?” **2** And Stephen said: “Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, **3** and said to him, ‘Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.’ **4** Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living. **5** Yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot’s length, but promised to give it to him as a possession and to his offspring after him, though he had no child. **6** And God spoke to this effect—that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them four hundred years. **7** ‘But I will judge the nation that they serve,’ said God, ‘and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.’ **8** And he gave him the covenant of circumcision. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs. **9** “And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but God was with him **10** and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household. **11** Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food. **12** But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers on their first visit. **13** And on the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph’s family became known to Pharaoh. **14** And Joseph sent and summoned Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five persons in all. **15** And Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, he and our fathers, **16** and they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

1. In our passage this week the Jews have seized Stephen for preaching Christ. Stephen’s preaching has been so full of grace and power, and accompanied by such great wonders and signs that the Jews could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking. Why then, do you think the Jewish leaders, even with all the irrefutable facts in front of them, had such a hardened heart towards Jesus Christ? Do you think this same hardened heart can still be found amongst religious people even within the church? If so, how so and why? If not, why not?
2. Although falsely accused, Stephen’s tone and demeanor towards his persecutors appears calm and respectful. He addresses them as “*brothers and fathers*.” Why do you think Stephen could respond this way and what does it tell you about where his deepest concerns lay? What do you think Stephen knew that his tormentors did not? How might Stephen’s response inform and help us when we face similar circumstances?

3. In verses 2-6, Stephen describes Abraham's life of faith. What made Abraham's faith so remarkable? How does Abraham's faith differ from that of Stephen's accusers? Think about your own life. Does your faith rest upon the blessings and provisions of God? Or does your faith endure even when God's plans and provision are shrouded in uncertainty? How would you know what kind of faith you really have?
4. Since only true faith can save us, why is it dangerous to assume a person is a Christian because they said a prayer, had an emotional experience, or walked down an aisle, but now give no indication of any spiritual life? In spite of the danger, we see this happening all the time. Why?
5. In re-telling the familiar story of Joseph - how he was sold into slavery by his brothers, (the eventual patriarchs of Israel), and how they did not recognize him on their **first** visit to Egypt - Stephen was showing his persecutors that from the very beginning, the Jews initially did not recognize God's plan of salvation. Why do you think he was doing this? What do you think Stephen was desperately trying to help his "*brothers and fathers*" understand? What hope does this give us as we present the gospel to friends and family who have rejected Jesus Christ?