

Wednesday with the Word

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May 8, 2019 - Acts 6:8-15 - What Do People See In You: What Does Your Witness Say

Acts 6:8-15

8 God gave Stephen the power to work great miracles and wonders among the people.

9 But some Jews from Cyrene and Alexandria were members of a group who called themselves "Free Men." They started arguing with Stephen. Some others from Cilicia and Asia also argued with him.

10 But they were no match for Stephen, who spoke with the great wisdom that the Spirit gave him. **11** So they talked some men into saying, "We heard Stephen say terrible things against Moses and God!"

12 They turned the people and their leaders and the teachers of the Law of Moses against Stephen. Then they all grabbed Stephen and dragged him in front of the council.

13 Some men agreed to tell lies about Stephen, and they said, "This man keeps on saying terrible things about this holy temple and the Law of Moses.

14 We have heard him claim that Jesus from Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs that Moses gave us." **15** Then all the council members stared at Stephen. They saw that his face looked like the face of an angel.

The high priest asked Stephen, "Are they telling the truth about you?"

2 Stephen answered:

Have you ever been lied on?

How did it feel?

How did you respond or how do you respond when people lie on you?

Why do you think people lie?

When you have lied, why did you lie?

Who is Stephen?

Answer:

Act 6:1-7

A lot of people were now becoming followers of the Lord. But some of the ones who spoke Greek started complaining about the ones who spoke Aramaic. They complained that the Greek-speaking widows were not given their share when the food supplies were handed out each day.

2 The twelve apostles called the whole group of followers together and said, “We should not give up preaching God’s message in order to serve at tables. **3** My friends, choose seven men who are respected and wise and filled with God’s Spirit. We will put them in charge of these things. **4** We can spend our time praying and serving God by preaching.”

5 This suggestion pleased everyone, and they began by choosing Stephen. He had great faith and was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they chose Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and also Nicolaus, who worshiped with the Jewish people in Antioch. **6** These men were brought to the apostles. Then the apostles prayed and placed their hands on the men to show that they had been chosen to do this work.

7 God’s message spread, and many more people in Jerusalem became followers. Even a large number of priests put their faith in the Lord. CEV

Is the church growing?

Why is it growing, what did they do in Act:6:1-5? What problem did they resolve and who was blessed by the outcome?

Is your witness sufficient enough to get people to lie on you?

When you are doing what God has called you to do and the ministry begins to increase in service, witness, meeting the needs of the needy, growing spiritually and numerically, when miracles start to happen, guess what? Lies will come!

Don’t get upset at this, this is a sign that God is with you, ironically enough. The lies are from the devil. We are engaged in spiritual warfare for the 176,651 people who are within three miles of Wheat Street who are in need of a faith community.

We are in a battle for the 73,681 Millennials (ages 17 to 36) or 41% of the population within three miles of Wheat Street.

We are in a battle for the 21/6% (18,140) people of these households within three miles of Wheat Street that are considered struggling Black families.

Ephesians 6:12

12 For our struggle is not against enemies of blood and flesh, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. NRSV

Ephesians 6:18-20

18 Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints. **19** Pray also for me, so that when I speak, a message may be given to me to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel, **20** for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may declare it boldly, as I must speak.

What is a lie and what does it do?

A lie:

To make an untrue statement with the intent to deceive

To create false or misleading impression

An assertion or inaccurate statement may or may not be believed to be true by the speaker but it is spoken with untrue intent to deceive (they trying to start mess)

What do lies do?

How do lies create confusion and undermine trust / relationships?

Acts 6:8

8 God gave Stephen the power to work great miracles and wonders among the people.

What is Stephen doing?

What is Stephen doing wrong?

Why do you think someone would want to lie on someone who God was using to work great miracle through?

Acts 6:8-11

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10 But they were no match for Stephen, who spoke with the great wisdom that the Spirit gave him. **11** ***So they talked some men into*** saying, "We heard Stephen say terrible things against Moses and God!"

What is Stephen doing Acts 6:8?

Who starts the argument?

Why do you think they are arguing?

Who wins the argument?

Why does the person who wins, wins?

How do the losers of the argument react and why do you think they reacted this way?

Acts 6:12

12 They turned the people and their leaders and the teachers of the Law of Moses against Stephen. Then they all grabbed Stephen and dragged him in front of the council.

What was the result of their lying?

Lies turn people away from the truth. Lies turn people on people. The liar is the one who causes confusion and begins the mess. Then those whose are gullible or desiring to hear and support the lie carry on, carry it around and the mess, the confusion swells.

When people are told a lie and believe the lie they will not accept the truth. You have to want to know the truth for the truth to set you free. You have to be willing to handle the truth, desire the truth, to be able to hear the truth, deal with the truth and then be set free. You have to be able to hear the truth and act on it in the face of a lie.

What was Stephen doing?

Why was it that people couldn't see what Stephen was doing?

What do you think hindered their ability to see through the lie(s)?

We tend to believe the lies of liars that we trust, know and have a relationship with. Many times we want to believe the lie that trusted liars tell us. It is our desire to believe them that gets us caught up listening to and being taken by the lies of liars.

Sometimes liars feed into our own issues, and liars tend to tell their lies to people who they know will carry their lies because they believe their lies or they are in with the liars in the mess they are stirring up. Even when you repeat a lie as a lie you are still spreading the lie.

“Child I don't believe but _____ said _____! I don't believe it do you?”

Don't even repeat what you know or believe to be a lie!

Acts 6:12-7:2

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14 We have heard him claim that Jesus from Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs that Moses gave us.” **15** Then all the council members stared at Stephen. They saw that his face looked like the face of an angel.

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2 Stephen answered:

It is amazing in vs. 13 - that the men agreed, got together, conspired to tell lies (plural). What was their intent? To get Stephen in trouble. To stir up mess. To stop what God was doing through Stephen and this second wave of leaders.

Stephen represents the second generation of leaders in the church. The apostles / disciples have begun to appoint the next wave of leaders. Those leaders are powerful and they represent growth and change. Acts 6:7 says: **7** God’s message spread, and many more people in Jerusalem became followers. Even a large number of priests put their faith in the Lord.

This thing is serious. These enemies of the God are starting mess. They are creating confusion. They start lying to get this thing under control. They don’t want these next generation of leaders to come up. As the church grows and leadership begins to change, take new shapes and new leaders emerge watch what the devil does! The devil is going to fight like mad, because the devil knows that the next wave of leaders will take God’s church to the next level!

They get Stephen brought up on charges and here he is in front of the council. It is interesting that as the council looked at him what they saw. What did they see?

Acts 6:15

15 Then all the council members stared at Stephen. They saw that his face looked like the face of an angel.

Since they saw this what do you think their response should’ve been?

What is the significance of this, Stephen appearing as an angel?

How did they respond?

Acts 7:1-2

The high priest asked Stephen, “Are they telling the truth about you?”

2 Stephen answered:

To be continued Acts 7:2-8:1