



Carrying the offenses
myself

TO FORGIVE



Stephen & Me



Giving the offenses
to God

Luke 6:2-6 So the Twelve Disciples called a meeting of all the believers in the area. "We should spend our time preaching, not administering a feeding program," they said. ³ "Now look around among yourselves, dear brothers, and select seven men, wise and full of the Holy Spirit, who are well thought of by everyone; and we will put them in charge of this business. ⁴ Then we can spend our time in prayer, preaching, and teaching." ⁵ This sounded reasonable to the whole assembly, and they elected the following: Stephen (a man unusually full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, Nicolaus of Antioch (a Gentile convert to the Jewish faith, who had become a Christian). ⁶ These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them and laid their hands on them in blessing.

1. Who was Stephen? _____
2. How was Stephen described? _____

As the Gospel began to be preached to the non-Jews (Gentiles), the numbers of believers grew in and around Jerusalem. The Jewish were called Hebrews; the non-Jewish believers were called Hellenists.

Luke 6:1 Now, in those days, when the number of the disciples (believers) was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. (Provisions for daily care needs)

3. What were the Hellenist believers complaining about? _____

The Hellenists believers were not Jewish; most of them spoke Greek. The Hebrew believers were Jewish; they spoke Hebrew or Aramaic. The 12 disciples could not keep up with the needs of all the believers, so they asked the believers in the church community to select 7 men to focus on ministry to the Hellenists. STEPHEN WAS ONE OF THE 7 SELECTED; ALL SEVEN MIGHT HAVE BEEN GREEK-SPEAKING HELLENISTS TOO.

Acts 6:7 Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples (believers) multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests (religious leaders) were obedient to the faith.

4. What happened after the 7 men were added to the ministry team? _____

Acts 6:8-10 And Stephen, so full of faith and the Holy Spirit's power, ⁸ did spectacular miracles among the people. ⁹ But one day some of the men from the Jewish cult of "The Freedmen" started an argument with him, and they were soon joined by Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria in Egypt, and the Turkish provinces of Cilicia, and Asia Minor. ¹⁰ But none of them was able to stand against Stephen's wisdom and spirit.

5. Yes No Stephen was a brilliant preacher, but the unbelieving, religious leaders could not handle nor would receive the truth he was sharing.
6. What did these leaders do next? _____
7. Yes No Did Stephen do anything wrong? He was preaching about Jesus.

A Slight Review

- Acts 6:9 The religious leaders argued with him publicly and openly.
- Acts 6:10 They were jealous & humiliated by the wisdom of Stephen.
- Acts 6:12 They stirred up the crowd to turn against Stephen.
- Acts 6:12 They physically brought him (seized) to the authorities
- Acts 6:13 Stephen was accused of speaking blasphemous words against God.
- Acts 6:58-59 They threw Stephen out of the city and stoned him to death.

8. Look up Acts 8:1. What were Stephen's dying words? _____

9. Look up Luke 23:34. Who else said similar words at death? _____

IN OTHER WORDS, "I FORGIVE YOU".

10. Yes No Notice, that while Stephen was dying, he was talking to God. Would it ever be possible to forgive someone without **God's help**?

11. Yes No Notice, that while Jesus was dying, he was talking to God. Isn't it logical that we forgive that offending person since we don't know the whole story. **God has a plan** that involves both people.

OK, LET'S FLIP THE COIN HERE!!

- A person could do nothing wrong & yet be offended & hurt. (This was Stephen. This could be us as kids being abused by adults.)
- A person could be totally in the wrong & yet feel offended & hurt.
 - a. You robbed a bank with a partner, then the partner turned you in.
 - b. You had assumed it was consensual sex and she cried rape.
 - c. You invited your female partner to live with you and she reported domestic violence.
 - d. You committed an admitted crime, pled a deal, but the attorney & judge screwed you.

12. You have every right to appeal any of this stuff legally. However, along the way, might it be wise for you to consider forgiving these people? Yes No

13. Would you be brave enough to tell God that you are willing to forgive these people, so that God's peace will have your permission to comfort you? Yes No

*I am not trying to minimize your hurt with some **CHEAP** religious talk. Your hurt is REAL but the help that God gives is also REAL.*

14. When we forgive someone, we turn the whole load over to God. God knows about your decision; you know about your decision; the offender knows nothing about your decision. Shouldn't the decision start in your heart (where you live)? Yes No

15. So, you want to know more about this **REAL** help that God is offering?

Check any of the lines below that remotely could be possible.

- a. God gives you permission to be angry with this person (nothing violent).
- b. God agrees with you that you are going to remember lots of the past stuff.
- c. God asks you to forgive the person so that He (God) can begin His work.
- d. God will enable you to supernaturally do this sometime along the way.
- e. You seem to feel a peace in your heart & attitude that wasn't there before.
- f. One day you actually feel an urge to contact the person.

I BELIEVE THAT FORGIVING SOMEONE IS ONE OF THE STEPS TO MOVING ON.