



**SERIES: ACTS - WHEN THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN**  
**MESSAGE TITLE: RADICAL RECONCILIATION AND A "CONTRAST COMMUNITY"**

**SPEAKER: BRAD WILLIAMS**  
**DATE: SUNDAY, JUNE 7, 2020**

## MESSAGE SUMMARY

### **BIBLICAL TEXT(S): Acts 6:1-7:60**

The early church wasn't perfect. They had their problems, and those problems are a lot like the ones facing us today. There was discrimination and prejudice in the early church. The apostles didn't ignore it. They were honest about it and worked to prevent it. This made the church even more appealing to their community. However, not everybody was happy about this. Some outside the church were also threatened, leading to the first martyrdom. The forces of division and darkness were at work then and are at work today, but the Gospel can always overcome.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

*These questions are designed to help lead your group through a progression of engagement with the Bible passage(s) and the speaker's message. These can help your group understand and apply the teaching more profitably*

### **LEAN IN**

***These are icebreakers and warm ups, mostly just to get the group talking and start the flow of conversation. Choose one and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.***

1. What one word best sums up how you've felt this week?
2. What's the funniest or most ridiculous complaint you've ever heard or made?
3. What's the first thing you think of when you hear the word "conflict"?
4. What is one thing that you're looking forward to this week? What's one that you are dreading?

### **LOOK DOWN**

***These are questions about the Bible passage(s) and observations about what's been read. Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max.***

1. Which two groups had a dispute in this text? What was the problem? Was it a valid complaint? Why or why not?
2. What was the Apostles' solution to the problem? What was the result, according to the story in Acts 6?
3. Which group of people started to oppose Stephen? What did they accuse him of and who did they take their case to?
4. How would you summarize Stephen's speech in your own words? What do you learn about the history of Israel from this speech?
5. How did Stephen's listeners react to what he told them?

*cont.*

CONTINUED:

**LOOK OUT**

***These questions help connect the world of the Bible to today. Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max.***

1. What are disputes that arise amongst groups in the church today? What are injustices that are present in the modern church? How have you seen people address these problems well and poorly?
2. Are there any examples of churches, organizations, or people that you can think of currently or in history that have solved a dispute in a similar manner to the apostles (putting the injured parties in a position of power)? What were the results of this?
3. Pastor Brad points out that the group of people who stir up trouble against Stephen are actually Hellenistic Jews, people from his own "party" because they viewed him as a threat instead of accepting the Gospel of grace. Have you seen similar things in our own time or in history? Can you think of examples of this inside the church?
4. Stephen argued in his speech that the religious leaders were acting just like their ancestors had: they were disregarding God's plan and persecuting his prophets. As you look at history, what are some of the patterns that humans continue to perpetuate?
5. How do people today (inside and outside the church) react to the Gospel in a manner similar to the religious leaders mentioned in this passage?

**LOOK IN**

***These are questions that help you consider personal application. Spend about 15-20 minutes on three questions max.***

1. What do you learn from this passage about disputes and injustices within the church? How does this passage encourage or challenge you?
2. What do you think it could look like to handle disputes within the church in the same way the apostles did? Is there anything you can do to help this happen?
3. Is there anyone who should be on your "side" that you view as a threat? How does this passage encourage or challenge you in your thinking?
4. What are some patterns that you have fallen into that are not what God would want for you? These could be generational, cultural, addictive, patterns, anything that continually sets you on a path that is contrary to God's plan for you and for the world. What can you do to change these patterns?
5. How does Stephen's response to persecution and unfair treatment encourage or inspire you? What does it teach you about how you should respond?

*cont.*

## CONTINUED:

## LIVE IT OUT

***These action steps help apply this week's message to day to day life. Choose one question and talk it over for 5-10 minutes.***

1. What's one thing you can do or pray this week to work towards fighting injustice and resolving disputes among your Christian brothers and sisters? You might need to do a little research or ask around. Ask your group to pray for you in your quest for restoration.
2. Is there a person or group that you have a dispute with or that you view as a threat? What's one thing you can do this week to view them as God sees them and work towards ending your dispute? How can your group pray for you in the process?
3. What are the patterns of brokenness in your life and in our world that feel heavy to you? Spend some time this week lamenting (telling God that you are sorry, recognizing that something is broken, even if you aren't directly responsible) over the patterns of sin that humanity continues to repeat. You might even designate a day to pray and fast before God. Invite your group to pray with you.

*Thanks to Ashleigh Rich and the ADT team this week for notes and questions, as well as Charissa Burns (@charissaburnsstudio on Instagram) for her illustrated notes, which normally appear on the following page.*

