

## **ICB COMMUNITY GROUP STUDY**

### **WHAT WE DO: A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BOOK OF ACTS**

The message last Sunday, continued our series "What We Do". Pastor John shared about the life and death of Stephen and his example to us of someone whose eyes were fixed on Christ.

#### **START**

Which road sign would best describe your life right now and why?

- Stop sign
- No U turns
- Winding road
- Yield/Give Way
- Exit
- Crosswalk
- Steep road ahead
- Detour ahead
- Sharp turn

#### **SHARE**

- Last week we began to read the story of Stephen. Read Acts 6:8-15 again and list at least 4 characteristics of Stephen that are worthy of our respect and imitation.

#### *READ ACTS 7*

- This is one of the longest recorded sermons in the Bible. What points stand out to you in all that Stephen shares?
- Where did Stephen begin in making his defence? Why was this a wise beginning point?
- What was Stephen trying to accomplish in his lengthy sermon? Was it effective and convicting? Did it achieve the desired result?
- In what ways are Stephen's opponents just like their ancestors? As this story unfolds, why do you think Stephen's opponents become so hostile?
- Throughout this persecution where was Stephen's focus and how did that help carry him through?

#### *READ ACTS 8:1-3*

- How did the purposes of Stephen's persecutors contribute to the mission of the church? What does this say about God?

#### **GROW**

- In this story who do you identify with most?
- How might we be just like these people in disobeying God even after having the same testimony they did?

- In what aspect of your life would you like to reflect more of the Spirit and wisdom?
- Stephen didn't let anything deter him having his focus and devotion fixed on Christ, even with his very last breath. In more recent years, an English woman named Helen Lemmel wrote a hymn which talks about this very subject: *Turn your eyes upon Jesus*. Her inspiration came from the writings of artist and missionary Lilius Trotter. She said: *"Never has it been so easy to live in half a dozen harmless worlds at once – art, music, social science, games, motoring, the following of some profession, and so on. And between them we run the risk of drifting about, the good hiding the best. It is easy to find out whether our lives are focused, and if so, where the focus lies. Where do our thoughts settle when consciousness comes back in the morning? Where do they swing back when the pressure is off during the day? Dare to have it out with God, and ask Him to show you whether or not all is focused on Christ and His Glory. Turn your soul's vision to Jesus, and look and look at Him, and a strange dimness will come over all that is apart from Him."*
  - How does this quote challenge you? What distracts you from keeping your focus on Jesus and His eternal principles? What could you do to change this?

### **PRAY**

Ask God to make you aware of that which keeps you from focusing on Jesus first. Pray that He would help you set things in the right order, and trust that His way of doing things is going to outlast anything we try to do on our own.

### **GO**

God calls us to fix our gaze on Jesus because He knows that it's the very best thing we can do! As you go into this week continue to put your focus on Him, and rest assured that His presence and plan will bring everything else into its right perspective.

#### Hebrews 12:1-3

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

Read more about Stephen in Acts 6-8:3.