

May 20, 2018

“Empowered: The Church on Fire!”

“A Journey through the Book of Acts”

“Fueling the Fire? It’s a Choice!”

“But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand.” Acts 7:55

A. The fire blazed...

“But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent.” Acts 6:1a

1. The church continued to grow! The numbers were swelling and there were at least 10,000 followers who were now filling the city!
2. With growth came challenges that faced this early church leadership.

“The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.” Acts 6:1b

B. Choices that fueled the fire...

“Don’t put out the Spirit’s fire.” 1 Thessalonians 5:19 GW

1. A conflict arose in the church of a social/racial problem that was existent in the community.
2. There was jealousy and comparison that was happening. It was never established whether the problem was real or perceived.
3. The apostles, up until this time, had been waiting on tables as part of their service.
4. Part of the values of the early church was that there no one was in need among them and the issues arising were indicating that this value was in conflict with reality.
5. The problem was immediately addressed when the rumblings were realized.
6. The response was to have everyone represented in a meeting to determine a healthy outcome.
7. Priorities were drawn, as to not lose focus, and the delegation was made to seven Hellenistic Jews who were full of the Holy Spirit, that they might serve.

“And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. Acts 6:3

C. Stephen arose as one of the servants...

“So God’s message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.” Acts 6:7

1. Refocusing of priorities, resolution of the problem, and the response of Stephen with a servant’s heart brought new fire to the church.
2. Everyone was willing to use their gifts of service to assist in keeping the church moving forward.

“Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people.” Acts 6:8

D. The fire blazed through Stephen...

1. Stephen was arrested under false charges and brought before the high council.
2. Stephen was known as one who was filled with the Holy Spirit as it is mentioned three times in Scripture.
3. Stephen was willing to serve in whatever way God provided for him.
4. Stephen began to preach the longest sermon recorded in the Book of Acts.
 - a. Israel had always resisted the prophets.
 - b. The law can’t save you because you can’t keep it and it can’t give you a new heart.
5. Stephen unashamedly preached a message of truth and grace.
6. Stephen offered a message that had traditionally only been reserved for priests. His message was to take care of the poor and that we could all directly commune with God!
7. Stephen’s final prayer would have preached a more powerful message than had ever been heard before by a young man named Saul.

“His accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul. As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, ‘Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.’ He fell to his knees, shouting, ‘Lord, don’t charge them with this sin!’ And with that, he died.” Acts 7:58b-60

E. How will you fuel the fire in your life?

“Don’t put out the Spirit’s fire.” 1 Thessalonians 5:19 GW
Every problem in our lives brings us a choice. How will you choose to handle the confronting issues in your life?

1. Will you choose to grumble and complain? Grumbling and complaining has killed more churches than persecution. When God is moving, the enemy will do his best to divide.
2. Will you choose to make yourself available wherever the need to serve is presented? God does His greatest work through ordinary people. The sermon begins in the parking lot.
3. Is study of the Word a priority in your life? Stephen, who waited on tables, was given the opportunity to speak and he shared a powerful message. He was ready!
4. Your sermon through pain speaks much louder than your sermon through blessing!
5. So...keep your focus...be available to serve...every opportunity can make a difference...and stay surrendered to the Holy Spirit! You never know when God is going to use your life to impact many other lives! Directly or indirectly!

“And let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.” Hebrews 12:1b-2a

*“Here I am,
I have come to do your will.”
Hebrews 10:9a*

Want to take this message deeper?

Want to dive deeper in thought and application?

Go to our podcast on iTunes or our website at:

www.cwc.life/dive-deep