



Group Guide

The Church Endures Persecution

July 13, 2025

Main Passage: Acts 6:8-12; 7:51-8:4

Theological Theme

Christians will face persecution. Jesus warned of this during His earthly ministry, and we see examples both in the pages of Scripture and in the lives of believers worldwide. The good news is persecution isn't the end . . . the church also endures. We can endure hardships knowing we are already victorious in Jesus, who overcame death and the grave. Jesus has already won, and He's worth facing opposition (Philippians 3:8).

Introduction

- ❓ What does it mean to be persecuted for your faith?
- ❓ Have you ever encountered any kind of persecution for your faith? How did you respond?

1. Persecution (Acts 6:8-12)

Luke describes Stephen as being “full of grace and power, [and] performing many wonders and signs” (v. 8). The Holy Spirit used Stephen as a tool to bless those around him by glorifying God and acting as a witness to the good news of Jesus. When we fully buy in to following Jesus like Stephen, God will use us too.

- ❓ What insight does this give on his preparedness to endure persecution?
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- ❓ Application: Stephen was described as full of grace and power before facing this specific opposition. How are you pursuing God's grace and power today so you might be prepared to face opposition to your faith?

2. Martyrdom (Acts 7:51-60)

Between our last passage and this one, Stephen delivered a Holy Spirit-filled sermon chronicling the history of God's people, beginning with Abraham and emphasizing the Jewish leaders' unfaithfulness to God.

- ❓ Stephen spoke the truth of Jesus boldly. How might he have been tempted to respond otherwise?
- ❓ How are Stephen's ability to stand firm and his focus on Jesus connected? What does this teach us?
- ❓ Application: What can we learn from Stephen and Jesus about the godly response to persecution?

3. Scattering (Acts 8:1-4)

These verses move into the events that follow Stephen's death. The CSB aptly titles this section, "Saul the Persecutor." Saul of Tarsus, who agreed with the decision to stone Stephen, led in the "severe persecution" against the church that followed. He sought to destroy the church, throwing men and women of faith into prison for their belief in Jesus (v. 3).

- ❓ What took place with the church in these verses?
- ❓ What was the result, and how does the church react? What does this teach us about responding to persecution?
- ❓ Application: How can we respond to opposition to Christianity today in a way that glorifies God and continues His mission?

Conclusion

- ❓ What can we learn from the way Stephen approached sharing the gospel in today's study?
- ❓ How can we support one another in seeking Jesus daily so that we might be prepared for opposition to the gospel that comes our way?
- ❓ How does suffering for your faith give you greater opportunity to share the gospel with others?