

WARM-UP

- What is one talent/skill you didn't realize you had or were surprised to discover?
- Tell about a time you underwent intensive training for something. How was your experience?
- Tell about a time you sacrificed something for a greater cause.

WORD *¹³For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. ¹⁴For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

GALATIANS 5:13,14

(Read also **1 CORINTHIANS 12:27,28.**)

One of the marks of the early church was service. Jesus unmistakably took the position of a servant leader; even after His death, this was seen in His disciples. As the body of Christ, we each have our roles (1 Corinthians 12:27,28). Each of us has been given the skills and gifts to serve in the purpose that God has for us. From the example of Stephen in the early church, how are we called to serve?

1 | Serve humbly.

And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. ACTS 6:5

When the Hellenists (Greek-speaking Jews) and the Hebrews got into a disagreement regarding the distribution of food to their widows, Stephen was one of the seven chosen to do the work of serving the widows, while Paul and the other leaders devoted themselves to the equally important task of prayer and seeking the Word. We must not think of service in terms of which task is more menial, but serve humbly. How do you serve? Have you made the mistake of not serving humbly?

2 | Serve by the power of the Spirit.

⁵And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch . . . ⁸And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people. ACTS 6:5,8

Stephen was *a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit*, even when he had been chosen to wait tables. As his gift of miracles developed, he began to do *great wonders and signs*. He even began to debate, *and they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit with which he was speaking* (Acts 6:10). He served God by spreading the gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit. By the Holy Spirit, Stephen worked miracles and spoke with supernatural wisdom. How are you growing and learning in your spiritual life? Do you allow the Holy Spirit to move through you as you preach the gospel?

3 | Serve sacrificially.

*⁵⁹And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." And when he had said this, he fell asleep. **ACTS 7:59,60***

Stephen was stoned to death after he boldly presented the gospel to the council of elders—the same council that had tried Jesus. His willingness to serve God and spread His name went far beyond waiting on tables. He served faithfully, declaring and demonstrating the gospel, even unto death. He served with all of himself, holding nothing back. How was this similar to what Jesus had done for us? Like Stephen, how can Jesus' sacrifice on the cross change the way we view service?

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APPLICATION

- Have you given your life to serving the one true God? Would you like to give your life to Him today?
- God has given us each spiritual gifts and empowered us to use them with His authority. Do you know your spiritual gifts? According to 1 Corinthians 12:7, what is the purpose of these gifts?
- Are there areas in your life that are not serving God? Submit these to God and ask that He mold you to do what pleases Him.

