

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

STUDY THREE

# OPPOSITION



FOUR STUDIES FOR SMALL GROUPS

## LIVING AS CHRIST'S AMBASSADORS

COMMUNICATING TRUE HOPE IN A BROKEN WORLD

REFLECT

INTRO

How has your week been as you have tried to live cultivating connection with God and with those around you?

- Pray for those with whom you have been in contact.
- Pray that this time together now would be one in which God works in our lives by His Spirit...

### OPPOSITION

Have you faced any opposition this week? How aware are you of the fact that we're in a world whose prince is utterly opposed to our message?

In Acts 6, Stephen is described as someone filled with the Spirit, wisdom, faith, grace and power. Now we meet him facing opposition. Despite the apparent tragedy here, what we are about to read precedes one of the biggest Gospel advances in history.

### ACTS 6:9-10, 7:54-58 - STEPHEN AND THE "FREE MEN"

**CHAPTER 6:9** Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called) – Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen, <sup>10</sup> but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.

*In chapter 7, Stephen challenges the leaders' openness to God concluding, "You always resist the Holy Spirit,"*

**CHAPTER 7:54** When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. <sup>55</sup> But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. <sup>56</sup> "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. "

<sup>57</sup> At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, <sup>58</sup> dragged him out of the city and began to stone him.



- Who is opposing Stephen? (6:9)
  - Luke underlines the irony of their name. Do you see any parallel with our culture? In what ways do those who think that they promote freedom sometimes restrict the Gospel?
- As Stephen's position is attacked by argument, what characterises his response? (6:10)
  - These Jews would have tried to prove that Jesus was not the Promised King and that He had not risen from the dead. Try to "argue" in the style and logic of Stephen.
    - It is vital that truth is tested like this. What are arguments against the truth of Jesus that you have recently heard? With a partner, play the role of questioner while the other tries to answer. Help each other if you get stuck!
- As these discussions conclude, what becomes clear about the "Free Men's" position? (6:10)
  - What should have been their logical response?
    - Were you led to Christ helped by logical argument? If this is your story - share a little of it now!
- Praise God for our friends' honest truth-testing questions.
- Pray for our responses - that we would be helped by God's Spirit to answer - leading to their salvation.

In "What Kind of God?" Michael Ots quotes ten arguments our contemporaries use. He then logically refutes them.

#### WHAT KIND OF GOD...

- doesn't make Himself clearer?
- is still relevant?
- doesn't prevent suffering?
- doesn't care about creation?
- allows violence in his name?
- lets the church represent him?
- allows only one way?
- would limit my sexuality?
- sends people to hell?
- would send his son to die?

This book is a great resource for Ambassadors of Christ serious about helping their truth-seeking friends.

BIBLE

Through Acts 7, in his "trial", Stephen speaks showing how historically, prevailing culture tries to silence God.

- How do his accusers respond? (7:54)
  - Why do you think this is?
  - What is symbolic about what the attackers do with their hands? (7:57a)
- Where is Stephen's gaze and who does he try to show to his attackers? (7:55-56)
  - How does Stephen challenge our style of communication when under pressure?
- Today, men and women will be dying for their faith. How do you respond to this?
- Pray for those experiencing persecution today. (Visit "Barnabas Fund" or "Elam Ministries" for more prayer-fuelling information.)
- Pray for commitment, courage and clarity as we share our faith this week.

PRAY