

## The Way: Believing, Stephen the Martyr

### Reflect

1. What was one of the hardest things you've experienced?
2. How did you get through that experience?

### Read Your Bible

- Acts 7:54-60
- John 17:18-23

### Apply God's Word to Your Life

1. Stephen is the first martyr of the Christian church, having died because of his belief in Jesus Christ. As you read of his death, what stands out to you the most?
2. Stephen's death has many parallels to Jesus' death on a cross – the giving up of his spirit to God and a cry for forgiveness for those who have condemned him to death (Acts 7:59-60). Of those two phrases, which one encourages you in faith the most?
3. Which phrase challenges you in faith the most?
4. If your faith were to be challenged or questioned by others, how might Stephen's deep expression of faith help you in your response?
5. In John 17:18-23, Jesus is praying for his disciples and future followers before He is arrested and taken to the cross. How does it feel to know that Jesus has specifically prayed for you in your faith?
6. At critical times in their lives, both Jesus and Stephen prayed to the Father for themselves and for others. Through prayer their faith was strengthened. Where in your life do you need to be strengthened and take to God in prayer?

7. Jesus prayed that in Him all believers would be made one and brought into complete unity with one another and God. How do you imagine that unity made a difference for Stephen when he was martyred?
8. What difference does it make in your faith to know you do not stand alone in Christ and in your belief in Him?

### **Conclusion**

The road of faith looks different for all believers. Jesus meets us right where we're at in life, and at every turn, offers us opportunity to place our trust in Him. Believing in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior doesn't mean that life will be easy, but it does mean believers have access to a strength and assurance that only God's Holy Spirit can give. We see that strength and assurance on full display in the life of martyrs, like Stephen. It can also be seen every time a believer turns to God in prayer and presses on in faith, whatever the circumstance. Belief in Jesus Christ not only secures our eternity, but it also gives us security in our present, knowing that no matter what happens, we are in God's loving hands and God will never let us go.

### **Pray**

Gracious God, you have revealed Your goodness and glory to us through Your creation, through Your Son, Jesus Christ, and through your Holy Spirit that gives us faith in You. As You assured and strengthened the faith of the martyr, Stephen, so increase our faith we pray. Assure and strengthen our faith so we may boldly share Your love and grace with those around us. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.