

LESSON 4

FAMOUS LAST WORDS

ACTS 4:32—7:60



1 How do people express opposition to something or someone they think is wrong?

2 How have you been opposed recently?



Read Acts 4:32—8:1a, Stephen's Profile, "The Effects of Stephen's Death" chart, and the following notes:

☐ 5:17, 18 ☐ 5:21 ☐ 5:29 ☐ 5:41 ☐ 6:14 ☐ 7:2ff ☐ 7:8 ☐ 7:55–58
☐ 7:59 ☐ 7:60

3 What caused the religious leaders to arrest the apostles (5:17, 18)?

4 How did the apostles respond to this wave of persecution (5:27–32, 41, 42)?

5 What did the apostles do to develop leadership in the young church (6:1–6)?

6 What evidence is there that the apostles were successful in developing those leaders (6:7, 8; 7:1–60)?

The young church experienced tremendous growth and unity. At first their success seemed limitless. But soon they were tested severely. First, Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for lying about their gift, and then tremendous opposition came from the Jewish religious leaders. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the leadership of the apostles, the church moved aggressively, healing the sick, caring for the needy, and boldly preaching the truth. Finally, however, through false witnesses, Stephen, a young leader in the church who was full of faith and the Holy Spirit, was arrested and brought before the Sanhedrin. There he confronted the religious leaders with their sin and hypocrisy. Responding with rage, the religious leaders condemned and executed Stephen on the spot. The church today, in existence for nearly two thousand years, seems to grow lethargic and powerless during times of prosperity and freedom. We seem afraid to speak the truth, holding tightly to our prestige and position in society. Stephen, on the other hand, courageously spoke up and lost his life for Christ. What are you willing to risk or lose for Christ? There is a time and place for confrontation. Where do you need to take a stand for Christ today?



7 What might cause religious leaders today to try to silence Christians who speak the truth?

8 In what ways is Stephen a good model for us to follow?



9 When are you likely to be quiet even though you know you should speak up?

10 What institutions, organizations, or individuals in your community need to be confronted about their wrong policies or actions?



11 What could you do this week to speak up for truth or to speak out against evil in your community (for example: write letters, make phone calls, march in protest, present your point at public hearings, speak to someone, etc.)?

A What did Peter mean when he spoke about obeying God rather than human authority (5:29)? When have you obeyed people instead of God?

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B What evidence of unity in the early church can you find in this section (4:32—8:1a)? What evidence of unity can be found in your church? What do you have that you could share with others?

C Why was there no poverty in the early church (4:32–37)? What can you do to alleviate suffering among members of your local church?

D Why were Ananias and Sapphira struck dead (5:1–11)? What was so bad about what they had done? In what ways do people lie to God today?

E What factors help make a church grow? What are some of the problems that come with growth? How can churches solve those problems?

F How can a local church help spread the gospel around the world? How is your church engaged in evangelism? What is your plan for sharing the good news of Christ?

G If you don't have public gifts like Peter and John, what can you do to build the church and to spread the Good News?