

# CHURCH ON THE MOVE

*Acts 7:44-60*

## **BIG IDEA**

A church with pierced hearts displays “grace under pressure” in their relationships and their daily situations.

## **ICE BREAKER**

Matt shared his story from the West Virginia junior church trip. The group of kids which Matt led had to pick an activity for the next day. The group chose to go caving and soon thereafter Matt’s anxiety was rising. The girl's anxiety was high as well as they entered the cave. Soon the girls began to cry. So, he said, “I gotta be strong for these girls...” in spite of his own anxiety. This was courage. He and the whole group did something they were afraid to do.

Consider the following statement which contrasts boldness with courage:

“Boldness is taking initial bold action but a heart of courage perseveres in giving grace regardless of the circumstances.”

1. When is a time that you had to do something courageous? (Think relationships)
2. Take some time as a group to define: courage. How would your group define it?

## **NEXT STEP**

Think of someone you know who has shown “grace under pressure” in the midst of a difficult situation. How might their example change your response this week?

## **ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. Spend some time brainstorming on the topic: “What builds courage?” Consider writing a list together and emailing it to everyone in the group. Along with this thought, discuss why some people are courageous and others not so much. Spend some time entering the story: feel the rage and imagine the faces of the crowd toward Stephen. Consider reading the story of Stephens’ stoning again in Acts 7: 54-60. What made Stephen so courageous?

2. When you have a big fight in your marriage or in an important relationship it's easy to go to bed angry. Courage doesn't do this. Courage rolls over in bed to face your spouse and asks, "Are you okay?" Courage says, "I am sorry." It takes courage to listen to people. It takes courage to receive feedback and to own it. It takes courage to call a friend that you have not talked to for a long time.

Share with the group either a situation or a relationship where you face the tension between avoiding fearfully or engaging courageously. Invite the group to be your ally in this situation. Let the group know how you would like them to support you.

Group leaders: consider praying together for each person that has shared a situation they face.

3. You may recall the statement we have heard often at BHBC: "The quality of any relationship is determined by how it handles conflict." Imagine having increased courage to work through conflict in your relationships. Imagine what you could do differently?

## **NOTES AND QUOTES**

Ernest Hemingway said: "Courage is grace under pressure."

Boldness is taking initial bold action but a heart of courage perseveres in giving grace regardless of the circumstances.

As Stephen was about to be stoned the text tells us that Stephen's face was like the face of an angel--this is grace under pressure. He is focused on the huge grace he has received so he can extend huge grace.

Remember, only two options are available when we realize that we "murdered" Christ: a pierced heart that takes ownership for murdering Him or hardness of heart that refuses ownership.

"When they heard these things they were enraged...". Rage meets faith.

Paul and Barnabas had a "sharp disagreement" regarding bringing John Mark along a second time. Why is this dispute in the story? The author doesn't reveal any resolution. We are left hanging and this is intentional. One reason for this may be that leaving something out may tell a story more powerfully. God wants us to feel the absence of reconciliation.

Relational courage. What does this mean?

“A church on the move not only is courageous in the face of the world’s persecution, resistance, and annoyance. It is also courageous in grace relationally with each other. Restoration is a must.”