

# SHINE Devotional

## Week 18 – Lesson 1



### The Servant of God

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Scripture reading Acts 6:8

*“And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.”*

Stephen was an ordained servant of the first local church. God has much to say about Him in this passage.

1. He was a man of “honest report.” That means that he had a good reputation both with people inside the church and outside the church.
2. He was a man “*full of the Holy Ghost.*” That meant that he displayed the fruit of the Spirit: “*love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance*” (Galatians 5:22-23).
3. He was a man full of “*wisdom.*” That means he was able to see things from God’s perspective, and he knew how to apply knowledge in a very practical way.
4. He was a good manager and was selected to minister to the needs of widows.
5. He was a man full of faith, which means he understood the Gospel and put his faith and trust in Christ for his salvation. He also trusted God for daily needs. In addition, Acts 6:8 tells us that he had great power to do miracles.

Stephen was a servant of God. He reflected God through his attitude, service, wisdom, love, and faith. What a great example Stephen is for all of us. We need to remember that people are always watching our lives. The man who says, “I don’t care about what anybody thinks about me,” is not someone that God can use for His glory. The believer should guard where he goes, what he does, what he says, and how he says it, because everything the believer does has a direct impact on the reputation of his Saviour.

If you learn this lesson from Stephen, you, as a believer, will SHINE.



## SHINE Devotional

### Week 18 – Lesson 2

#### The Tactics of Satan

Scripture reading Acts 6:9

*“Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.”*

When our church was very young, we were busy sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ to everyone we could in the Las Vegas valley. (We are still trying to do that every day.) One day while sitting in my office, I got a phone call from a preacher who did not believe in salvation by grace through faith alone. He firmly believed that a person must be baptized in order to be saved. He told me he had gotten one of my brochures and asked me if I would publicly debate with him about the need of baptism for salvation. I was young and dumb, but I was not that dumb. I said to him, “No, I will not debate with you publicly.” He asked me, “Why?” Then I gave him several reasons. I told him...

1. “I am right, and I know what the Bible says but you may be a better debater than me. If I debate with you publicly and lose the debate, it may lead people astray into thinking that somehow the Bible teaches salvation by baptism which it does not. I don’t want to take that chance.”
2. “I do not want to debate you publicly because if I win I would humiliate you and would place you in a place of defensiveness and would never have the opportunity of winning you over to my side. I love you too much to put you in that position.”
3. “I have a personal problem with pride. If I began to prepare to debate you publicly I would eventually become more concerned about me looking good in front of an audience than about you, or the other people that would not bring glory of God.”

In Stephen’s day there were people who wanted to publicly argue with him. They wanted to make him look foolish. This has always been Satan’s tactic. David said, *“Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil. They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul”* (Psalm 56:5-6). Don’t allow yourself to fall into Satan’s trap. Determine to love people. Speak His truth in love. When you do, you, as a believer, will SHINE.

# SHINE Devotional

## Week 18 – Lesson 3



### The Fury of the Lost

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Scripture reading Acts 6:10-12

*“And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake. Then they suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. And they stirred up the people, and the elders, and the scribes, and came upon him, and caught him, and brought him to the council,”*

The wise man is one who recognizes that ungodly men are self-righteous, and do not want to hear the truth. The Bible says that they are driven by pride. *“The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set gins for me. Selah”* (Psalm 140:5). We live in a reprobate world that describes right as wrong and wrong as right. A governor will claim to be “concerned about every human life,” but promote abortion, which is the taking of innocent life. A man will stand and say he stands for American values and, yet, will promote lifestyles that contradict the Biblical and traditional values upon which this nation was founded. When the hypocrisy of the lost is pointed out their rage will be seen and heard in what they say and do. *“Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord, and against his anointed...”* (Psalm 2:1-2). In our Scripture today we see that the enemies of Stephen hired people to say false things about him. They could not refute his message, so they attacked his character. They lied about him and said that he spoke evil about Moses and God, because he stood for truth, they did not want to hear him. They could find no good and they stirred up people to fight against him.

As a believer you must understand the tactics of Satan and avoid the fury of the lost so you can SHINE.

# SHINE Devotional

## Week 18 – Lesson 4



### Believers Should Guard Their Tongue

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Scripture reading James 3:6-8

*“And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath been tamed of mankind: But the tongue can no man tame; it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.”*

In Acts 6, self-righteous men set themselves up to defame Stephen, a man full of faith, of a good reputation, a wise manager, and spirit filled. They began their attack by using their tongues. They lied. They bent his words. They hired men to be false witnesses against him. These are the tactics of Satan and should never be the tactics of the believer.

It is so important that we avoid using our tongue to attack. Remember God’s Word said, *“Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled”* (Hebrews 12:14-15). It is easy to lash out at someone if they disagree with you politically, or on any important issue. The believer needs to guard his tongue and needs to speak in love. He needs to remember he is not here to condemn the lost but to share the Good News of the Gospel and reflect the love of Jesus Christ. If you know how to control your tongue, you, as a believer, will SHINE.

# SHINE Devotional

## Week 18 – Lesson 5



### The Believer Should Listen

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Scripture reading Acts 6:15

*“And all that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel.”*

After all the false accusations had been made about Stephen, the council finally sat down and gave Stephen an opportunity to speak. Acts 7 records Stephen’s message. The problem was before they heard what he was about to say their hearts were already prepared to reject the truth. This is a terrible position to be in. As believers, we should always be ready to listen. *“Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath”* (James 1:9). So often the opposite is true. We are swift to speak and slow to listen. My mother used to say, “God gave you two ears and one mouth. Take a clue.”

Several years ago, I was preparing to leave Pensacola, Florida, and go to New Orleans. I was in a hurry and had taken that trip several times before. I was frustrated because I was running behind. My wife said, “David, shouldn’t we pray that God will give us direction and we won’t get lost?” My pride filled response was, “I know the way. Let’s get going.” Needless to say, the trip was disastrous. We got lost, trapped in a traffic jam, and almost missed our plane. All because I was unwilling to listen to my wife and worse than that, listen to God. Solomon said, *“A wise man will hear, and will increase learning; and a man of understanding shall attain unto wise counsels”* (Proverbs 1:5).

In Stephen’s day, the religious elite were lifted up with pride, refused to listen, and made a foolish mistake. Do not let your pride keep you from God’s blessing. Listen to His Word, listen to those who teach His Word, and you will SHINE.

# SHINE Devotional

## Week 18 – Lesson 6



### The Believer Should Look For the Good

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Scripture reading 1 Corinthians 4:5

*“Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”*

This passage always amazes me. It is obviously a passage that is speaking about the judgment seat of Christ, where believers will stand before God and receive rewards for what they have done in their flesh. What is amazing to me is that God says every man will have praise of God. I am amazed that when I stand before God, His Word says He is going to have something good say about me. I am aware of my failures. I am aware of my weaknesses. I am aware of all the things that I have done wrong in my life. I am so thankful for the grace of God because without His grace, there is no way that I could get to heaven. It will be a privilege just to be in the throne room of God. Not only will I be able to be in His throne room, I will be there as His child because of what Jesus Christ did. On top of that, when I am there Jesus will have something good to say about me! That is true about you as well. If you have put your faith and trust in Jesus Christ for your salvation, God is going to have something good to say about you.

What a difference between our God and the way of the world. In Acts 6, a good man named Stephen was condemned by bad men. They could find nothing good in him. Believers should always be looking for the good. Paul said, *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.”* (Philippians 4:8). We are so quick to criticize other people because we do not agree with them, or to condemn others because of their lack of understanding in the things of God. The believer should be one who is constantly looking for the good.

Jesus spent time with publicans and sinners, and I guess I can too. As believers, let's not look for the fault. Let's not follow the tactics of Satan. Let's look for the good. Let's stand with those who stand for truth. When we do, we will SHINE.