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| ***Title:*** | Making a Difference! |
| ***Text:*** | Acts 6:8-15 |
| ***Subject:*** | What enabled Stephen to have such an impact on his world? |
| ***Compliment:*** | He was a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost. |
| ***CIT:*** | Stephen had a tremendous impact on the world around him because he was a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost! |
| ***Purpose:*** | To encourage believers to really be Christian people, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost! |
| ***Homiletic Idea:*** | If you desire to live a life that impacts the world around you for Christ you must first purpose to be full of faith and of the Holy Ghost! |
| ***Intro:*** |  |

To impact something is to have a direct effect, make an impression, or impinge upon it. The amount of rest you get can have a direct impact on the quality of your morning. It can affect it. Finding out that your wife got you off brand Oreo’s can impact your mood, as can finding out those were for the kids and your real Oreo’s were in another bag. People can impact your life for good or bad. They can affect it. Your life can be different in one way or another due to the influence of another.

What does that have to do with the book of Acts? Well, we are about to be thoroughly introduced to a man, just a member of a local New Testament church, that, to say he impacted his world would be an understatement. His name is Stephen.

Stephen had an effect on the people of time like few others had. He affected the Jews so greatly that they were willing to find false witnesses to testify against him so that they would have reason to arrest him in order to shut him up! They really disliked Stephen and the climax of their rage had not yet been reached! Why was he able to affect men so?

(State the CIT) Stephen had a tremendous impact on the world around him because he was a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost!

1. **Stephen was a man used of God to impact the world around him! V8-15**
   1. God used him to validate this Jesus of Nazareth claims as the Messiah. V8
      1. ‘great wonders and miracles among the people.”
      2. Wonders and miracles have to do with signs that were not naturally possible; they were supernatural causing the people to be amazed.
      3. The purpose of these miracles was to validate or prove that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Messiah by showing forth the power that is in that name!
   2. God used him to then witness to the people regarding this same Jesus! V14
      1. He wasn’t just performing miracles for the sake of the peoples personal felt needs being met.
      2. The reason for validating the identity of Jesus was so that he could then preach Jesus and have people trust in Him!

**Transition**: So he preached Jesus and performed miracles and wonders in Jesus name, and apparently he was getting a lot of attention from the people because the Jews started to take notice and interfere. They didn’t like what he was doing and they didn’t like the man in whose name he was doing it. So they get involved and decide that they will simply show from Scripture that what he is saying just isn’t true. The only problem was that it was true and Stephen was ready to defend it!

* 1. God used him to defend, from Scripture, his claims regarding Jesus of Nazareth. V10
     1. “they were not able”
        1. The word able means ‘to be strong.’
        2. This means that they did not have the strength or the ability to that he had with the Word!
     2. “to resist”
        1. The word means ‘to withstand.’
        2. This means that though they didn’t like what he said, they could not deny he claims from Scripture. He thoroughly made his case based solely on the Truth of the Word of God!
     3. “the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake.”
        1. Again this has to do with his wisdom and his ability regarding the Scriptures.
        2. He knew the Old Testament Scriptures very well.
        3. He was able therefore to use them to make his case!

**Transition:** He proved his point to say the least. Consider the way the one commentator put it, “The strength of his case was such that his opponents in the debate found themselves worsted. They accepted his premises (for like him they acknowledged the authority of Old Testament Scripture), but they could not accept his conclusions, so scandalous and revolutionary did they appear.” F.F. Bruce

Isn’t that crazy? They were so committed to their tradition that even though Stephen proved indisputably the claims of Jesus to be true form the Scriptures themselves, these people instead of saying, “Wow, well in that case I guess I owe Jesus my allegiance!” they seek to ruin Stephen’s character instead.

They willingly and knowingly create lies and get others to lie so they can win. They will be able to, through this, discredit Stephen and his claims, retain the people’s adherence to Judaism, and if they are lucky get rid of Stephen once and for all. That is the purpose for the type of accusation they brought according to F.F. Bruce. In verse 14 they accused Stephen of blaspheming the temple. The reason is because the Romans had chosen to let the Jews handle themselves any who were convicted of such a crime as they saw fit. The Jews tried the same thing before the Romans with Jesus, but failed, with Stephen however will see soon enough.

So he has to appear before the Sanhedrin, and they get people to bare false witness against him. What happens?

* 1. God uses Stephens countenance to further establish the power and validity of his claims! V15
     1. Commentators are undecided as to what this actually means.
        1. Some say that Stephens face actually had a glow to it as that of Moses.
        2. Others say that it is a reference to the inspiration that was within, that his eyes burned with an “inner light.”
     2. Whatever the implications are we know what is said.
        1. They saw his face as that of an angel.
        2. There is no denying whose side the angels are on.
        3. The very word means a “messenger of God.”
     3. Even Stephens’s countenance communicated that he was a ***messenger*** of God, and therefore the probability is that his claims are ***messages*** from God!

Sum up: No one can deny that Stephen had a tremendous ***impact*** on the world around him! The kind of response that he evoked in the people he ministered to as well as the religious Jews is on par with that of Jesus and the apostles.

Jesus and the apostles were renowned among the people, as was Stephen. Jesus and the apostles debated and bested the religious Jews, as did Stephen. Jesus and the apostles won debates so masterfully that it became obvious that the only way the Jews would win was underhandedly, Stephen did the same and with the same response from the Jews!

Stephen was used of God in a way that impacted people greatly. What was it that distinguished Stephen from others? What was it that set him apart? Why was God able to use him to the degree that he was? Because…

1. **Stephen was a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost! V5**

**Transition:** “What set him apart from the rest of the saints of the day? What made him special or unique?” Nothing…

* 1. He was “a man.”
     1. Before he was the mighty man we find in the second half of Chapter 6 he was just a church member!
     2. It was as a church member that he became known as a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost!

**Transition:** There is nothing said about Stephen’s personal ability apart from his dependence upon God. He depended upon God! He strove to be a Christian…Christ like and therefore he was just a man that was full of faith and full of the Holy Ghost!

* 1. He was a man full of faith and full of the Holy Ghost!
     1. Full of faith means by necessity that he was a man that was full of the Word!
        1. Faith is trusting in God’s Word!
           1. Something you trust in is something you act in accordance with.
           2. Your actions reveal the foundation of your beliefs!
        2. In order to be full of faith, if faith is believing in and therefore acting upon God’s Word, one must be fairly familiar with God’s Word!
           1. “full of faith” what a general characteristic of Stephen as a person!
           2. This means that generally he lived his life according to the Book!
           3. In order for this to be a general description of his entire life experience he would have to know the Book and it’s general applications to life well!
        3. His experience with the Word is what enabled him to handle himself as he did against the religious Jews of his day!
        4. It is also what enabled him to be such a strong witness of Jesus.
           1. He only used the Old Testament!
           2. This means he had to know the Old Testament passages that pertained distinctly to the Messiah.
     2. Full of the Holy Ghost means that he lived under the Spirit of God’s influence! Eph. 5:18
        1. He was a man sensitive to the Holy Spirit of God in his life!
        2. He was surrendered to the will of God to the extent the Spirit had monopoly on his life!
        3. He was a man ready, apt to do God’s will; totally yielded without reserve to the point that it affected his very countenance!

**Transition to Application:** That was Stephen. He had a tremendous impact on his world because he was a man that was full of faith, and a man that was full of the Holy Ghost.

The thought then is, (Homiletic Idea): If you and I desire to live a life that impacts the world around us for Christ we must first purpose to be people full of faith, and full of the Holy Ghost!

After all this is what the Christian life is all about! This is what it consists of! Isn’t it?

* What Christian isn’t supposed to be describable in this manner? Doesn’t that come with the territory?
  + What Christian isn’t supposed to be full of faith and the Holy Ghost?
  + What Christian isn’t supposed to be a man or woman that strives to know the Book and fix their lives upon it?
  + What Christian isn’t supposed to live under and according to the influence of the Holy Spirit of God in their lives?
* This is the Christian life.
  + The problem is most Christians simply don’t live it!
  + Stephen stood out; Stephen was used of God because he was what most aren’t, but what all are supposed to be… A Christian!
* By the way Stephen was used because of what he was not the other way around.
  + It wasn’t that God wanted to use Stephen and so Stephen straightened up.
  + Stephen straightened up and so God used him.
  + He had the description of being full of faith and of the Holy Ghost before he was ever called upon to represent the apostles in the daily ministration of the church!

**Conclusion:** Stephen was just a faithful Christian church member, loving the Lord, learning and living the Book, and making himself available to the Lord without reservation, and the Lord used him to impact his world in an incredible way.

* Does your life impact those around you, or if you were gone tomorrow would anyone notice you were missing?
  + Does it have the type of impact Stephen’s had?
  + I’m with you here… but we have to ask ourselves why not?
* So, what was special about Stephen? Nothing... He stood out because he was a man that was committed to really being a Christian, ***not just claiming the title***! His life literally impacted the world around him!
  + He was a man full of faith. He learned the Word. He knew the Word! There was no part of his life that he kept back from the Word!
  + He was a man full of the Holy Ghost! Whatever God wanted, Stephen was ready to do! He anxiously awaited the leadership of the Spirit!

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| ***Dates and Locations Delivered*** | |  |
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