

# 08 THE FIRST MARTYR

KEY TEXT: ACTS 6:8-15; 7:54-60

## CENTRAL truth

In this week's teaching, we will meet a disciple named Stephen who was empowered by the Spirit to pattern his life and teaching after Jesus's example, even in suffering. As we learn about this man, who would become the first martyr of the church, we will see that **the Holy Spirit empowers us in times of suffering.**

## key question

**How can we remind ourselves of God's presence when we are rejected?**

In Christ, God is familiar with rejection. We can take comfort in knowing that we serve a God who understands our experience and has given us the Holy Spirit. Through the Spirit, God comforts us and gives us courage to follow Him. We are never alone.

## keep in mind

- As Christ-followers in the United States context, severe persecution and martyrdom are usually not realities that we face. This week's teaching is a good opportunity to help students look beyond their experiences and think about our siblings in Christ who face these realities each day. In your meeting with students, take time to pray for suffering Christians around the world.
- Forgiveness is a theme in this week's teaching. Just as we've been shown mercy by God in Christ, we too are called to extend mercy to others. While forgiving others is a command, it can also be a process at times. Encourage students to be honest with the Lord about any difficulties in being able to forgive others, and point them to the Holy Spirit who enables us to do so.

## application

**How does the gospel free us to forgive others, even when their actions seem unforgivable?**

## the win

**FOR THE STUDENT:** Help students to understand that through the Spirit, we can pattern our lives like Jesus—even in suffering. While rejection and difficulty will be experienced for following Jesus, He is always worth it.

**FOR THE LEADER:** Though martyrdom is not a likely outcome for most of us in the American context, there are other difficulties that students face for following Jesus. Leaders should be empowered to point students to the experience of other Christians in the world and to give students space to share rejection or difficulty they've experienced for following Jesus.

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