



Walking with the Spirit through the Book of Acts

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Schedule

April 7	The Holy Spirit
April 14	Acts 1:1-9
April 21	Acts 1:10-26
April 28	Acts 2:1-13
May 5	Acts 2:14-47
May 12	BREAK (Mother's Day)
May 19	Acts 3:1-26
May 26	Acts 4:1-21
June 2	Acts 4:22-5:11
June 9	Acts 5:12-42
June 16	BREAK (Father's Day)
June 23	Acts 6:1-15
June 30	Acts 7:2-60; 8:1-4



Hero #1: Stephen

2. Satan has the ability to create adversity in culture through lies.

Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, “We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.”

So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. They produced false witnesses, who testified, “This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.” (Acts 6:11-14)



Hero #1: Stephen

2. Satan has the ability to create adversity in culture through lies.

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree. Then some stood up and gave this false testimony against him: “We heard him say, ‘I will destroy this temple made with human hands and in three days will build another, not made with hands.’” Yet even then their testimony did not agree. (Mark 14:55-59)



Hero #1: Stephen

3. The message the Spirit inspires is one that exposes people who claim to follow God but live faithless, disobedient lives. People like this naturally oppose God's appointed (and empowered) representatives.

All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel. Then the high priest asked Stephen, "Are these charges true?" (6:15, 7:1)



The Pattern of Heroes Under the Spirit's Power

I. Abraham: One man, the father of Israel, prior to the law, believes God and acts out of obedience. God made him promises (and came through). (Acts 7:2-8)

To this he replied: “Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Harran. ‘Leave your country and your people,’ God said, ‘and go to the land I will show you.’” (Acts 7:2-3)



The Pattern of Heroes Under the Spirit's Power

God spoke to him in this way: 'For four hundred years your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated. But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves,' God said, 'and afterward they will come out of that country and worship me in this place.' **Then he gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision.** And Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him eight days after his birth. Later Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs. (Acts 7:6-8)



The Pattern of Heroes Under the Spirit's Power

2. Joseph: One man, the victim of the patriarchs of Israel, was rescued by God. He rose to prominence and power in a foreign land, during a time of suffering. God gave him wisdom. (Acts 7:9-16)

“Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh king of Egypt. So Pharaoh made him ruler over Egypt and all his palace.” (Acts 7:9-10)



The Pattern of Heroes Under the Spirit's Power

3. Circumstances seemed to shift against God's people in Egypt and jeopardize the promise. They experienced hardship and suffering. But this was just a step in God's plan to raise up one man—a hero. (Acts 7:17-19)

“As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt had greatly increased. Then ‘a new king, to whom Joseph meant nothing, came to power in Egypt.’ He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our ancestors by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die.” (Acts 7:17-19)



The Pattern of Heroes Under the Spirit's Power

4. Moses: One man, adopted by the household of Pharaoh, was raised within Egyptian culture and gained wisdom. He rose to a position of prominence. He was rejected by his own people (the many) as a leader and fled Egypt, but God had other plans for him. God revealed himself and gave him the law, and appointed him as the savior of his people—the same people who had rejected him. He performed miracles and signs by the power of God. (Acts 7:20-38)

“At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for by his family. When he was placed outside, Pharaoh’s daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.” (Acts 7:20-22)

The Pattern of Heroes Under the Spirit's Power

“When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his own people, the Israelites. He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. **Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not.** The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, ‘Men, you are brothers; why do you want to hurt each other?’

“But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, ‘**Who made you ruler and judge over us?** Are you thinking of killing me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?’ When Moses heard this, **he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons.**” (Acts 7:23-29)

The Pattern of Heroes Under the Spirit's Power

“This is the same Moses they had rejected with the words, ‘Who made you ruler and judge?’ He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. He led them out of Egypt and performed wonders and signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the wilderness.

“This is the Moses who told the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your own people.’ He was in the assembly in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our ancestors; and he received living words to pass on to us. (Acts 7:35-38)



The Pattern of Heroes Under the Spirit's Power

5. Despite their suffering and the power of God, Israel (the many) refused to obey God's appointed hero and desired to return to their bondage. They rejected God and worshipped an idol. God turned away from them and sent them into exile. (Acts 7:39-43; cf. Amos 5:25-27)

“But our ancestors refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. They told Aaron, ‘Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt—we don’t know what has happened to him!’ That was the time they made an idol in the form of a calf. They brought sacrifices to it and reveled in what their own hands had made.” (Acts 7:39-41)



The Pattern of Heroes Under the Spirit's Power

6. Israel (the many) had the law during their time in the wilderness (the tabernacle, i.e., the mobile temple) which remained with them for many years until only much later it came to rest in the temple, built by Solomon (not God's hero, David). (Acts 7:44-47)

“Our ancestors had the tabernacle of the covenant law with them in the wilderness. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen. After receiving the tabernacle, our ancestors under Joshua brought it with them when they took the land from the nations God drove out before them. It remained in the land until the time of David, who enjoyed God's favor and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. But it was Solomon who built a house for him.” (Acts 7:44-47)

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The Pattern of Heroes Under the Spirit's Power

7. The temple is not, and has never been, a necessary residence for God's presence.
(Acts 7:48-50; cf. Isa 66:1-2a)

“However, the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says:

“Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool.

What kind of house will you build for me?
says the Lord.

Or where will my resting place be?

Has not my hand made all these things?” (Acts 7:48-50; Isa 66:1-2a)

The Pattern of Heroes Under the Spirit's Power

8. Application to Stephen's audience: You are the *many*—not the *one* who is faithful, obedient, wise, and empowered by God. You resist the Holy Spirit who works (and has always worked) through his faithful messengers. You persecute the ones God sends, including Jesus. You make claims on the basis of the law but have not obeyed it. (Acts 7:51-53)

“You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.” (Acts 7:51-53)

The Pattern of Heroes Under the Spirit's Power

9. The crowd, proving Stephen's words to be true, drags him outside the city and kills him. Stephen is rejected by the many but vindicated by Jesus—the only one who matters. This is the same pattern evident in Stephen's examples. (Acts 7:54-60)

When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God." (Acts 7:54-56)



The Pattern of Heroes Under the Spirit's Power

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At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.

While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep. (Acts 7:57-60)



The Emergence of Saul, Enemy of the Church

1. Paul is first introduced as a force against the church. He is motivated the same as the crowd, which is a response against the perceived blasphemy of lifting Jesus up to the level of God. Paul is therefore present and approves of Stephen's murder.

And Saul approved of their killing him. (Acts 8:1a)

Say to the Israelites: 'Anyone who curses their God will be held responsible; anyone who blasphemes the name of the LORD is to be put to death. The entire assembly must stone them. Whether foreigner or native-born, when they blaspheme the Name they are to be put to death. (Lev 24:15-16)



The Emergence of Saul, Enemy of the Church

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And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven, but blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come. (Matt 12:31-32)



The Emergence of Saul, Enemy of the Church

2. The effect of Stephen's message is an intense persecution of the church in Jerusalem. The disciples scatter throughout Judea and Samaria to escape persecution. (Acts 8:1b-3)

On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison. (Acts 8:1b-3)



The Emergence of Saul, Enemy of the Church

3. The result of this suffering for the church is the spread of the gospel. (Acts 8:4)

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went. (Acts 8:4)

