



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 22 Combatting What is False
By Pastor Jody May 02/26/2023**

Acts 7:1-53 ESV

Stephen’s Speech

7 And the high priest said, “Are these things so?” ² And Stephen said:

“Brothers and fathers, hear me. The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, ³ and said to him, ‘Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.’ ⁴ Then he went out from the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran. And after his father died, God removed him from there into this land in which you are now living. ⁵ Yet he gave him no inheritance in it, not even a foot’s length, but promised to give it to him as a possession and to his offspring after him, though he had no child. ⁶ And God spoke to this effect—that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them four hundred years. ⁷ ‘But I will judge the nation that they serve,’ said God, ‘and after that they shall come out and worship me in this place.’ ⁸ And he gave him the **covenant of circumcision**. And so Abraham became the father of Isaac, and circumcised him on the eighth day, and Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob of the twelve patriarchs.

⁹ “And the patriarchs, jealous of Joseph, sold him into Egypt; but **God was with him** ¹⁰ and rescued him out of all his afflictions and gave him favor and wisdom before Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who made him ruler over Egypt and over all his household. ¹¹ Now there came a famine throughout all Egypt and Canaan, and great affliction, and our fathers could find no food. ¹² But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers on their first visit. ¹³ And on the second visit Joseph made himself known to his brothers, and Joseph’s family became known to Pharaoh. ¹⁴ And Joseph sent and summoned Jacob his father and all his kindred, seventy-five persons in all. ¹⁵ And Jacob went down into Egypt, and he died, he and our fathers, ¹⁶ and they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham had bought for a sum of silver from the sons of Hamor in Shechem.

¹⁷ “But as the time of the promise drew near, which God had granted to Abraham, the people increased and multiplied in Egypt ¹⁸ until there arose over Egypt another king who did not know Joseph. ¹⁹ He dealt shrewdly with our race and forced our fathers to expose their infants, so that they would not be kept alive. ²⁰ At this time Moses was born; and he was **beautiful in God’s sight**. And he was brought up for three months in his father’s house, ²¹ and when he was



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 22 Combatting What is False
By Pastor Jody May 02/26/2023**

exposed, Pharaoh's daughter adopted him and brought him up as her own son. ²²And Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was mighty in his words and deeds.

²³"When he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brothers, the children of Israel. ²⁴And seeing one of them being wronged, he defended the oppressed man and avenged him by striking down the Egyptian. ²⁵He supposed that his brothers would understand that God was giving them salvation by his hand, but they did not understand. ²⁶And on the following day he appeared to them as they were quarreling and tried to reconcile them, saying, 'Men, you are brothers. Why do you wrong each other?' ²⁷But the man who was wronging his neighbor thrust him aside, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us?' ²⁸Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' ²⁹At this retort Moses fled and became an exile in the land of Midian, where he became the father of two sons.

³⁰"Now when forty years had passed, an angel appeared to him in the wilderness of Mount Sinai, in a flame of fire in a bush. ³¹When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight, and as he drew near to look, there came the voice of the Lord: ³²'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham and of Isaac and of Jacob.' And Moses trembled and did not dare to look. ³³Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off the sandals from your feet, for the place where you are standing is holy ground. ³⁴I have surely seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their groaning, and I have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.'

³⁵"This Moses, whom they rejected, saying, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge?'—this man God sent as both ruler and redeemer by the hand of the angel who appeared to him in the bush. ³⁶This man led them out, performing wonders and signs in Egypt and at the Red Sea and in the wilderness for forty years. ³⁷This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, 'God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.' ³⁸This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and with our fathers. He received living oracles to give to us. ³⁹Our fathers refused to obey him, but thrust him aside, and in their hearts they turned to Egypt, ⁴⁰saying to Aaron, 'Make for us gods who will go before us. As for this Moses who led us out from the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' ⁴¹And they made a calf in those days, and offered a sacrifice to the idol and were rejoicing



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 22 Combatting What is False
By Pastor Jody May 02/26/2023**

in the works of their hands. ⁴² But God turned away and gave them over to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the prophets:

“Did you bring to me slain beasts and sacrifices,
during the forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel?

⁴³ You took up the tent of Moloch
and the star of your god Rephan,
the images that you made to worship;
and I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.’

⁴⁴ “Our fathers had the tent of witness in the wilderness, just as he who spoke to Moses directed him to make it, according to the pattern that he had seen. ⁴⁵ Our fathers in turn brought it in with Joshua when they dispossessed the nations that God drove out before our fathers. So it was until the days of David, ⁴⁶ who found favor in the sight of God and asked to find a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. ⁴⁷ But it was Solomon who built a house for him. ⁴⁸ Yet the **Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands**, as the prophet says,

⁴⁹ “Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool.
What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord,
or what is the place of my rest?

⁵⁰ Did not my hand make all these things?’

⁵¹ “You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. ⁵² Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the **Righteous One**, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ⁵³ you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.”

[INTRODUCTION]

Starting off with the example of Josh Buice and his article for G3 on the **Asbury Revival.**¹

¹ <https://g3min.org/asbury-revival-and-the-local-church/>



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 22 Combatting What is False
By Pastor Jody May 02/26/2023**

1 Peter 3:15 ESV

¹⁵but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always **being prepared to make a defense** to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with **gentleness** and **respect**,

[MAIN POINT]

Practicing One’s Faith comes with the challenge of Combatting Falsehood (Duplicity, Doctrine, & Denial).

1. Challenge #1 Living out our faith means dealing with the **Duplicity** of the world.

Duplicity, it’s a law term, and the prefix of Du means two. It is something that judges are to be on the look for in their courtrooms. A judge is to be aware of charges that come with alternative motives, or to penalize a person for something they are not being charged for (**think O.J. Simpson trial**). They are to root out false charges, unnecessary punitive measures, that could be sought after by the offended in a trial. This is exactly what Stephen was facing and it was exactly what the Sanhedrin should have protected him from.

Let’s back up a little bit, did Stephen do something wrong to get him in front of the high court of his people, **YES, he lived out his faith**. He took the good news of the Gospel, that which had altered his life for the good, shared it with his brothers, in an attempt to help widows, and the result was their inability to combat him in debate:

6:10 - But they could not withstand the wisdom and the Spirit

This caused the Jews to incorporate bribery:

6:11 - Then they secretly instigated men who said, “We have heard him speak **blasphemous words** against Moses and God.”



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 22 Combatting What is False
By Pastor Jody May 02/26/2023**

Charge is now **blasphemy** which according to how that word is used in scripture means speaking evil, or slanderous words against not people but God. So, the Duplicity of this act is that they charged him with speaking against God when in actuality they were upset with his and his ability to make them look foolish. They wanted a charge of a higher crime for something that insulted them, that is duplicitous behavior.

Which I just got to point out that Paul later as a justification I think of Stephen points out he was the one that was a blasphemer and guilty of duplicity.

1 Timothy 1:13 ESV

¹³ though formerly I was a **blasphemer**, persecutor, and insolent opponent. But I received mercy because I had acted ignorantly in unbelief,

Then they accused him (Stephen) of speaking against the temple, the law, Moses, and God Himself.

6:13-14

¹³ and they set up **false witnesses** who said, "This man never ceases to speak words against this holy place and the law, ¹⁴ for we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and will change the customs that Moses delivered to us."

The Duplicity in all of this is that while they were accusing a fellow Jew, who still lived observing the law to live out his new life so he may influence his countrymen, they were guilty of breaking the law as Paul attested to. They set up false witnesses and in doing so were now guilty of many wrongs according to the Torah of how one should bear witness and honor one's elders (widows).

What we want to do now is learn how did Stephen combat this falsehood, **this duplicity**, because if you are living out your faith Christian, I am going to guarantee you one thing today, you **will OFFEND** someone in this world. And you will also notice that what you can be accused of is exactly what the world is guilty of.



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 22 Combatting What is False
By Pastor Jody May 02/26/2023**

First thing, instead of getting your ego offended, let's not forget like Paul you at one time were guilty of all manner of sin. Notice here, **Stephen instead of distancing himself from his accusers aligns himself with them or better yet, he - Identifies with the False (Duplicitous) Accusers.**

"Brothers and fathers, hear me. The **God of glory** appeared to **our father Abraham** when he was in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran, ³and said to him, 'Go out from your land and from your kindred and go into the land that I will show you.'

Stephen is like brothers I am with you – **God of Glory** (El Hakkavod) God is all of everything we have ever applied to Him, I accept everything you believe about Him. Not only that I believe we were elected for this. Yes, there is something special about us. **V.8 we are the circumcised**, we bear the mark of our covenant with God, therefore **YES**, we got to talk about what I said!

Yet, so many times, when we are accused of something that we see is blatantly duplicitous, false, and demeaning we want to draw dividing lines between us and our accusers. The world says, *pick a side, pick a tribe, if you are not for us then you are against us*, BUT the person infected by God's Gospel and Love, tells us to seek the good of our neighbor though.

[CHALLENGE + APPLICATION]

We have to keep in mind that people who are offended when we live our faith out are most likely feeling the condemnation of sin, guilt, and shame. That is the same thing that drove us to the cross and that needs to be the same offer they get, **not our resentment**. Many times, personal attacks against God's people, His church, is because people **feel the weight of sin**.

Currently in our culture the world accuses us not of blasphemy, but that Christians are unloving and sometimes they are right. We get accused of being judgmental, homophobic, transphobic (fearful of anything we don't understand), racist, of which is all duplicitous, **BUT KNOW** that's because people feel **fear** when they see you are more worried **about offending God rather than offending them**.



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 22 Combatting What is False
By Pastor Jody May 02/26/2023**

So, two things here, 1st we may have people that get a little perturbed because your actions show them, **they may be wrong**. It is natural for people to be aggressive against you when you live out your faith and the belief that you are more concerned about the audience of one. **Then 2nd**, underneath that anger and duplicity, is the accusation **“you think you’re better than me?”** Of which Paul reminds us of the right attitude to take.

I Timothy 1:15 ESV

¹⁵ The saying is trustworthy and deserving of full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the **foremost**.

It is important to tell the world that yes, there is judgment of our sin, and it is important to tell them that we deserve it too, but most of all, that **Jesus came to save us all from that!** You may not be able to make a friend out of an enemy but at least our enemies may be enlightened as Solomon would tell us:

Proverbs 25:21-22 ESV

²¹ If your enemy is hungry, give him bread to eat,
and if he is thirsty, give him water to drink,
²² for you will **heap burning coals on his head**,
and the LORD will reward you.

By caring for those that accuse us even by use of duplicity, we can cause them to feel **remorse** by responding with love to their threats. It may cause them to see Christ in you, it may get them to stop and think about what they are doing, and it may even perhaps one day that may be the spark that the HS ignites to win them to Christ. We have to be willing to be persecuted a little by duplicity because there is a greater challenge that needs to be taken on.

2. Challenge #2 Living out our faith means dealing with all matters of false Doctrine.

Stephen then goes on in his defense speech he gives a history lesson, and I think to help show the duplicity of his brothers and fathers, again not in hate



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 22 Combatting What is False
By Pastor Jody May 02/26/2023**

but out of love. He does this to point out some glaring discrepancies between their current religion of Judaism and how it all started.

You're going to watch Stephen remind them that it is not the people who make God, who give Him identity, who give Him purpose BUT **it is God who makes a people.**

Let me also point out that Stephen doesn't try to outsmart them, play dirty like them, or argue a case on law, he goes directly to **God's Word**. Please hear me today, you and I will have to get use to going to God's Word for the defense of God for starting anywhere else you are not resting on God's authority, His revealed will, nor the past witnesses gone by. God's Word needs to speak for itself, and the HS will bring conviction because of it. Alright, back to our historical defense.

He first starts with **Abraham**, that person every Jew looks back as their ancestral father. He calls Abraham out of a **Polytheistic** cultural into a **Monotheistic** lifestyle. He does it by offering him an exclusive contract that Abraham cannot deny.

God promises descendants and land of which Abraham received none of that before he died. Abraham could not define God by what he already had received, he could not look at his earthly blessings and call himself favored but had to accept and believe what God had promised, and that was counted to him as righteousness (Gen. 15:6). This was something that in Stephen's day that had been reversed, if you had not land or descendants you were **considered cursed**. You see, God in the wilderness, caring for Abraham, and making promises was enough, God defined Abraham as His, it wasn't Abraham's possessions that defined him, and definitely not his standing with God. More than this, his immediate offspring would have to wait as well for these covenantal promises to come about as Stephen reminds them:

⁶And God spoke to this effect—that his offspring would be sojourners in a land belonging to others, who would enslave them and afflict them four hundred years.



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 22 Combatting What is False
By Pastor Jody May 02/26/2023**

Stephen calls forward his second witness, Joseph (v.9-16), of which he notes in v.9 that **“God was with him”** (just like Abraham). God would go with Joseph into Egypt when his brothers had sold him into slavery, brought about by Joseph’s declaration that he would be the savior of his brothers. In much the same way we remember Jesus was rejected the same way by His people for the same beliefs. Joseph ended up bringing his family to Egypt to escape famine once again **showing God is not confined by a place or even good behavior**. He goes with His people into a foreign land and there blesses them becoming descendants of Abraham that were too numerous to count. What got them to the first point in their covenantal promise of Grace, that was given to Abraham, was all based on God’s work not theirs.

Stephen then puts forward every Jew’s favorite prophet Moses, the giver of the law. ²⁰**At this time Moses was born; and he was beautiful in God’s sight.** Again, it demonstrates that God is doting an awfully big amount of electing men based on His purpose and His will to be the delivers of His people. Then in vs. 23-29 Stephen recounts that Moses’ first try at deliverance was while he was a prince of Egypt, but the people rejected the offer sending him out into the wilderness for forty years.

God sends Moses back, God heard their cries not because they were innocent but because they were His and He had made a promise. Moses reminded them at the end of his life he wouldn’t be the last sent savior (Deut. 18:15) of which Stephen quotes:

³⁷**This is the Moses who said to the Israelites, ‘God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brothers.’**

Perhaps Moses is referring to the one who will speak with God’s authority, or one that matured in Egypt, or one that functions as a High Priest, or one that is the epitome of God’s law, or one that intercedes for the people willing to take God’s wrath, or one that would be rejected, or **ALL OF THE ABOVE. BTW** would you know that Stephen again points out that all of this happens in a foreign land where God comes to the rescue, because He is not bound by a physical structure, nor he is he kept at bay by the behavior of His children. **God is never contained nor controlled...**



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 22 Combatting What is False
By Pastor Jody May 02/26/2023**

He calls lastly the monarchy to the stand, of whom we witnessed last week when Solomon builds and consecrates his temple. The original one, not the remade and soiled one that Stephen is standing in now. The one that when Solomon had a week-long feast the Shekinah glory of God descended on the temple itself. Yet even then, Solomon in 1 Kings 8:27 told them God does not live there as Stephen reminds them the words of Solomon:

⁴⁸ Yet the Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands, as the prophet says,

*⁴⁹ " 'Heaven is my throne,
and the earth is my footstool.*

*What kind of house will you build for me, says the Lord,
or what is the place of my rest?*

⁵⁰ Did not my hand make all these things?'

All of this so Stephen could say, *God is not found within the four walls of this temple, God is not held in compulsion to do what you want Him to do by your behavior, your election had nothing to do with your righteousness or spiritual beauty, because it has never worked that way!*

You see our God is a God that calls His people out of the confines of safety, out from physical barriers, out of stereotypes that would be dangerous to hold onto. He goes to His people as sojourners, out in this world, so His people can see Him work, they can see Him do wonders, so they can learn to depend on Him in the wilderness, fighting their enemies, feeding them food from heaven, all of it because He promised to love them, even when their behavior warranted abandonment. **God is never contained nor controlled because He's not conceived in the mind of man!**

The Jews, in Stephen's day, were living under the false doctrine that said they defined who God was as shown by how hard the Pharisees and the Sadducees worked out a **behavior formula** to give them an advantage in living out their faith. They lived under the false doctrine that God hid behind by the walls they put around Him both physical and spiritual, and Stephen reminds them by their history it has never been that way! Stephen points out that their original charges of blasphemy don't work because their faith is not right.



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 22 Combatting What is False
By Pastor Jody May 02/26/2023**

[CHALLENGE + APPLICATION]

Family when you practice your faith guess what that means for you, you are going to have to get out of your comfort zone, and you may have to abandon some stereotyping you have done yourself about God. Meaning you not only have to battle false doctrine outside of you but inside as well.

You may think that because you are a decent person, that makes God bound to your will to bless you? Do you think that because God has elected you unto Salvation that means you don't have to worry about establishing your King's rule on earth.

[ILLUSTRATION] I find one of the most disheartening practices among protestant believers over the last 50 years is since that they believe we are heading to judgment day as in the *Left Behind* series, that they are to separate themselves from this world and not care about what happens to those around them. Remember God is always about demonstrating His power, His grace, His mercy to a lost world. He is still calling us outside the confines of this building and in that way, we bless the community around us. He is calling you constantly outside your four walls to witness, to build, to bless others around you, do you have a faulty doctrine stopping you?

Jesus went and ate with sinners what would your dinner calendar tell me about your life? Perhaps it's time for all of us to practice living out our faith among the world and not hide away from it.

Then lastly when we have dealt with the two-faced duplicity of the world, and confronted false doctrine wherever we have found it we then have one more challenge to overcome.

3. Challenge #3 Living out our Faith means dealing with the **Denial of the need for Christ.**

⁵¹"You **stiff-necked** people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you.



Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 22 Combatting What is False
By Pastor Jody May 02/26/2023

This is not fun for Stephen and it's not going to make for a pleasant day, but it will give Stephen the sense of satisfaction that he has been looking for his whole life.

Stephen is like, *you obstinate, overbearing, and stubborn to the point of total exasperation type of people*. I am not making that up, that is why Stephen is using that term. In Exodus 33 (v.3 & 5) at Mt. Sinai, God tells them to leave His sight for they are a **stiff necked people**, they had just built the golden calves and worshipped them, He tells them to leave for He can no longer be among them or they would die (remember Ananias and Saphira). They had built a religion for themselves, and you should see that this is really a desire we all have, that is to create a God that we can control, manipulate, and let us behave in whatever way we desire.

Then in Exodus 34 Moses goes back up to the mountain and gets the covenant written on stone and admits they are **stiff necked people** and Moses prays to God about that:

Exodus 34:9

⁹And he said, "If now I have found favor in your sight, O Lord, please let the Lord go in the midst of us, for it is a **stiff-necked people**, and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for your inheritance."

Lord we are a stiff-necked people, you are unchanging, Ex. 34: 8 you said you won't pass over our iniquities, so we will still need you to do something more than these ten commandments. Just giving us the law won't be enough, that's why Judaism didn't work btw, it was never going to work, from the point the Jews received it Moses declared it wouldn't be enough!

And now Stephen goes in for the kill:

⁵²Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One (**JESUS**), whom you have now betrayed and murdered, ⁵³you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 22 Combatting What is False
By Pastor Jody May 02/26/2023**

You have neither kept the law nor did you welcome the prophet that Moses said, at Mt. Sinai centuries earlier, would come to **fix the iniquity** between us and God.

[CHALLENGE + APPLICATION]

Family, one of the things that living your faith out will do for you, it will not only get you in hot water, it will not only get you confronting those who are **duplicitous**, it will not only get you challenging **false doctrine**, but it will always get you facing others and your own **denial** for a Savior.

No one wants to be rescued because it shows their recklessness, no one wants to hear they messed up for it shows foolishness, no one wants to hear it was hopeless for it shows one's powerlessness, but everyone needs to be confronted with their need for Christ!

Today are you denying the need for Christ especially in front of your family by not going to Him in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving?

Do you admit your thankfulness for Him by repenting and confessing sin publically in front of your family at home and here?

To never confess you are wrong, to never admit your frailty as a believer, to never go to Christ everyday with your short comings is to be in your denial of a Savior? What will you do about that today?

We can help our neighbors with the sin of denial if we will practice our acceptance of our need for a Savior in front of them.

Practice admitting your mistakes, your fears, and your worries in front of this world and watch others start reaching out for the person that you have come to rely on. Play your part today as being a witness for Christ as Stephen did in his trial for his life centuries ago, and discover the joy of living for a risen Jesus today.

[PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]



**Acts – Can I get a Witness?
Wk. 22 Combatting What is False
By Pastor Jody May 02/26/2023**

[BENEDICTION]

Go in the name of the Father, who gives us the opportunity to live out our faith so we may help those that deny their need for Christ.

Go in the name of the Son, who lived out His faith in God granting us the gift of grace, so we may learn to live in dependence of the HS as He did.

Go in the name and power of the Holy Spirit, and live out your faith combatting duplicity, false doctrine, and the denial of Christ, by your confession of your need for Him.