



Rick Mandl
rick@eaglerockbaptist.com
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¹"Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen. A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria.

²(Some devout men came and buried Stephen with great mourning.)

³But Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison.⁴But the believers who were scattered preached the Good News about Jesus wherever they went."

Acts 8:1-4

Lessons From The Death Of Stephen

1. God Often Takes _____
And Turns It Into _____

2. Sometimes We Get So _____
Where We _____ That We _____
_____ To Where God _____ Us To _____

Beauty From Ashes

3. Acts 1:8 _____ Acts 8:1
To The Degree That We're _____ Jesus
We Will _____

Memory Verse

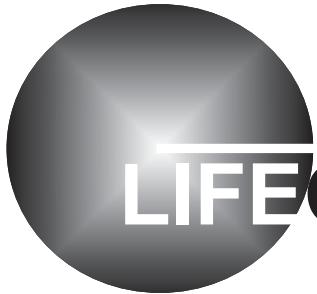
"And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."

Romans 8:28

MY NEXT STEP IS TO... .

- Commit my life to Jesus Christ by receiving Him as my Lord and Savior for the first time
- Memorize Romans 8:28
- Ask God to show me any area in my life where my comfort is keeping me from moving out in obedience to Him
- Begin to pray for the persecuted church around the world
www.persecution.com





LIFE GROUPS

Discussion Questions - Week #4

QUICK REVIEW

Thinking back to the sermon this weekend, "Beauty From Ashes?" summarize the main point in a sentence or two.

Was there anything you heard for the first time or that caught your attention, challenged, or confused you?

Is there any practical step you plan on taking this week in response to the message?

GETTING STARTED

- What do you think is the hardest part about being a Christian today?

- Where have you seen God work through a painful or difficult situation to bring about something good?

- If religious freedom in the US were to disappear tomorrow, what do you think would happen to the church?

DIGGING DEEPER

In the message this weekend, Pastor Rick shared that sometimes we get so comfortable where we are that we won't go to where God wants us to go. Some might suggest that the Prophet Daniel was living a comfortable life. Yet, Daniel didn't allow that to stop him from going where God wanted him to go or, better yet, doing what God wanted him to do. Read Daniel 6:1-28. Is there anything in this passage that stands out, encourages you, or raises a question with you?

Daniel's enemies knew that he would break their law out of faithful. What is something you do faithfully daily or something in which you would like to be faithful?

How do you think Daniel's prayer impacted his ability to endure faithfully?

How did God turn Daniel's pain into His gain?

What can you do to support Christians whose experience today is not that different than Daniel's?

2. Read Matthew 16:21-28. Why do you think Jesus responded to Peter as strongly as he did in verse 23?

In verse 23, Jesus accuses Peter of having in mind "merely human concerns" rather than the "concerns of God." What can we do to keep our minds focused on the right things?

Why does Jesus say we must lose our lives in order to find life in Him?

What might it look like for you to take up your cross and follow Jesus?

Is there any practical step you could take this week in light of this passage?

FOR PRACTICE

In the passage we looked at this weekend, we were told, "Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him." While we rejoice that the church so often advances through pain and sorrow, we don't discount the reality of those feelings. Again and again, we see in scripture that lament is a legitimate biblical response to the pain and suffering in our lives. When we face the emotions of anger, sadness, or hurt, scripture teaches that we are not to bottle them up or hide them but express them back to God. Lament allows us to give voice to our pain and allows us to turn powerful negative emotions into trust. If you find yourself amid a painful ordeal, consider the practice of regularly praying Psalm 13, 31, 44, or 86.

SHARE IT

Is there anything you heard or learned in the weekend message or Life Group this week that you want to share with someone you know?

PRAYER REQUESTS

Pray for Christians in Afghanistan. The situation for Christians has only worsened there since the Taliban takeover. Christians face extreme persecution wherever they are in Afghanistan. If a Christian's new faith is discovered, their family, clan, or tribe has to save its honor by disowning the believer or even killing them. This is widely considered to be justice. Pray for protection for the believers and opportunities to witness to Jesus and for a change in the structures that facilitate persecution and for God to move in the hearts of the persecutors.