

## **No One but the Truth Small Group Guide**

**Warm-up Question:** (Choose one, make up your own, or skip this part all together, depending upon the nature of your group.)

1. Describe a time when you lied as a child. Did you get away with it or get caught?
2. What is one aspect of your life experience growing up that you are thankful for now?

**Read the following passages:** Acts 6:8-7:10, 23-29, 51-60.

Stephen was a remarkable individual. He was a servant, a leader, a worker of great miracles, and a man of truth. His life has striking parallels to the life of Jesus, and Jesus honored Stephen even as he died for the truth of the Gospel (Acts 7:54-60). Stephen is a role model for us in our calling to be truth-tellers and also a challenge to us in our need to listen to and humbly receive the truth, even when it is uncomfortable.

### **Questions for Discussion:**

1. Assuming we live in a region with a diverse population, why should we seek to build a multiethnic church?
2. Even when the church consisted entirely of Jews, fractures began to emerge along cultural lines (see Acts 6:1-4). What are some obstacles to building a truly unified multiethnic church in our context?
3. What are some of the ways Luke describes Stephen (see Acts 6:5, 8, 10, 15; 7:55-56, 59-60)? How might these characteristics help us as truth-tellers in our context? What characteristics in our own lives might hinder us as truth-tellers?
4. What do you think Stephen was hoping would happen when he began speaking to his “brothers and fathers?” (Acts 7:2) What should be our goal when we communicate truth? Can you think of times when you have embraced unhelpful or unhealthy goals in truth-telling? Explain.
5. At one level, Stephen got the worst possible response to his efforts to communicate truth. What should we do when people resist what we are trying to communicate, or even become hostile toward us?
6. Can you think of times in your life when you resisted some particular truth or reality that you now accept? Explain. What are some reasons we might be prone to resist particular truths or realities?
7. Have you felt the impact of racism in your own life or the lives of those close to you? Explain.

8. Consider the following passage from *Divided by Faith* (authored by Michael Emerson and Christian Smith).

*From the isolated, individualistic perspective of most white evangelicals and many other Americans, there really is no race problem other than bad interpersonal relationships...*

*This perspective misses the racialized patterns that transcend and encompass individuals, and are therefore often institutional and systemic. It misses that whites can move to most any neighborhood, eat at most any restaurant, walk down most any street, or shop at most any store without having to worry or find out that they are not wanted, whereas African Americans often cannot. This perspective misses that white Americans can be almost certain that when stopped by the police, it has nothing to do with race, whereas African Americans cannot. This perspective misses that whites are assumed to be middle class unless proven otherwise, are not expected to speak for their race, can remain ignorant of other cultures without penalty, and do not have to ask every time something goes wrong if it is due to race, whereas African Americans cannot. This perspective misses that white Americans are far more likely than black Americans to get a solid education, avoid being a victim of crime, and have family and friends with money to help when extra cash is needed for college, a car, or a house. This perspective misses that white Americans are far more likely to have networks and connections that lead to good jobs than are black Americans. This perspective misses that white Americans are more likely to get fair treatment in the court system than are African Americans. And this perspective ultimately misses the truth revealed by Joe Feagin's and Melvin Sikes's exhaustive study of black middle-class Americans: "Today blatant, subtle, and covert discrimination against African Americans persists in virtually all aspects of their public life.... Racial discrimination is pervasive, and cumulative and costly in its impact." The individualistic perspective encourages people to dismiss such evidence as liberal, wrongheaded, overblown, or as isolated incidents. Such a perspective, then, fails to see or acknowledge, as Cornel West puts it in *Race Matters*, "The sheer absurdity that confronts human beings of African descent in this country—the incessant assaults on black intelligence, beauty, character, and possibility."*

Have you experienced any of the realities the authors describe here? Are any of these realities issues you have not really considered before? Explain. How might these differences in lived experience be obstacles to our unity in the church?

9. When it comes to truth, do you think you're willing to hear whatever Jesus wants to speak to you and to communicate whatever he wants to say through you? Explain.

**Pray**