

## Discussion topics for groups:

### ***After Genocide – There is Hope***

To accompany the book: ***After Genocide – There is Hope*** by Mary Weeks Millard  
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#### Leader Notes:

These questions are in fact incorporated into the book in a section on pp 157-59. The Rwanda genocide in 1994 provides the basic story and especially as seen through the eyes of one Christian, Stephen Gahigi. It is a sad, though strangely uplifting story. The need for forgiveness and renewal is writ large in the thinking of Jesus. The practicalities and implications of this are considered in “After Genocide”. The questions below are suitable for group use and can be a helpful focal point to bring out the key issues and lessons of this book. The need to forgive and to restore will be a challenge to Christians until the return of our Lord. Mary Weeks Millard’s book is a helpful resource.

There are possibly too many chapters to employ this as a week by week study – unless a church is prepared to allocate 4 months to explore it on a week by week basis. So it is suggested the leader selects those chapters best suited to the needs of the group, and focus the discussion prompts to those needs.

#### **Chapter One.**

Stephen grew up in an atmosphere of fear and tension. All around him he felt a fear of death.  
Read Job Chapter 3 vs. 25 & 26.

1. What negative impact can fears have upon us?

Read Hebrews Chapter 2 vs. 5 -15.

2. What does this passage teach us about death?
3. How is Jesus able to free us from the fear of death?

## Chapter Two.

Read Isaiah chapter 60 vs. 1 – 3; Romans chapter 10 v 12; Galatians chapter 3 v 28.

1. How does God view people of different races?
2. Should our commitment to members of God's kingdom override commitment to our human nationality?
3. How do we *honestly* feel about immigration / refugee issues & cultural differences?

Stephen's baptism was for the wrong reason.

Read Acts chapter 2 v. 38; 9 vs. 17 -19; 10 vs. 44-48; 16 vs. 31 -33; 22 vs. 14 -16; 1 Peter 3 v 21.

1. What does baptism signify?
2. Can a person be saved by baptism?
3. Can a person be saved without having been baptised?

## Chapter Three.

Stephen's battle to find peace with God and live a new life. Read John chapter 14 v 27 & Romans 5 v. 1.

1. How do we find real peace with God?
2. How do we live in continuing peace with God?

Read Romans 8 vs. 5 -17 & 1 Thessalonians 4 vs. 1-11.

1. Do the people we live / work / study with know that we are Christians?
2. Should being a Christian make a difference to our lifestyle?

Read Exodus 17 vs. 8-13. This story is a picture of the power of prayer support.

1. Do you know people whom you can trust enough to share your areas of weakness for them to pray for you?
2. Is there a value in having a spiritual mentor or being in a prayer partnership / triplet?

## Chapter Four.

Issues of restitution. Read Luke 19 vs. 1 -10 (Story of Zacchaeus)

1. What changed in Zacchaeus' life after his encounter with Jesus?
2. Draw out parallels in Stephen's life after he had met Jesus.
3. How has your life changed since you met Jesus?
4. Is there anyone to whom you need to make restitution, (even returning that long borrowed book!)?

## **Chapter Five.**

Issues of prejudices. Read Acts chapter 10.

1. What were Peter's prejudices which the Lord needed to address?
2. Was Stephen justified in his anti – Hutu attitude? How did God change it?
3. What prejudices do you have? Which groups of people do you shy away from? Do you think God wants you to change this attitude?

## **Chapter six.**

Temptation to revert to fear. Read 1 Corinthians 10 vs. 12 -13; James 1 vs. 12 -15; 1 Peter 3 vs. 8 -13

1. What do these passages teach us about temptation? In times of temptation Stephen met with other Christians to pray about the situation.
2. Read and discuss Hebrews chapter 10 vs. 23 -26. Some people believe they can be a Christian but never join in fellowship with other believers. How does belonging to a Christian fellowship help us?

## **Chapter seven.**

Stephen said, "In difficult times God is always with us." Read Psalm 23 v. 4; Psalm 25 v. 14 & Hebrews chapter 13 v 5.

1. Can we expect God to protect us from evil?
2. On what did Stephen base his trust in God that he would survive the genocide?
3. Read Daniel chapter 3. How does this story relate to times of severe testing such as Christians faced during the genocide?

## **Chapter eight.**

Faith in Action. Read Matthew chapter 25 vs. 31 -46; Hebrews 13 v.3; 1 John chapter 3 vs. 16 -18.

1. How relevant are these passages in our own day, in the country in which we live?
2. What might Jesus be asking us to help with in the community where we live?

Obedience to God's word. Read Matthew chapter 7 vs. 24 -27

1. Do we take God's word to us (read/ preached / spoken / revealed) seriously?
2. Have we areas of disobedience in our own lives?
3. If we choose to ignore God's word to us what might happen in our spiritual lives?

### **Chapter nine.**

Issues concerning the right to revenge. Read Matthew chapter 5 vs. 43 – 48 & Romans chapter 12 vs. 14 – 21.

1. It is easy to hold on to bitterness, resentment, hate & the right to revenge. Why should we give it up?
2. How will these attitudes affect our lives if we hold on to them?

### **Chapter ten.**

Repentance. Read Jeremiah Chapter 15 v. 19; Luke chapter 3 vs. 7 -8; 2 Corinthians chapter 7 v. 10

1. What does the biblical word 'repentance' mean?
2. Can we become a Christian without repentance?
3. Should repentance be a 'one off' or continuing part of our lives?
4. Why is 'sorry' the hardest word to say?
5. Read Isaiah chapter 61 vs. 1 -3. Can the blessings stated here be given to an unrepentant person?

### **Chapter eleven.**

Costly forgiveness. Read Matthew chapter 5 vs. 21 -24; 6 vs. 5 -15; James chapter 5 v. 16.

1. Does Jesus really mean that he will not forgive us *unless* we forgive others?
2. What does unforgiveness do to our relationships?
3. How does forgiveness open the offender's heart?
4. How does forgiveness change the victim's heart?

### **Chapter twelve.**

Care for widows and orphans. Read Exodus 22 vs. 21 -23; Psalm 146 v 7; Isaiah 1 v. 17; James 1 v. 27

1. Why does God have such a heart for widows and orphans?
2. In the 21st century is there still a need to obey these scriptures? Can these issues be left to the state to take care of?
3. How have needs changed through the centuries? Think of ways in which widows and orphans might need help in the community in which you live.

### **Chapter thirteen.**

Peer pressure; government pressure. Read Luke chapter 22 vs. 54 -62.

1. How might we react if we had such pressure put upon us to either participate in evil or be killed?
2. Do we have the courage to make the right choices? Read Deuteronomy chapter 30 v. 20 & Joshua chapter 2 vs. 14 -15. Take time to pray for Christians in countries where they are persecuted for their faith and where witnessing for Christ might well mean the death sentence.

### **Chapter fourteen.**

Stephen's Spiritual Journey. Read Job chapter 23 vs. 10 -12 & Matthew chapter 5 vs. 38 -48.

1. Is your life experience, however difficult, helping you to walk forwards spiritually?
2. Are the teachings of Jesus filling your heart and mind and continually challenging your attitudes?
3. Read 1 Samuel chapter 16 vs. 1 -13. Discuss this chapter together. We may look impressive to the people around us but God sees what we are really like inside.

### **Chapter fifteen.**

Restoring relationships. Read Psalm 133 v1; Matthew 18 vs. 15 -17; Hebrews 13 v... 1; 1 Peter 3 v. 8; 1John 2 vs. 10 -11; 1 John 3 v 14 & 1John 4 vs. 20 -21.

1. What can we do to ensure that we live in a right relationship with family, friends, and colleagues and in community?

### **Chapter sixteen.**

Reconciliation. Read Genesis chapter 27 vs. 1 -29; 32 vs. 3-5; 33 vs. 1-4

In this chapter Stephen discusses how these brothers reached reconciliation.

1. How can these brothers be a picture for us about reconciliation in relationships?
2. Is it more difficult to accept forgiveness than to offer it?
3. If we struggle to forgive, has the Holy Spirit the power to change us and make us willing?
4. Do we have to wait until we *feel* we can forgive or can we choose to forgive even though we still hurt? i.e. is forgiveness an emotional response or a choice of the will?