

St. Paul's Lutheran Church
Minot, ND
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The Acts of the Apostles

The Ministry of the Gospel in a Messy Church & Conflicting World

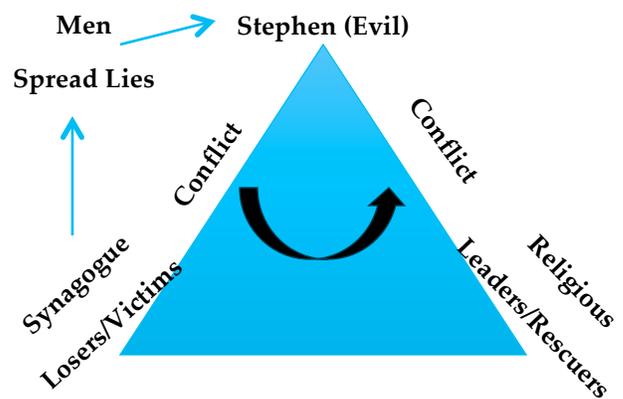
Acts 6:8-7:60

In Acts 6, individuals from a particular synagogue tried to take Stephen to task via a debate. They argued, discussed, and reasoned together. However, Stephen was full of wisdom and the Spirit. Thus, the individuals of the competing synagogue lost.

Now, power, control, and a humiliated pride can do nasty things to a person. As seen in Acts 6, the losing synagogue did not handle the lost debate well. And so, they resorted to instigating some other men to slander Stephen. Simply stated, they most likely paid off a group of men to assassinate Stephen's character by spreading false accusations against Stephen. Once the false accusations (false narrative) were sown, the men of the synagogue then pointed to the false narrative and 'stirred up' the religious leaders.

It is quite a brilliant strategy, if you think about

it. It is a classic triangulation combined with what is called "The Strawman Logical Fallacy." Consider the following diagram for a moment:



The synagogue losers could not point to the substance of their debate, so they created a Stephen-Strawman. They applied a false position to Stephen and then stirred others to attack Stephen for something he never said to begin with. And so, the synagogue losers were able to get even

with Stephen but did not have to lay a hand on him. They paid for a false narrative and stirred others to do the dirty work of seizing him. Evil!

We now see the importance of the 8th Commandment. Also, we see the importance of letting a person's yes be yes, and their no be no. We also see the importance of having people speak on their own behalf. "People are saying," and "I heard others say," are EXTREMELY dangerous phrases in the culture and church.

Long story short, after being seized, Stephen was given an opportunity to speak... and speak he did! He recounts how God's chosen people rejected Moses and Christ. (Take special note of 7:51-53.)

So, how did they all respond to Stephen? In a word, they did not hear what Stephen said but attacked it – just as the devil does. They defended their own worldview by attacking!

Speaking of worldview, consider the following from Paul Hiebert,

"To question worldviews is to challenge the very foundations of life, and people resist such challenges with deep emotional reactions. There are few human fears greater than a loss of a sense of order and meaning. People are willing to die for their beliefs if these beliefs make their deaths meaningful."

In other words, when we are confronted by knowledge/truth that conflicts with what we perceive to be true, we get rather defensive. In fact, we will often attack – even kill – those who would dare overturn what we believe to be good, true, and beautiful.

Take some time and consider the same reactions of the people in Luke 4:28-29 and John 6:66. As you will see, every time individuals in these passages are confronted with the truth (and their worldviews are challenged), they either distance themselves from the speaker, try to silence the speaker, or kill the speaker. Truth is powerful; mankind loves to live in lies and will often murder to do so.



