SIX-DAY DEVOTIONAL

When the Odds Are Stacked Against You

Standing in Christ when accusation, hardship and fear press in.

A Six-Day Devotional Based on This Week's Sermon

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:13 - “After you have done everything, to stand.” (NIV)

Across six days we follow the sermon from recognising spiritual opposition and reflecting God’s presence, through Moses’ hidden preparation and holy-ground calling, to walking in Christ’s authority, acting in faith, standing firm and forgiving as Stephen did.

Based on the Sunday morning sermon preached by Jacques Vorster
at The Bridge Church on 14 June 2026
Acts Series

READ SLOWLY. REFLECT HONESTLY. PRAY PERSONALLY.

Each day is designed for about 15 minutes, including Scripture, reflection, three memory questions and prayer.

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DAY 1

See the Battle Clearly

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERMON

The sermon opened with Francis describing how God had challenged her to take His Word seriously in ordinary life. When termites threatened the home and tree her family wanted to use as a safe place for others, she did not remain passive. Practical treatment was arranged, but she also prayed and took a stand in faith. Jacques then named the message: “If the odds are stacked against you.” From there he turned to Stephen in Acts 7 - a Spirit-filled witness facing false accusations before the Sanhedrin.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Ephesians 6:12-13 (NIV)

12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.

13 Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand.

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Stephen was accused of speaking against Moses, God, the law and the temple. On the surface, this was a dispute between people. Jacques asked the church to look deeper. The accusations were carried by human voices, but the sermon presented a spiritual battle

behind the visible confrontation: the accuser wanted the witness silenced.

That distinction matters. Paul does not say that people are unimportant or that every difficulty should be blamed carelessly on the devil. He says that our deepest struggle is not against flesh and blood. I can therefore refuse to make another person my ultimate enemy. I can address what is wrong without hatred, retaliation or panic. I can ask God for open eyes, open ears and discernment.

The sermon did not give the enemy honour. It reminded us that accusation does not have the final word over those who belong to Jesus. Jacques said that when accusation is brought before the Father, Jesus answers that it has been dealt with. The cross has spoken. My standing before God rests in Christ, not in my ability to defend myself perfectly.

This changes the way I face a stacked situation. Fear may tell me that the pressure is proof I am losing. Anger may tempt me to fight people in the flesh. Discouragement may tell me to become silent. But the call is to recognise the battle, put on what God provides and remain standing.

Today I can name the visible problem without being ruled by it. I can ask: What response would come from the Holy Spirit rather than from fear? Where am I treating a person as the enemy? What accusation am I carrying as though Jesus has not answered it? Standing firm begins by seeing clearly.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What two accusations were brought against Stephen before the Sanhedrin?
2	Why did Jacques say the conflict around Stephen had both a physical and a spiritual dimension?
3	How does Ephesians 6:12 change the way I should respond to people involved in my present struggle?

PRAYER

Father, open my eyes to see what is happening without fear or exaggeration. Keep me from turning people into enemies and from fighting in the flesh. Thank You that Jesus has answered the accusation against me. Clothe me with what I need today, give me discernment, and help me remain standing in truth, grace and courage. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

I will not fight people as the enemy; I will stand in Christ and respond by the Spirit.

DAY 2

A Face Shaped by His Presence

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday I saw that Stephen's trial was more than a clash of personalities. The sermon called me to recognise spiritual opposition without giving the enemy undue attention, to stop treating people as the true enemy, and to stand in what Christ has already done.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

> **Acts 6:15 (NIV)**
>
> *15 All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.*

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Stephen was not introduced as a man who won by aggression. He stood before hostile leaders with a face that reflected something of heaven. Jacques connected this with Moses, whose face shone after speaking with God, and with Jesus at the transfiguration, whose face shone like the sun. The sermon's point was simple: the presence of God forms a person from the inside out.

Stephen's circumstances had not become gentle. False witnesses were still present. His life was still in danger. Yet the pressure around him did not define

what came through him. His face carried the evidence of where his attention and life were rooted.

That challenges me because I often want God to change the room before I allow Him to change me. I wait for the accusation to stop, the difficult person to soften or the pressure to lift. Stephen shows another possibility: I can be filled with the Holy Spirit in the middle of the council. God's presence can steady me before the situation changes.

Jacques described the way a person can enter a room and draw attention because something is different. This was not a call to perform spirituality or seek admiration. It was a call to spend time with God until His life becomes visible in ordinary reactions - patience instead of panic, truth without cruelty, confidence without pride, forgiveness without denial.

The face I carry into my home, workplace and conflict tells a story. Constant anxiety can become the atmosphere I spread. Resentment can harden my expression before I say a word. But time in God's presence can reshape what I carry. I do not manufacture His glory. I remain with Him, listen to Him and allow His Spirit to change me.

Before I ask God to make me impressive, I should ask Him to make me present to Him. Before I ask for influence, I should ask for inward formation. Stephen's shining face was not an escape from the battle; it was evidence that the battle had not removed him from God's presence.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What did the members of the Sanhedrin notice about Stephen's face?
2	Which two other shining faces did Jacques connect with Stephen's experience?
3	What reaction or attitude in me most needs to be reshaped by time in God's presence?

PRAYER

Holy Spirit, fill me in the place where I am under pressure. Draw my attention away from fear and resentment and back to Jesus. Form me from the inside out so that my words, face and reactions carry Your patience, truth and peace. Let people encounter Your light rather than my anxiety or pride. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

Pressure does not have to define what I carry; God's presence can shape me within it.

DAY 3

Prepared in the Hidden Place

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday I reflected on Stephen's face and the sermon's comparison with Moses and Jesus. Time in God's presence does not merely improve appearances; it changes the inner person so that His life can be seen even under pressure.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Acts 7:29-30 (NIV)

29 When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons.

30 "After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai."

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

Jacques then followed Stephen's retelling of Moses' life. Moses spent his first forty years in Pharaoh's palace. He was educated in Egyptian life and surrounded by status and privilege. When he saw an Egyptian mistreating an Israelite, he intervened and killed the Egyptian. He believed his people would understand that God was using him, but they rejected him. Moses fled.

The next forty years looked like a fall from significance. The palace prince became a foreigner in Midian and a shepherd caring for his father-in-law's

sheep. The sermon described this as a humbling season in which God was transforming Moses and removing what needed to be removed.

Hidden seasons can feel like wasted time because they do not resemble the future we expected. A reduced role may feel like rejection. An uncomfortable environment may feel like evidence that we missed God. Moses' story does not make every setback automatically sacred, but it shows that God can work deeply in places we would not choose.

Moses had attempted to act with strength before he had received God's commission. In Midian he learned a different posture. He lived without the palace, without public authority and without the recognition he once possessed. By the time the burning bush appeared, God had prepared a man who still felt inadequate but was ready to listen.

The sermon said that sometimes God takes us aside and places us where He can work with us. That work is not always comfortable. He may confront pride, hurry, self-reliance or the need to be seen. He may build patience through repetition and faithfulness through ordinary responsibilities.

I should not despise the small field in front of me. The sheep, the silence and the long years were part of Moses' preparation. God's hidden work may be forming the character that public calling will require. My task today is not to force the next chapter. It is to be faithful where I am, allow God to search me, and remain alert for the bush that burns without being consumed.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What happened when Moses tried to intervene for an Israelite in his own strength?
2	How did Moses' life change during his forty years in Midian?
3	What may God be forming in me through a season that currently feels hidden or reduced?

PRAYER

Father, I surrender the parts of my story that feel delayed, hidden or diminished. Keep me from wasting this season through bitterness or impatience. Search my heart, remove pride and self-reliance, and teach me faithfulness in ordinary responsibilities. Prepare me to recognise Your voice and obey when You call. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

God can use the hidden place to prepare the person His calling requires.

DAY 4

Take Off Your Sandals

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday I followed Moses from palace privilege to exile and shepherding. The sermon showed that God can use uncomfortable, hidden years to humble, form and prepare a person for a calling that cannot be carried by natural strength alone.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Acts 7:33-34 (NIV)

33 "Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground."
34 "I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt."

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

At the burning bush, Moses encountered more than a new assignment. He encountered the holiness and compassion of God. He was told to remove his sandals because the ground was holy. Then God declared that He had seen His people's oppression, heard their groaning and come down to deliver them. The call to go was rooted in who God is and what God had seen.

Jacques removed his own shoes while preaching and asked what difference there is between Moses standing before God and believers gathered as the

church. His emphasis was that the church is not merely a building. The Holy Spirit lives in God's people. Wherever a believer goes, God's presence goes with that believer.

This does not mean I make every place holy through personal importance. It means I enter every place as someone who belongs to God and carries His Spirit. I cannot divide life into sacred moments at church and ordinary moments everywhere else. The office, home, classroom, hospital room and difficult conversation all become places where I must remember whose presence I carry.

Removing sandals is a picture of reverence and surrender. Moses could not rush into God's call on his own terms. He had to stop, listen and acknowledge holy ground. I also need moments where I lay down familiarity, control and excuses. Before asking what authority I have, I must remember whose servant I am.

The call also moves outward. God saw suffering and sent Moses back toward it. Jacques asked whether we are willing to go. Carrying light is not hiding in places that already feel safe and bright. It is entering dark or difficult spaces under the authority of Jesus, trusting that darkness does not have the final word where His light is present.

Today I can pause before crossing the threshold. I can pray: 'Lord, this place belongs to You. Help me listen, honour You and carry Your light.' Then I can enter not with arrogance, but with reverence,

compassion and availability. Holy ground leads to holy obedience.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What two things did God say He had seen and heard concerning His people in Egypt?
2	Why did Jacques remove his shoes during the sermon?
3	Which ordinary place in my week do I need to enter more consciously as a carrier of God's presence?

PRAYER

Holy God, teach me to stop, listen and surrender before I move. Thank You that You see suffering and hear groaning. Make me willing to go where You send me. Let me carry Your light into difficult places with humility, compassion and courage, always remembering that the authority is Yours. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

I take off my sandals in surrender, then go where God sends me with His light.

DAY 5

Walk in Authority, Act in Faith

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday I stood with Moses on holy ground. God's presence called for reverence, surrender and obedience. Because the Holy Spirit lives in His people, ordinary places become places where we consciously carry His light and respond to His sending.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Joshua 1:3 and Acts 5:15 (NIV)

Joshua 1:3 - "I will give you every place where you set your foot, as I promised Moses."

Acts 5:15 - "As a result, people brought the sick into the streets and laid them on beds and mats so that at least Peter's shadow might fall on some of them as he passed by."

DEVOTIONAL REFLECTION

The sermon moved from holy ground to walking. Jacques connected Moses' calling with God's promise to Joshua: every place where he set his foot would be given to him. He applied that picture to homes, workplaces and environments that feel spiritually dark. The believer does not enter those places as a helpless victim, but under the authority of Jesus.

Spiritual authority is not loudness, control or personal importance. Moses did not deliver Israel through his own power. God worked through a man who obeyed. Jacques repeatedly returned the glory to God: the works were not produced by Moses' strength, but by God's power working through him.

That protects me from two opposite errors. The first is passivity: 'God could never work through me, so I will do nothing.' The second is pride: 'My faith, words or presence make me powerful.' Biblical authority holds both humility and expectation. I am not the source, yet the Holy Spirit truly lives in me and equips me to obey.

The reference to Peter's shadow pressed the question further. People expected God to work as Peter passed by. Jacques asked what difference there is between Peter and believers today. His challenge was not to chase spectacular attention, but to stop reducing faith to a comfortable message received on Sunday. The same Holy Spirit calls the church to step out.

Little faith can shrink back when confronted by ordinary reality. I may sing confidently about God's glory and then doubt that He can use me in a conversation, prayer or act of obedience. Acting in faith may be as simple as offering to pray, speaking truth with love, refusing to join darkness in the workplace, or taking a practical step God has already made clear.

Victory does not mean attacks stop immediately. Jacques said that darkness may continue to resist, but Jesus has already won the decisive battle. I therefore

walk forward without pretending the struggle is easy. I set my foot down in obedience, trust the authority of Christ and leave the outcome to God.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER

1	What promise to Joshua did Jacques use to describe walking into difficult places?
2	Why must spiritual authority never become a reason for personal pride or fame?
3	What specific act of faith or obedience is God asking me not to postpone today?

PRAYER

Lord Jesus, all authority belongs to You. Forgive me for passivity and for the pride that wants credit. Fill me with the Holy Spirit and make me available. Give me courage to take the next obedient step, to pray when You prompt me, to bring light into darkness and to trust You with the result. Amen.

CARRY THIS WITH ME TODAY

I am not the source of the power, but I am called to walk, obey and expect God to work.

DAY 6

Stand Firm, Shine and Forgive

YESTERDAY IN ONE MINUTE

Yesterday I was challenged to walk under Christ's authority and act in faith. Authority is neither passivity nor pride: God is the source, the Holy Spirit equips, and my part is to obey, carry light and trust Him with the outcome.

TODAY'S SCRIPTURE

Acts 7:54-56, 59-60 (NIV)

54 When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. 55 But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 "Look," he said, "I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

59 While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." 60 Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he fell asleep.

THE WHOLE SERMON IN ONE FINAL REFLECTION

The sermon began with faith becoming practical. Francis refused passivity when something threatened the home her family wanted to use for God's purposes. Jacques then placed Stephen before us: falsely accused, surrounded by hostility and still full of the Holy Spirit.

Stephen's story taught us to see the spiritual battle without turning people into the ultimate enemy. His response was not hatred or fleshly retaliation, but discernment, truth and confidence in what Jesus had already done. His face showed what had formed him: pressure did not remove him from God's presence.

Moses' story showed how God prepares a servant. Palace education and natural confidence were not enough. After an impulsive intervention and rejection, Moses spent forty years in Midian. The prince became a shepherd, and the hidden place humbled and formed him before the burning bush called him.

At the bush, Moses took off his sandals. God revealed His holiness, His compassion for oppressed people and His intention to send Moses back. Because the Holy Spirit lives in believers, we are called to enter homes, workplaces and dark places as people who carry Christ's light - reverently, not arrogantly.

Joshua's promise and Peter's shadow turned the message toward action. We should not receive a comfortable word and remain passive. The Spirit calls ordinary Christians to pray, obey and expect God to work, while giving all the glory to Him.

Finally, Stephen showed what standing firm looks like at the end. The crowd gnashed its teeth, but he looked up. They rushed him, but he saw Jesus standing. They stoned him, but his final words were prayer and forgiveness. He remained faithful, reflected Jesus and entrusted himself to the Lord.

Jacques applied the message to accusation, depression, anger, loneliness, pressure on church

leadership, difficult work, family conflict, marital crisis and financial fear. The call was not to deny these struggles, but to refuse passive surrender. Bring them to God. Repent where needed. Ask the church for help. Pray life into dark situations and stand in the Spirit rather than fight people in the flesh.

When the odds are stacked against me, I can choose where I look, whose authority I trust and what spirit I carry. I can take off my sandals, receive my orders, set my feet down in obedience and keep my eyes on Jesus. Standing up may mean praying, forgiving, seeking help, speaking truth, resisting darkness or remaining faithful for one more day. The victory is Christ's. My calling is to stand.

THREE QUESTIONS TO HELP ME REMEMBER THE WHOLE SERMON

1	How did Stephen, Moses, Joshua and Peter each contribute to the sermon's message about standing in God's presence and authority?
2	What did Jacques identify as the right response to accusation, darkness and the practical struggles people face?
3	Which truth from the whole sermon must now become a specific action in my life beyond this week?

FINAL PRAYER

Father, thank You that Jesus has won and that I do not stand alone. Open my eyes to the spiritual battle, but keep my heart free from fear and hatred. Form me in Your presence, use hidden seasons to prepare me, and

teach me reverence on holy ground. Fill me with the Holy Spirit so that I walk in Christ's authority without pride, act in faith without passivity, and carry light into dark places. Where I am accused, angry, lonely, discouraged or afraid, help me look to Jesus. Bring repentance, healing and restoration where they are needed. Give me Stephen's courage to speak truth, remain faithful and forgive. After I have done everything, help me stand. Amen.

CARRY THIS BEYOND THE SIX DAYS

When the odds are stacked against me, I will look to Jesus, carry His light, obey His call and keep standing.