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# WEST VALLEY CHURCH OF CHRIST

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9:30 am Bible Class—all ages

10:30 am Sunday Worship

5:00 pm Proverbs study (online)

7:00 pm Wednesday Bible Class

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**November 28, 2021**

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## Chaining Your Faith

You've been seized in public, in broad daylight. Before you know it, you are standing in a courtroom and being tried for your faith in Jesus. The likely outcome is imprisonment, maybe even death. In your heart though, you know there is only one thing to do. You must not shy away from your faith; you must speak about Jesus. So, you start talking... about Abraham?

This is exactly what happened to an early Christian named Stephen – yes, even the part about Abraham (Acts 6:8-7:2). It's worth noting that Stephen was being tried for his faith by people who already believed in the Old Testament. If he were standing in a Gentile court like Paul would do later, he might very well have chosen instead to talk about how and why he had become a Christian (just like Paul did – Acts 26:1-29). Still, why did Stephen bother with the Old Testament at all?

If you read Stephen's defense, Stephen traces the promises of God from Abraham to Isaac then Jacob, Joseph, Moses and the Tabernacle, and David and Solomon and the temple (Acts 7:2-50). It's like each person or event is a link in a chain, with all the links connected to each other. I get the impression Stephen might have kept following that chain all the way to Jesus if he didn't have to stop to address an audience that was growing increasingly hostile (Acts 7:51-54). What he managed to say demonstrates the wisdom of trying to find common ground when speaking to a hostile audience. More than that though, it demonstrates that Christianity wasn't born "in a corner" somewhere in Jerusalem (cf. Acts 26:26) but was instead a part of a plan that was in place "before the foundation of the world" (Ephesians 1:4; cf. 1 Peter 1:20; Revelation 13:8).

The New Testament is like a tabletop. A tabletop doesn't work like it should if it doesn't have legs. Well, the New Testament tabletop rests on Old Testament legs. You can appreciate a tabletop without ever noticing its legs; you might even be able to use a tabletop to some degree if you behaved as though the legs did not exist. However, if you really want to get under that tabletop, you need to observe and honor the placement of the legs.

The legal requirements of the Old Testament were taken away when Jesus nailed it to the cross along with our sins (Colossians 2:14). Still, the Old Testament remains a valuable tool for learning and warning (Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 11:1). You can't read very much of the New Testament without finding quotes from or allusions to the Old. It's compared to a tutor in its ability to prepare us for Christ (Galatians 3:24).

Could you offer a defense of your faith like Stephen offered that day? Could you tell someone about how your faith in Jesus is just a link in a chain that stretches all the way back to the book of Genesis? Forming a chain like that in your heart might not keep you from chains or death, but it certainly will prepare you to see Jesus one day (Acts 7:55-59).