

Christians are Mistreated; Stephen is Killed

Acts 6:7-7:60



New Testament 6
Part 1: The Apostle Paul

SUNDAY MORNING

New Testament 6 [Class Attendance Sheet](#) provided in activity sheets (NOTE: The document is interactive, allowing the teacher to type in the Class, Teacher, and the children's names.)

SCRIPTURE REFERENCES:

Acts 6:7-15; 7:1-60; 8:1-2; Matthew 5:10-12

MEMORY WORK:

YOUNGER CHILDREN: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ" (Romans 1:16a).

OLDER CHILDREN: "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Romans 1:16).

SONGS AND FINGERPLAYS (SEE END OF LESSON FOR WORDS):

A [song book](#) and [audio recordings](#) of many of the curriculum songs are available on the curriculum Web site.

- ["Dying for the Cause of Christ"](#)
- ["Do Not Fear"](#)

LESSON VISUALS AND TEACHING AIDS (NOTE ANY DISCLAIMERS):

- See [AP's Pinterest page](#) for ideas on bulletin boards, visuals, crafts, etc. [DISCLAIMER: Pins may sometimes need to be adjusted to be Scriptural.]
- [Paul & the Fruit of the Spirit](#) Bible fact cards (provided under "N.T. 6 Bible Facts" on curriculum Web site)
- "Summary of the Bible" from ["Kids Prep"](#) CD by Jeff Miller
- Pictures/drawings from the books listed under 3rd-4th Grader Pre-Class Activities/Learning Centers
- Betty Lukens' felt pieces
- Life of Paul (Series 1) A Beka picture set (DISCLAIMER: use the cards, *not the lesson book*; note that only the apostles received the Holy Spirit baptism in Acts 2—skip card 1.2 or remove girl)



PERSONAL APPLICATION:

If people make fun of me or try to hurt me because I believe in Jesus and God, I can be strong because God is with me.

LESSON STARTS HERE

INTRODUCTION: (YOUNGER CHILDREN)

Last year we learned about Stephen. Today, we are going to review the story of that very brave Christian. Stephen was one of the seven men chosen in Jerusalem to be special servants and help take care of the widows. Today we'll talk about something very sad that happened to Stephen because he taught others about Jesus.

INTRODUCTION: (OLDER CHILDREN)

Has anyone ever made fun of you for believing in Jesus and doing what's right? How did that make you feel? People can make you feel like you are really dumb for believing in Jesus and standing for what the Bible teaches. It can be very hard when people make fun of us or isolate us for believing in Jesus. Today we are going to review a story from last year about a man who was teaching others about Jesus even when his life was threatened. He was very brave and is a great example for us!

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

1. Jesus was killed during the Feast of the Passover. Fifty days after Passover was another Jewish feast called Pentecost. On the Day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter preached the first Gospel sermon; we can read about this in Acts 2. [Remind the children about Jesus' command to "Go into all the world and preach the gospel..." before His ascension.] After Peter's sermon, 3,000 people were baptized and became Christians!
2. The Church grew quickly—by the thousands. Many of the new Christians stayed in Jerusalem and eventually needed food and other help. Some of those people were widows. Why were there so many widows? Israel (Palestine) was "holy" land to the Jews. Many Jews wanted to spend their final days in Israel and be buried there. That meant that many wives were often left completely alone, far away from family and others who could care for them. Seven men were chosen by the Christians in Jerusalem to be special servants to help those widows. (All seven had Greek names; they may have been converted Grecian Jews themselves.)



NOTE: Many of the widows were Hellenists, meaning they were Jews from outside Palestine who spoke Greek (like Barnabas, from Cyprus) and had been converted to Christianity.

3. Stephen was one of those chosen by the Christians in Jerusalem as a servant to help the needy widows. He was a well-educated young man, a young Christian described as "full of faith and filled with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 6:5). He was also the first Christian who was not an apostle that is mentioned to have performed **miracles** (Acts 6:8).



NOTE: Jesus gave the apostles the ability to perform **miracles**. Also, the apostles could “lay their hands” on others to pass on the ability to perform miracles (Acts 8:18). No one but the apostles had the power to pass on the ability to perform miracles. So after the apostles and those on whom they had laid their hands died, there were no more men who could perform miracles. Remember that the reason for miracles, in both the Old and New Testaments, was to prove that the spoken Word was from God (Mark 16:20; Hebrews 2:3-4). As the Word was written, by inspiration, there was no longer a need to prove its origin (confirm it), and miracles ceased.

4. Large groups of Christians were meeting near the Temple and from house to house every day so they could learn more about Jesus and how to live as His followers (Christians). But Jesus’ enemies, the leaders of the Jews, were becoming more and more concerned about this new religious group, especially when some of their priests were converted (Acts 6:7). When Stephen was teaching in the **synagogue**, a group of Jews from several different places outside Jerusalem argued with Stephen. But they could not successfully prove anything he said was wrong because God was helping him with everything he did and said. The Jews were afraid (and jealous) of this new group (followers of Jesus, Christians) and wanted to discredit and weaken its leadership. They decided to arrest Stephen.



Synagogue: No one is sure when the synagogue originated, but many scholars believe its use began after the Jews returned from Babylonian captivity. Ezra and those who followed him introduced the reading of Scripture and prayers in the synagogue alongside forms of worship that had been common in the Temple. By the time Titus destroyed Jerusalem, it has been estimated that there were at least 394 synagogues in Jerusalem alone. In New Testament times it was a Jewish community house of worship where men would also gather to study and discuss Scripture. Crusaders and Muslims remodeled or destroyed synagogues and built churches on their foundations as they tried to eliminate the Jews.

[For more information, see <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/14160-synagogue>]

5. The Jewish leaders took Stephen to a Jewish court where false witnesses were brought in to accuse him of **blasphemy**, to lie about what he had taught and done. But Stephen was not afraid. The Jews treated Stephen just as they had treated Jesus before His crucifixion several weeks before.



Blasphemy: speaking against, and showing disrespect for, God (and, among the Jews, against Moses and the Law)

6. Acts chapter 7 is Stephen’s speech before the Jewish court. It is the longest single speech in the book of Acts and a turning point in the history of the Church. After Stephen’s speech, the Jews made their rejection of Jesus very clear, and persecution of the Church began.



RECOMMENDED READING FOR TEACHERS: See the articles “**Who is Right—Stephen or Moses?**” “**Jacob’s Journey to Egypt,**” “**How Many of Jacob’s Descendants Moved to Egypt?**” and “**Was Moses Ineloquent or ‘Mighty in Words’?**” by Eric Lyons on the Apologetics Press Web site for discussions about alleged biblical discrepancies from this section of Scripture.

7. Stephen spoke to the crowd about some of the most important events and people in their history. His main points were about Abraham, Joseph, and Moses. Throughout their history, the Jews refused to follow those chosen by God to lead them. They rejected God’s promises over and over. At the end of his speech, Stephen told the crowd that they were stubborn people, like their ancestors. He called them murderers; he reminded them that Jews had killed Jesus, the “final prophet” and Savior sent by God, just as their ancestors had killed the prophets whom God sent in times past.
8. When the crowd heard Stephen call them murderers and accuse them of not obeying God, they became very angry! Stephen looked upward and told them that he could see Jesus standing at the right hand of God in Heaven. This made the crowd even angrier. They all rushed toward him and dragged him outside the city, and stoned him to death. (Being under Roman occupation, the Jews were not supposed to carry out capital punishment.)
9. As Stephen was dying, he asked God to forgive the people, just as Jesus had done as He was dying on the cross. It was not uncommon for the person being executed to confess his sin. But Stephen prayed aloud for the sins of those who falsely accused him. (Standing to the side, holding the coats of the Jews, was a young man named Saul of Tarsus.) After Stephen died, there was great sadness and fear among the Christians in Jerusalem. A time of **persecution** against the Christians began in and around Jerusalem. Most of the Christians (except for the apostles) left Jerusalem, but everywhere they went, they taught others about Jesus. So the Church continued to grow and the Gospel was spread to many places all over the world.



Persecution: mistreatment by those who do not share your beliefs and want you to stop sharing your faith



NOTE: “It took persecution—mainly the scattering of the bicultural, foreign Jews—to get the church to begin to do what Jesus had commanded them back in Acts 1:8” (*Bible Background Commentary*, p. 334).

10. At some point, each of us may have to stand up for what is right and not be ashamed that we believe in Jesus. We probably won’t be asked to face death, like Stephen did, but we will often be in situations where people make fun of us or try to get us to do something we know God would not want us to do. No matter what other people say or do to us, we must never be afraid to tell others that we believe in Jesus and try to do what He wants us to do.

PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES/LEARNING CENTERS (TO BE USED AS CHILDREN ARE ARRIVING—BEFORE CLASS, AND UP TO THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF CLASS; OR AS HOMEWORK):

- Click here for complete [Activity Book](#) and [Answer Key](#).

Ages 2-5:

- “[Stephen Coloring Sheet](#)” (provided in activity sheets)
- Write key words from the lesson on cards. Write the same words on the board (one at a time), with one or more missing letters. Show the children the word cards and ask them to fill in the missing letters. (“[Key Words Cards](#)” provided in activity sheets)

- “Stephen Sticks to the Truth” game: Draw or find a picture of a gumball machine without the gumballs in it. Cut it out, and glue it on a half-sheet of poster board. Stick little pieces of Velcro® “inside” the “globe” of the gumball machine figure. Then cut circles out of construction paper to be the gumballs, write numbers on the front, laminate them, and put the other side of the Velcro® on the back of the gumballs. Have each child get a “piece of gum” (a circle) from the machine and read the number. Before class, the teacher will prepare a page of review questions that are numbered. The teacher should read aloud the questions that correspond to the numbers the children choose. If the child answers correctly, he can be given a real gumball, a Skittle®, or other small treat. (“[Gumball Machine](#)” and “[Gumballs](#)” cutouts provided in activity sheets)
- Make picture frames for the kids out of four wooden craft sticks glued together in the shape of a square. Write the memory verse on the frames. Let the children decorate their picture frames; take the children’s pictures and add them to the frames on Wednesday night. (Foam or wooden picture frames can be purchased at a craft store or one can be easily made with wooden craft sticks.)

1st-2nd Graders:

- “Stoning of Stephen” game: Find 10-12 smooth rocks (white ones work best; big enough to write a word on). On a large file folder or half-sheet of posterboard, print questions or fill-in-the-blank sentences from the story. Write the missing words/answers on the rocks, and ask the children to match the correct rock to each sentence or question. (You can also cut out “rocks” from tan paper and write the answer words on them. Write the sentences, with blanks for the answers on a posterboard. Put magnets or Velcro® on the “rocks” and the spaces where they should go on the posterboard.)
- “[Sequencing Game](#)”: Cut 8-10 strips of cardstock. On each strip, write something that happened in this story. Make two to three sets of the strips. Divide the students into groups of two to three, and give each group a set to put in chronological order. (provided in activity sheets)
- “[Memory Verse Cards](#)”: Write the memory verse on index cards, one word per card. Mix the cards up, and ask the children to put them in the correct order. Make enough sets for children to work in pairs.
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3rd-4th Graders:

- “Stoning of Stephen” game: Find 10-12 smooth rocks (white ones work best; big enough to write a word on). On a large file folder or half-sheet of posterboard, print questions or fill-in-the-blank sentences from the story. Write the missing words/answers on the rocks, and ask the children to match the correct rock to each sentence or question. (You can also cut out “rocks” from tan paper

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- “[Memory Verse Cards](#)”: Write the memory verse on index cards, one word per card. Mix the cards up, and ask the children to put them in the correct order. Make enough sets for children to work in pairs.
- Have the children read the following:
 - Acts 6-7
 - *Stephen Stands Strong*, by Julie Stiegemeyer, Arch books (DISCLAIMERS: p. 2—change “Easter” to “a Sunday”; p. 14—change the second line to “When Him you obey and love.”)
 - *Discovery* magazine articles: “Lions and Tigers and Christians,” [August, 2000](#); “Saul the Enemy of Christ,” [May, 2007](#)

SONGS:

“DYING FOR THE CAUSE OF CHRIST” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Lora Laycook

(Tune: “Standing on the Promises”)

VERSE 1:

Singing songs of Christians, and Ste-phen was one,
Who was true and faithful to our God’s dear Son;
Dying for the cause of Christ, oh let us sing,
Dying for the cause of Christ, our King.

CHORUS:

Dying, dying,
Dying for the cause of Christ our Lord and Savior,

Dying, dying;
He was dying for the cause of Christ, our King.

VERSE 2:

Stephen then saw Jesus, as he looked above,
Standing on the right hand of our God of love;
Praying to the Father, as to sleep he fell,
Dying for the Lord he loved so well.

(CHORUS)

“DO NOT FEAR” ([Click to Hear](#))

Author: Lora Laycook

(Tune: “What A Friend We Have In Jesus”)

Do not fear for God is near us.
All the twinkling stars do say.
Do not fear for God is near us,
All the night and all the day.

He will ever be our Father,
And He'll care for us, we know;
If we'll do as He commands us,
He'll go with us where we go.

***** IF YOU HAVE SUGGESTIONS PERTAINING TO THIS LESSON, PLEASE CLICK THE
“SUGGESTION” BUTTON BESIDE THE BUTTON FOR THIS LESSON ON THE
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WEDNESDAY EVENING

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PERSONAL APPLICATION:

If people make fun of me or try to hurt me because I believe in Jesus and God, I can be strong because God is with me.

INTRODUCTION:

Review [N.T. 6 Bible Fact Flash Cards](#) (provided under “N.T. 6 Bible Facts” on curriculum Web site)

POINTS TO EMPHASIZE:

Review Sunday’s lesson (see [N.T. 6 Review Questions](#) for example questions)

Spend more time talking about how some people are mistreated for their faith. Also discuss Bible characters who were persecuted: Daniel; Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego; Paul; Joseph. What can we do when we face persecution?

Write situations (persecutions, trials, and tribulations) on strips of paper and put them in a can or jar. Let each child draw out a strip of paper and then discuss what might be the best way to handle the problem.

PRE-CLASS ACTIVITIES/LEARNING CENTERS (TO BE USED AS CHILDREN ARE ARRIVING—**BEFORE** CLASS, AND UP TO THE FIRST FIVE MINUTES OF CLASS; OR AS HOMEWORK):

See Sunday morning’s lesson

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