

## Stephen's Address

**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Acts 6:8–7:60

**MAIN POINT:** Stephen was not afraid to die so that others would hear about Jesus.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Philippians 2:13

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** What does the Holy Spirit do? The Holy Spirit helps Christians follow Jesus.

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## Leader BIBLE STUDY

Stephen was one of the seven men chosen to serve as leaders in the early church at Jerusalem. (See Acts 6:1-7.) God blessed Stephen and gave him power to do wonders and miracles like some of the apostles.

Some of the Jews accused Stephen of blasphemy and dragged him to the Sanhedrin, a group of Jewish leaders who acted as a legal council. Stephen addressed the group. He drew from the Jewish history, which the leaders in the Sanhedrin would have known well. But Stephen taught from the Old Testament things the Jewish leaders had likely never realized.

As Stephen preached, he showed how the Old Testament pointed to a coming Savior and how that Savior was Jesus. Stephen pointed out that the Jews' ancestors had rejected God's prophets. And they were just like their fathers; they rejected the Messiah, the Lord Jesus. Not only did they reject Jesus, they killed Him!

The Jewish leaders rushed at Stephen. Stephen looked into heaven. He saw God's glory, and Jesus was standing at God's right hand. The Jews forced Stephen out of the city, and they stoned him.

Remind kids of Jesus' words in Matthew 10:22: "You will be hated by everyone because of My name. But the one who endures to the end will be delivered." Following Jesus will include difficulty and suffering. Jesus gives words of both warning and comfort: "Don't be afraid" (Matt. 10:26).

Stephen was killed because he was a Christian. Jesus told His followers that they would be persecuted—hated, hurt, or even killed—for loving Him. (Mark 13:9-13; John 16:2) Jesus also said that those who suffer for Him would be blessed. (Matt. 5:11) Stephen was not afraid to die because he saw Jesus waiting for him in heaven. We can face suffering in this life because we know great joy is waiting for us in heaven.



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# The BIBLE STORY

## Bible Storytelling Tips

- **Vary your tone:**  
Speak softly and seriously when telling the story. When Stephen speaks, use a bold and confident tone.
- **Utilize eye contact:**  
Hold kids' attention by scanning the room as you tell the story. Make eye contact with various individuals and use animated facial expressions.

## Stephen's Address

*Acts 6:8–7:60*

**One of Jesus' followers was named Stephen.** God blessed Stephen and gave him power to do great wonders and signs among the people in Jerusalem. **One day, some Jews came and began to argue with Stephen. The Holy Spirit helped Stephen speak with wisdom,** so no matter how hard the Jews tried, they could not win the argument.

**The Jews decided to lie about Stephen.** They said that Stephen had spoken against God. **The people dragged Stephen to the Sanhedrin (san HEE drihn), which was the Jewish court.** There, they told more lies about Stephen. "We heard him say that Jesus will destroy the temple and change the laws that Moses gave us," they said.

"Is this true?" the high priest asked Stephen.

**Stephen began to preach about Jesus. He started by reminding them about Abraham.** God had made promises to Abraham and his son Isaac. **He reminded them about Joseph and Moses.** God kept Joseph safe when his brothers tried to hurt him, and God used Joseph to help all His people during a famine. **When God's people lived in Egypt, God called Moses to rescue His people from Pharaoh. Moses led God's people away from Egypt, but they turned against Moses and against God.**

**God did not give up on His people, though. He was working out a plan.** God worked through Joshua and David and Solomon. The religious leaders knew these stories from the Old Testament.

**Stephen told them these stories to explain that Jesus was the Messiah God had promised! But just like their ancestors rejected and killed the prophets in the Old**

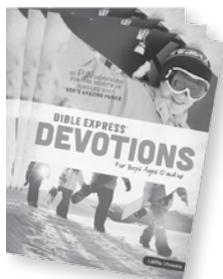
**Testament, these Jewish leaders had rejected Jesus and murdered Him!**

**Stephen's words made the Jewish leaders so angry! Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he looked up into heaven. Stephen saw Jesus standing there.**

“Look!” he said. “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”

**The Jewish leaders screamed at the top of their lungs. They covered their ears and rushed at Stephen. They threw Stephen out of the city and began to throw stones at him. As they were stoning him, Stephen called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” Then Stephen knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” After saying this, Stephen died.**

*Christ Connection: Stephen was killed because he was a Christian. Jesus was crucified, and He told His followers that they would be persecuted—hated, hurt, or even killed—for loving Him. Jesus also said that those who suffer for Him would be blessed. (Matthew 5:11) We can face suffering in this life because Jesus suffered first. He died and then rose again, and He is waiting for us in heaven.*



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# Introduce the STORY

**SESSION TITLE:** Stephen's Address

**BIBLE PASSAGE:** Acts 6:8–7:60

**MAIN POINT:** Stephen was not afraid to die so that others would hear about Jesus.

**KEY PASSAGE:** Philippians 2:13

**BIG PICTURE QUESTION:** What does the Holy Spirit do? The Holy Spirit helps Christians follow Jesus.

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## Welcome time

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, and help new kids connect to your group. Prompt kids to imagine they had to stand in front of a large crowd. What would they do or say if the crowd was happy? What would they do or say if the crowd was angry?

**SAY** • Today we are going to hear about one of Jesus' followers who faced an angry crowd and said something very important.

## Activity page (5 minutes)

- "Can't Live Without It" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers

Invite kids to complete "Can't Live Without It" on the activity page. Kids will number the items from 1 to 8 based on their importance. The number 1 indicates "Can't live without it!" and 8 indicates "Wouldn't miss it at all." Call for volunteers to share their rankings.

**SAY** • What is the most important thing to you on this list? What is the least important? In today's Bible story, one of Jesus' followers had to decide what was the most important to him. We will find out what that was when we hear today's Bible story.

## Session starter (10 minutes)

**OPTION 1:** Take a stand

Instruct kids to listen to each statement. If the statement describes them, they should stand. Guide all kids to return to their seats before reading the next statement. Use the suggested statements or create your own. Be sure to end with a statement about trusting in Jesus.

1. My favorite color is brown; 2. I like to eat broccoli; 3. I like math; 4. I am afraid of the dark; 5. I don't like thunderstorms; 6. I believe Jesus is the Son of God.

**SAY** • Was it hard to take a stand for what you know to be true? Sometimes it takes a lot of courage to stand up for what you know is true. Today's Bible story is about one of Jesus' followers who stood up for what he believed no matter what.

**OPTION 2:** What to expect

Before the session, write the following words or phrases on separate paper cups: *eternal life, adoption into God's family, God's love, a purpose, forgiveness, freedom, peace, persecution, pain, suffering*. Position the cups at the front of the room.

Give each kid 10 pennies or other small manipulative. Instruct kids to drop a penny into the cups with things they think believers will experience because they trust in Jesus. Collect any extra pennies before examining kids' choices.

**SAY** • Interesting choices. Did any of these things surprise you? The Bible actually says that believers will have all of these things—even persecution, pain, and suffering. [See *Matt. 7:14; John 15:18; 2 Tim. 3:12.*] We will hear more about that in today's Bible story.



LOW PREP

Tip: Be sure kids are respectful of one another, regardless of whether or not someone stands.

- paper cups, 10
- marker
- pennies or other small manipulatives, 10 per kid

## Transition to teach the story

# Teach the STORY

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## Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as your kids arrive, and set it to end as the session begins.

## Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire

• prop box

*[Leader enters wearing a black outfit with a colorful cape. To the side, a prop box is displayed on a stool or table.]*

**LEADER** • Ladies and gentlemen! I am the great illusionist, Sir *[or Madam]* *[your name]*. And now, I need a volunteer to come up here. *[Choose a volunteer. Then give her the following instructions.]*

OK, now think of a number between 1 and 1,000. Don't say it out loud! Just think about it. Picture it in your mind. I am going to read your mind and tell you what number you are thinking of. *[Stare intently at the volunteer and then begin guessing a few numbers.]* You are thinking of the number 5, right? No? Hmm ... how about 848? Or 207?

Huh. This is harder than I thought it would be. I give up. What number are you thinking of? *[Invite the volunteer to share the answer, and then guide her to return to her seat.]* You didn't come here to see me

fail at another trick or illusion. Let's get to our Bible story.

## Big picture question (1 minute)

**LEADER** • You might remember that our big picture question is, *What does the Holy Spirit do?* That is a very good question. Does anyone remember the answer? [*Call on a volunteer to answer.*] *The Holy Spirit helps Christians follow Jesus.* The power of the Holy Spirit is incredible! The same power that raised Jesus from the dead lives inside of every believer—and He can do some pretty incredible things through us as we follow Jesus.

## Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline or big story circle.

**LEADER** • We've already seen how God worked through Peter to heal a man who couldn't walk. Today we are going to see how the Holy Spirit gave courage to a man name Stephen even when he faced death.

• Giant Timeline or Big Story Circle

## Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Acts 6:8–7:60. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Stephen's Address.”

**LEADER** • As more and more people believed in Jesus and the early church grew, Jesus' disciples realized that they needed help leading the church. God had called the apostles to be teachers, and they couldn't address all the problems and needs of the believers. So they chose seven men who were wise and respected to be leaders. Stephen was one of those seven men.

• Bibles  
• “Stephen's Address” video  
• Big Picture Question Poster  
• Bible Story Picture Poster

God blessed Stephen and gave him power to do wonders and miracles like some of the apostles. But some of the Jews began to argue with Stephen. They did not like that Stephen said that Jesus is the Messiah. They did not believe that Jesus is God's Son. So they accused Stephen of blasphemy, or saying something about God that is not true. They dragged Stephen to the Jewish court.

Stephen preached to the Jewish leaders. They knew the Old Testament because it was part of their Jewish history. But Stephen said that the Old Testament pointed to a coming Savior, and that Savior is Jesus. He told the leaders that they were just like their ancestors, who hurt and killed God's prophets who told about Jesus. But what these leaders had done was worse. When Jesus—the One whom God had promised—came to earth, the people rejected Jesus and killed Him!

Now the Jewish leaders were really mad! The Bible says that the Holy Spirit filled Stephen, and when Stephen looked into heaven, he saw Jesus standing at God's right hand. The leaders wanted to kill Stephen, so they forced him out of the city and began to throw stones at him.

**Stephen was not afraid to die so that others would hear about Jesus.** The Holy Spirit gave Stephen power to be brave before his enemies. Stephen did not change his mind about what he believed. If he had, maybe they would have stopped hurting him. If Stephen had said, "Never mind, I agree with you that Jesus is not the Son of God," maybe he wouldn't have died. But that is not the

truth. Jesus is the Son of God, and Stephen was brave to die for the name of Jesus.

## Christ connection

**LEADER** • Stephen faced persecution. *Persecution* is when someone is hated, hurt, or killed for what he or she believes. Stephen was killed because he was a Christian. Jesus was crucified, and He told His followers that they would be persecuted for loving Him. Jesus also said that those who suffer for Him would be blessed. [See *Matthew 5:11*.]

We can face suffering in this life because Jesus suffered first. He died and then rose again, and He is waiting for us in heaven. Those who trust in Jesus will live with Him forever.

Tip: Use Scripture and the guide provided to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

## Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Philippians 2:13. Then challenge them to close their eyes and say it from memory.

**LEADER** • Paul wrote these words in his letter to the believers in Philippi. He explained that God is working in us. He helps us not only obey Him, but want to obey Him. We can be open to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to work in us so that we can work out God’s plan for us. Let’s sing.

Lead boys and girls in singing “His Good Purpose.”

• Key Passage Poster  
• “His Good Purpose” song

## Discussion starter video (4 minutes)

**LEADER** • In our Bible story today, we saw that **Stephen was not afraid to die so that others would hear about Jesus**. The way Stephen lived and died showed

• “Unit 28, Session 3” discussion starter video

His love for Jesus and the gospel. Keep that in mind as you watch this video.

Show the “Unit 28, Session 3” discussion starter video.

Then lead kids to discuss the following questions:

- Who seemed to be the biggest fan of the band? How could you tell?
- Why do you think Candace changed her mind about going to the concert?
- How can we show faithfulness to Jesus?

Tip: Define *martyr* as “a person who is killed or who suffers greatly for what he believes.”

**LEADER** • God calls us to tell others about Jesus, even when we are treated badly. Stephen believed that the good news about Jesus was so important, he was willing to die for it. Stephen was the first Christian martyr. He died because of his message about God’s truth.

### **Sing (4 minutes)**

• “The Story” song

**LEADER** • Stephen died because he preached the truth about Jesus. He looked up and saw Jesus in heaven. Jesus is King! Let’s sing.

Sing together “The Story.”

### **Pray (2 minutes)**

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

**LEADER** • Father God, we confess that we are not always bold for Your name. Sometimes we feel embarrassed to talk about Jesus. Lord, change us. We pray for the believers all over the world who face persecution because they follow You. Give them comfort and strength. Guide them as they work to tell others about You. Amen.

## **Dismiss to apply the story**

## The Gospel: God's Plan for Me

Ask kids if they have ever heard the word *gospel*. Clarify that the word *gospel* means “good news.” It is the message about Christ, the kingdom of God, and salvation. Use the following guide to share the gospel with kids.



**God rules.** Explain to kids that the Bible tells us God created everything, and He is in charge of everything. Invite a volunteer to read Genesis 1:1 from the Bible. Read Revelation 4:11 or Colossians 1:16-17 aloud and explain what these verses mean.



**We sinned.** Tell kids that since the time of Adam and Eve, everyone has chosen to disobey God. (Romans 3:23) The Bible calls this sin. Because God is holy, God cannot be around sin. Sin separates us from God and deserves God's punishment of death. (Romans 6:23)



**God provided.** Choose a child to read John 3:16 aloud. Say that God sent His Son, Jesus, the perfect solution to our sin problem, to rescue us from the punishment we deserve. It's something we, as sinners, could never earn on our own. Jesus alone saves us. Read and explain Ephesians 2:8-9.



**Jesus gives.** Share with kids that Jesus lived a perfect life, died on the cross for our sins, and rose again. Because Jesus gave up His life for us, we can be welcomed into God's family for eternity. This is the best gift ever! Read Romans 5:8; 2 Corinthians 5:21; or 1 Peter 3:18.



**We respond.** Tell kids that they can respond to Jesus. Read Romans 10:9-10,13. Review these aspects of our response: Believe in your heart that Jesus alone saves you through what He's already done on the cross. Repent, turning from self and sin to Jesus. Tell God and others that your faith is in Jesus.

Offer to talk with any child who is interested in responding to Jesus. Provide *I'm a Christian Now* for new Christians to take home and complete with their families.

# Apply the STORY

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## Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- chalkboard or large piece of paper
- pencil or chalk
- eraser

Show the key passage poster and lead kids to read it aloud together. Then, on a large sheet of paper or a chalkboard, draw a blank for each word of the key passage. Hide the poster and invite volunteers to take turns writing in the words of the key passage, one at a time. Gently correct any errors. Turn over the paper or erase the words to play again if time allows.

**SAY • Stephen was not afraid to die so that others would hear about Jesus.** Do you think Stephen was just a really strong Christian? Is that why he had so much courage? The Bible is clear that when we do God's work, He is working through us. We can face suffering in this life because Jesus suffered first. He died and then rose again, and He is waiting for us in heaven.

## Bible story review & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Main Point Poster

Provide Bibles and guide kids to find Acts 6–7. Explain that you will read some sentences about today's Bible story. Kids should determine if the statements are true or false. Provide the Bible references for kids to check their answers.

1. The Holy Spirit gave Stephen wisdom when he spoke. (*true, Acts 6:10*)
2. The Jews took Stephen to Bethlehem. (*False, to the Sanhedrin or Jewish court; Acts 6:12*)
3. Stephen accused the Jewish leaders of rejecting Jesus, the Messiah, and murdering Him. (*true, Acts 7:52*)
4. Stephen saw Moses in heaven, standing at the right hand of God. (*False, he saw Jesus; Acts 7:55-56*)
5. The Jewish people put Stephen in prison. (*False, they threw him out of the city and threw stones at him; Acts 7:58*)
6. Stephen asked the Lord to receive his spirit and to not hold his murderers' sin against them. (*true, Acts 7:59-60*)

**SAY** • Great job investigating those statements, everyone. The Holy Spirit was with Stephen, even as he was killed for being a Christian. Let's say our big picture question and answer together: ***What does the Holy Spirit do? The Holy Spirit helps Christians follow Jesus.***

Option: Retell or review the Bible story using the bolded text of the Bible story script.

## Activity choice (10 minutes)

**OPTION 1:** Stephen's storybook

Provide a copy of the "Stephen's Storybook" for each kid. Instruct kids to follow along as you read the storybook aloud. Then encourage kids to illustrate what happened in today's Bible story. As kids work, talk about the story. Consider emphasizing the following points:

- Stephen was the first Christian martyr. A *martyr* is someone who suffers or dies because of his message about God's truth.
- After Stephen was killed, Jesus' followers scattered,



- "Stephen's Storybook" printable
- crayons or colored pencils
- Bibles

but they did not stop sharing the good news.

- Jesus said that His followers will be hated. He also said that those who suffer for Him will be blessed.

**SAY** • **Stephen was not afraid to die so that others would hear about Jesus.** He looked up and saw Jesus standing in heaven.

Stephen knew that his physical death was not the end. When he died, he would be with Jesus, which is far better than life on earth. When Stephen died, Jesus welcomed Stephen home into life forever with God.

#### **OPTION 2:** Trust stones

- smooth stones
- permanent markers or colored duct tape
- scissors (optional)

Provide smooth stones for boys and girls to decorate with permanent markers. You may choose to provide colorful duct tape for kids to cut and cover their stones. As kids work, talk about the following points:

- The Holy Spirit helped Stephen speak with wisdom.
- Stephen began to preach about Jesus. He explained what happened in the Old Testament.
- Stephen said that Jesus is the Messiah God had promised.
- The Jewish leaders were angry, and they stoned Stephen.
- Stephen saw the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.

**SAY** • The Jewish leaders threw stones at Stephen until he died. Stephen was killed because he was a Christian.

Why do you think Stephen didn't just pretend to not be a Christian so he would not be killed? [*Allow kids to respond.*] Jesus was crucified, and He told His followers that they would be persecuted—hated,

hurt, or even killed—for loving Him. Jesus also said that those who suffer for Him would be blessed. [*See Matthew 5:11.*]

Keep your stones as a reminder of our Bible story. Remember that we can face suffering in this life because Jesus suffered first. He died and then rose again, and one day, everyone who trusts in Him will live with Him forever.

### **Journal and prayer (5 minutes)**

Distribute journal pages and pencils. Guide kids to think about and answer the questions listed on the page:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does the story teach me about myself?
- Are there any commands in this story to obey? How are they for God’s glory and my good?
- Are there any promises in this story to remember? How do they help me trust and love God?
- How does this story help me to live on mission better?

As kids journal, invite them to share their ideas. Then pray, asking God to take away any fear kids feel about defending their faith. Pray for courage to stand up for Jesus’ name.

As time allows, lead kids to complete “Stephen Said” on the activity page. Kids should color the spaces according to the code.

Option: Review the gospel with boys and girls. Explain that kids are welcome to speak with you or another teacher if they have questions.

- pencils
- Journal Page
- “Stephen Said” activity page, 1 per kid

Tip: Give parents this week’s *Big Picture Cards for Families* to allow families to interact with the biblical content at home.