

Use Week of:

Unit 29 • Session 2

Stephen's Sermon

BIBLE PASSAGE:

Acts 6–7

STORY POINT:

Stephen preached about Jesus no matter what.

KEY PASSAGE:

Romans 12:5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

What is the church? The church is all Christians everywhere, who gather together in their communities to worship and serve God.

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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 of 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. As he faced his enemies, Stephen looked into heaven and saw God's glory. 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 saved." 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.

The BIBLE Story

Stephen's Sermon

Acts 6-7

Stephen was one of Jesus' followers. God blessed Stephen and gave him power to do great wonders and signs. One day, some Jews 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 lied about Stephen; they said he had spoken against God.

The people dragged Stephen to the Sanhedrin (san HEE drihn), the Jewish court, and told more lies. "We heard Stephen 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 reminded the court 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. He looked up to heaven and 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 him out of the city and began throwing stones at him. Stephen called out, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" Then he said, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" After this, Stephen died.

Christ Connection: 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. Jesus also said that those who suffer for Him would be blessed. 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 Storytelling Tips

- **Use lighting effects:** Dim the lights and stand in a spotlight as you tell about what Stephen preached to the crowd. Raise the lights when describing Stephen's looking up to heaven.
- **Display art:** Show Bible story pictures of Old Testament people Stephen preached about: Abraham, Isaac, Joseph, Moses, Joshua, David, and Solomon.

INTRODUCE the Story



SESSION TITLE: Stephen's Sermon

BIBLE PASSAGE: Acts 6-7

STORY POINT: Stephen preached about Jesus no matter what.

KEY PASSAGE: Romans 12:5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is the church? The church is all Christians everywhere, who gather together in their communities to worship and serve God.

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 share if they've ever spoken in front of a large crowd. If so, how did they feel?

Activity page (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete "Historical Figures" on the activity page. Guide kids to match each person with the correct description. Kids may use their Bibles to find the references and check their answers. Consider displaying the timeline for kids to see where each person fits in the Bible.

SAY • In today's Bible story, we will hear how one of the early church leaders reminded the Jewish leaders about these Old Testament people.

Session starter (10 minutes)

OPTION 1: On the spot history

Before the session, write on separate index cards items or events that have an origin. (Examples: *ice cream, birthday cakes, shaking hands*, and so on) Put the cards in a gift bag. Call for volunteers to pull a card from the bag and begin

speaking about the history of the item or event. Consider timing kids for 30 or 60 seconds. Emphasize that kids can make up the story if they do not know the true history. Encourage creativity. Applaud volunteers for their efforts.

SAY • Was it hard or easy to tell about the history of something? In today's Bible story, a man named Stephen preached to a crowd about the history of God's people. We will find out why.

OPTION 2: Take a stand

Prepare two sets of cards—actions cards and statement cards. Write simple group actions on several index cards. (Sample actions: *Do 10 jumping jacks, give someone a high-five, jump as high as you can, say the alphabet as quickly as you can*, and so forth.) Put the action cards in a bag. Write several statements on separate cards. (Sample statements: *I think that dogs are the best animals in the world. My favorite food is pizza. Math is my favorite subject in school.*)

Position two hula hoops on the floor, several feet apart. Instruct kids to stand. Explain that you will read a statement. If kids agree, they should put one foot in the first hula hoop. If they disagree, they should put one foot in the second hula hoop. After kids have moved to a hoop, draw an action card for kids at the first hoop to complete. Then play again with another statement and another card. Each time, the first group should complete the action.

SAY • Did any of you disagree with the statement just so you could avoid doing the action? In today's Bible story, a man took a stand for what he believed even though it cost him his life.

Transition to teach the story

- index cards
- marker
- paper bag
- hula hoops, 2

- "Historical Figures" activity page, 1 per kid
- pencils or markers
- Bibles
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970)

LOW PREP

- index cards
- marker
- gift bag
- stopwatch or timer (optional)

TEACH the Story



SESSION TITLE: Stephen's Sermon

BIBLE PASSAGE: Acts 6–7

STORY POINT: Stephen preached about Jesus no matter what.

KEY PASSAGE: Romans 12:5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is the church? The church is all Christians everywhere, who gather together in their communities to worship and serve God.

Countdown

• countdown video

Show the countdown video as you transition to teach the story. Set it to end as the session begins.

Introduce the session (3 minutes)

• leader attire
• bag of coins
• magnifying glass
• Bible

[Leader enters carrying a bag of coins and a magnifying glass. A Bible is positioned on a table.]

LEADER • Hello! I am so glad to see you again. If you weren't here last time, my name is *[your name]*. I've decided to try coin collecting. *[Pour some coins onto the table and examine one with the magnifying glass.]* So far, I haven't found any coins worth a lot of money, but I still have a lot of coins from my grandpa to sort through. My grandpa told me that he used to collect coins when he was young. Some of his friends thought coin collecting was a silly hobby, but he had a few friends who liked collecting coins too. They started a coin collecting club at their school.

That sounds pretty neat. *[Pick up the Bible.]* I want to share a Bible story with you about someone named Stephen. He was a follower of Jesus. Not everyone liked what Stephen believed. Following

Tip: If you prefer not to use themed content or characters, adapt or omit this introduction.

Jesus was not a hobby for him, though; it was his life. Let's hear more.

Big picture question (1 minute)

LEADER • As you listen to our Bible story, remember our big picture question: *What is the church?* Does anyone remember the answer? *[Call on volunteers to respond.] The church is all Christians everywhere, who gather together in their communities to worship and serve God.*

Giant timeline (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

• Giant Timeline

LEADER • We have been hearing about the early church. After Jesus returned to heaven, the Holy Spirit gave His disciples power to share the gospel. As more people heard the good news and believed in Jesus, the church grew. Following Jesus wasn't easy, though. Our Bible story today is called "Stephen's Sermon." Stephen was a believer. He followed Jesus' teachings and told others about Him. Stephen had good news to share, but some of the Jews did not like this news and tried to stop it from spreading. Listen closely to this story to find out what happened to Stephen.

Tell the Bible story (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Acts 6–7. Use the Bible storytelling tips on the Bible story page to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video "Stephen's Sermon."

LEADER • Many Jews did not believe that Jesus is God's Son. What did they accuse Stephen of doing? Look

• Bibles
• "Stephen's Sermon" video
• Big Picture Question Poster
• Bible Story Picture Poster
• Story Point Poster

at Acts 6:11. [Allow kids to read the verse and respond.] They accused Stephen of *blasphemy*—or speaking against God—and they dragged Stephen to the Jewish court.

Stephen preached to the Jewish leaders. They knew the Old Testament; it was part of their Jewish history. But Stephen said that the Old Testament pointed to a coming Savior, and he said 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 Jewish leaders had done was worse. When the One whom God had promised came to earth, they rejected Jesus and killed Him! Now the Jewish leaders were really mad. They forced Stephen out of the city and began to throw stones at him.

The Bible says that the Holy Spirit filled Stephen. When Stephen looked into heaven, what did he see? Look at Acts 7:56. [Allow kids to read the verse and respond.] Stephen saw Jesus standing at God's right hand. As he died, Stephen asked God not to hold the sin of his accusers against them.

Stephen preached about Jesus no matter what. He was brave before his enemies, and he didn't take back what he had said about Jesus. He didn't change his mind about what he believed. If he had, maybe they would have stopped hurting him. Maybe if Stephen had said, "Never mind, I agree with you that Jesus is not the Son of God," maybe he would have lived. But the truth is, Jesus is the Son of God. 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 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. 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 on page 115 to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.

Questions from kids video (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 29, Session 2" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to think about how they feel sharing about Jesus with family members. Guide them to discuss who first shared the gospel with them.

• "Unit 29, Session 2" questions from kids video



Missions moment (3 minutes)

Display the "Nache Photos" printable. Select strong readers to read the captions.

• "Nache Photos" printable

LEADER • Stephen told other people about Jesus even though it cost him his life. Some of the people who come to the Naches' (NAH ch) church understand what it means to live in danger. The Naches want the people to know about Jesus and to be bold about following Him, even if others in their community don't believe.

Key passage (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead the boys and girls to read together Romans 12:5.

• Key Passage Poster
• "We Who Are Many (Romans 12:5)" song

• "One Foundation"
song
• Bible

LEADER • Everyone who trusts in Jesus is part of the church—the body of Christ. Like Stephen, all believers can face suffering in this life because Jesus suffered first. He died and then rose again, and He is waiting for us in heaven. Let's sing our key passage song to remember that we belong to Jesus.
Lead kids in singing "We Who Are Many (Romans 12:5)."

Sing (4 minutes)

Open your Bible and read aloud Romans 12:18-19.

LEADER • Jesus said those who suffer for Him would be blessed. When we face suffering for our faith, we can trust God. One day He will make all things right. Sing together "One Foundation."

Pray (2 minutes)

Invite kids to pray before dismissing to apply the story.

LEADER • Father God, we pray for the believers all over the world who face persecution because they follow You. We pray You would give them comfort and strength. Guide them as they work to tell others about You. You are worth any suffering we face in this life, and we look forward to the day we will be with You face-to-face. 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



SESSION TITLE: Stephen's Sermon

BIBLE PASSAGE: Acts 6-7

STORY POINT: Stephen preached about Jesus no matter what.

KEY PASSAGE: Romans 12:5

BIG PICTURE QUESTION: What is the church? The church is all Christians everywhere, who gather together in their communities to worship and serve God.

Key passage activity (5 minutes)

- Key Passage Poster
- masking tape
- permanent marker
- dominoes

Before the session, write the words of the key passage on separate strips of masking tape, including the reference. Attach the words to dominoes. Prepare several sets.

Display the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading Romans 12:5 aloud together.

Invite kids to arrange the dominoes in order by standing the dominoes on end, about an inch apart. Kids should set up several sets to practice memorizing the key passage. When kids finish, lead them to say the key passage together. Then invite a kid to push over the first domino and watch them all fall down.

SAY • Stephen was a leader in the early church. What is the church? The church is all Christians everywhere, who gather together in their communities to worship and serve God.

Discussion & Bible skills (10 minutes)

- Bibles, 1 per kid
- Story Point Poster
- Small Group Timeline and Map Set (005802970)

Distribute Bibles. Guide boys and girls to open their Bibles to Acts 7. Challenge kids to name the divisions of the New Testament. (*Gospels, New Testament History, Paul's Letters, General Letters, New Testament Prophecy*) Remind kids that

the Book of Acts is New Testament History. It shows how the Holy Spirit worked in the lives of those in the early church and how the gospel spread to all the world.

SAY • Stephen was one of the men chosen by Jesus' disciples to serve in the early church. He was falsely accused of speaking against God, but that did not stop Stephen from telling the truth. **Stephen preached about Jesus no matter what.**

Choose a volunteer to read aloud Acts 7:54-55. Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss:

1. How did Stephen show love to those who hated him? *Guide kids to recognize that even as he was being killed, Stephen prayed for those who were hurting him. He asked God to forgive them. Point out that Jesus also prayed for His enemies as He died on the cross.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read Luke 23:34.)
2. How do you think Stephen was able to face suffering so courageously? *Emphasize to kids that the Bible is clear that when we do God's work, He is working through us. We may feel afraid when facing suffering, but we can ask the Holy Spirit to give us peace and courage.* (Option: Choose a volunteer to read John 16:33.)
3. Have you ever been laughed at or made fun of because you go to church or read your Bible? Would you ever change your mind about Jesus because you didn't want to feel left out or embarrassed? *Lead kids to discuss persecution and how it makes them feel. Explain that in some countries, it is illegal to own a Bible or tell others about Jesus. Even today, Christians in many nations face imprisonment or death for their faith in Jesus. They are not allowed to meet with other*

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

believers to worship God or read His Word.
(Option: Choose a volunteer to read Matt. 5:11-12.)

Activity choice (10 minutes)



OPTION 1: Naches on mission

Ask a volunteer to find Minnesota on a U.S. map. Point out Minneapolis and St. Paul. Explain that the two cities are very close to each other. Show the "Nache Photos" printable again. Form three small groups and give each group one photo. Ask kids to think of three ways to pray for the Naches and their work to start churches in Minneapolis.

SAY • Many immigrants and refugees from Africa come to Minneapolis and St. Paul. Since the Naches also came from Africa, they are uniquely gifted to share Christ with them. We can live on mission like the Naches by seeking ways to share the truth of God with people around us. Sometimes preaching the gospel may cost us. Others may dislike us, but we can stand firm with the Holy Spirit.

OPTION 2: Is this true?

Form two teams of kids. Explain that you will read a statement and then give a Bible verse. Kids should race to find the verse and determine if the statement is true or false. If false, kids should correct the statement. Use the following statements or include your own:

- I heard that God told Abram never to leave his home. Is this true? (Gen. 12:1)
- I heard that God promised to give Abram a big family. Is this true? (Gen. 15:5)
- I heard that Joseph's brothers sold him to traders going to Jerusalem. Is this true? (Gen. 37:28)

• U.S. map
• "Nache Photos"
printable

Tip: Use this activity option to reinforce the missions moment found in Teach the Story.

**LOW
PREP**

• Bibles

- I heard that Joshua led the Israelites across the Nile River. Is this true? (Josh. 3:17)
 - I heard that David fought a giant who was more than nine feet tall. Is this true? (1 Sam. 17:4)
- SAY** • The Jews lied about Stephen and said he had spoken against God. Yet **Stephen preached about Jesus no matter what**. 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. 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.

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

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, confessing that we are not always bold for Jesus. Ask God to help kids not to fear the world but to trust in Him because He is in control.

As time allows, lead kids to complete "Stephen Quiz" on the activity page. Kids should circle the correct answer for each statement or question.

• pencils
• Journal Page
• "Stephen Quiz"
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.