

Unit 29 • Session 2

Stephen's Sermon

Bible Passage:
Acts 6–7

Story Point:
People hurt Stephen because he followed Jesus.

Key Passage:
Romans 12:5

Big Picture Question:
What is the church? The church is all Christians everywhere.

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 preschoolers 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 a man who loved Jesus. He served the church. God was good to Stephen and gave him power to do great things. **One day, some Jews told lies about Stephen. They did not like Stephen, and they wanted him to get in trouble.**

The high priest asked Stephen if the Jews were telling the truth. Stephen answered by teaching the Jewish leaders about Jesus. He started in the Old Testament with stories about Abraham and Isaac, Joseph, and Moses.

In those days, God was working out His plan to bring someone into the world who could save people from their sins. God chose to do great things through His people, the Israelites. He rescued them from slavery in Egypt. And even though the people did not obey God or love God like they should, God did not give up on them.

God worked through Joshua and King David and King Solomon. **Stephen taught the religious leaders new things. He said that Jesus is the Messiah, and the religious leaders were wrong to reject Him and kill Him on the cross.**

The religious leaders were so angry! They **did not like what Stephen was saying.** But **Stephen looked up and said, “I see the heavens opened and Jesus is standing at God’s right side.” Suddenly, the people yelled and rushed toward Stephen. They made Stephen leave the city, and then they threw rocks at him. Stephen said, “Jesus, forgive them!”** Then he died.

Christ Connection: People hurt Stephen because he followed Jesus. Jesus told His disciples that people would hurt them for loving Him. When people are mean to us because we love Jesus, we can be brave because people hurt Jesus too. Jesus died and came back to life, and one day we will live with Him forever.