

Story Time - Read the story to the children

Lesson 250: STEPHEN

ACTS 6:2-8:2

The twelve apostles called the whole group of disciples together. The apostles said to them, "It would not be right for us to give up our work of teaching God's word in order to be in charge of getting food to people. So, brothers and sisters, choose seven of your men who have a good reputation. They must be full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit. We will give them this work to do. Then we can use all our time to pray and to teach the word of God." The whole group liked the idea. So they chose these seven men: Stephen (a man with great faith and full of the Holy Spirit), Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus (a man from Antioch who had become a Jew). Then they put these men before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. The word of God was reaching more and more people. The group of believers in Jerusalem became larger and larger. Even a big group of Jewish priests believed and obeyed. Stephen received a great blessing. God gave him power to do great wonders and miraculous signs among the people. But some of the Jews there were from the synagogue of Freed Men, as it was called. The group included Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and Asia. They started arguing with Stephen. But the Holy Spirit was helping him speak with wisdom. His words were so strong that these Jews could not argue with him. So they told some men to say, "We heard Stephen say bad things against Moses and against God!" By doing this, these Jews upset the people, the older Jewish leaders, and the teachers of the law. They became so angry that they came and grabbed Stephen and took him to a meeting of the high council. The Jews brought some men into the meeting to tell lies about Stephen. These men said, "This man is always saying things against this holy place and against the Law of Moses. We heard him say that Jesus from Nazareth will destroy this place and change what Moses told us to do." Everyone there in the council meeting was staring at Stephen. They saw that his face looked like the face of an angel. The high priest said to Stephen, "Is all this true?" Stephen answered, "My Jewish fathers and brothers, listen to me. Our great and glorious God appeared to Abraham, our ancestor, when he was in Mesopotamia. This was before he lived in Haran. God said to him, 'Leave your country and your people, and go to the country I will show you.' "So Abraham left the country of Chaldea. He went to live in Haran. After his father died, God sent him to this place, where you live now. But God did not give Abraham any of this land, not even a foot of it. But God promised that in the future he would give Abraham this land for himself and for his children. This was before Abraham had any children. "This is what God said to him: 'Your descendants will live in another country. They will be strangers. The people there will make them slaves and mistreat them for

400 years. But I will punish the nation that made them slaves.' And God also said, 'After those things happen, your people will come out of that country. Then they will worship me here in this place.' "God made an agreement with Abraham; the sign for this agreement was circumcision. And so when Abraham had a son, he circumcised him when he was eight days old. His son's name was Isaac. Isaac also circumcised his son Jacob. And Jacob did the same for his sons who became the twelve great ancestors of our people. "These ancestors of ours became jealous of their brother Joseph and sold him to be a slave in Egypt. But God was with him and saved him from all his troubles. Pharaoh was the king of Egypt then. He liked Joseph and respected him because of the wisdom God gave him. Pharaoh gave Joseph the job of being a governor of Egypt. He even let him rule over all the people in Pharaoh's house. But all the land of Egypt and of Canaan became dry. It became so dry that food could not grow, and the people suffered very much. Our people could not find anything to eat. "But Jacob heard that there was food in Egypt. So he sent our people there. This was their first trip to Egypt. Then they went there a second time. This time Joseph told his brothers who he was. And Pharaoh learned about Joseph's family. Then Joseph sent some men to tell Jacob, his father, to come to Egypt. He also invited all his relatives, a total of 75 people. So Jacob went down to Egypt. He and our other ancestors lived there until they died. Later, their bodies were moved to Shechem, where they were put in a tomb. It was the same tomb that Abraham had bought in Shechem from the sons of Hamor. He paid them with silver. "The number of our people in Egypt grew. There were more and more of our people there. The promise that God made to Abraham was soon to come true. Then a different king began to rule Egypt, one who knew nothing about Joseph. This king tricked our people. He treated them badly, making them leave their children outside to die. "This was the time when Moses was born. He was a very beautiful child, and for three months his parents took care of him at home. When they put him outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him. She raised him as her own son. The Egyptians taught Moses everything they knew. He was powerful in all he said and did. "When Moses was about 40 years old, he decided to visit his own people, the people of Israel. He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he defended him. Moses hit the Egyptian to pay him back for hurting the man. He hit him so hard that it killed him. Moses thought that his people would understand that God was using him to save them. But they did not understand. "The next day, Moses saw two of his own people fighting. He tried to make peace between them. He said, 'Men, you are brothers! Why are you trying to hurt each other?' The man who was hurting the other one pushed Moses away and said to him, 'Did anyone say you could be our ruler and judge? Will you kill me just as you killed that Egyptian yesterday?' When Moses heard him say this, he left Egypt. He went to live in the land of Midian, where he was a stranger. During the time he lived there, he had two sons. "Forty years later Moses

was in the desert near Mount Sinai. An angel appeared to him in the flame of a burning bush. When Moses saw this, he was amazed. He went near to look closer at it. He heard a voice; it was the Lord's. The Lord said, 'I am the same God your ancestors had--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' Moses began to shake with fear. He was afraid to look at the bush. "The Lord said to him, 'Take off your sandals, because the place where you are now standing is holy ground. I have seen my people suffer much in Egypt. I have heard my people crying and have come down to save them. Come now, Moses, I am sending you back to Egypt.' "This Moses was the one his people said they did not want. They said, 'Did anyone say you could be our ruler and judge?' But he is the one God sent to be a ruler and savior. God sent him with the help of an angel, the one Moses saw in the burning bush. So Moses led the people out of Egypt. He worked wonders and miraculous signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea, and then in the desert for 40 years. "This is the same Moses who said these words to the people of Israel: 'God will give you a prophet. That prophet will come from among your own people. He will be like me.' This same Moses was with the gathering of God's people in the desert. He was with the angel who spoke to him at Mount Sinai, and he was with our ancestors. He received life-giving words from God to give to us. "But our ancestors did not want to obey Moses. They rejected him. They wanted to go back to Egypt again. They said to Aaron, 'Moses led us out of the country of Egypt. But we don't know what has happened to him. So make some gods to go before us and lead us.' So the people made an idol that looked like a calf. Then they brought sacrifices to it. They were very happy with what they had made with their own hands. But God turned against them and let them continue worshiping the army of false gods in the sky. This is what God says in the book that contains what the prophets wrote: 'People of Israel, you did not bring me blood offerings and sacrifices in the desert for 40 years; You carried with you the tent for worshiping Moloch and the image of the star of your god Rephan. These were the idols you made to worship. So I will send you away beyond Babylon.' "The Holy Tent was with our ancestors in the desert. God told Moses how to make this tent. He made it like the plan that God showed him. Later, Joshua led our ancestors to capture the lands of the other nations. Our people went in and God made the other people go out. When our people went into this new land, they took with them this same tent. Our people received this tent from their fathers, and our people kept it until the time of David. God was very pleased with David. He asked God to let him build a Temple for the people of Jacob. But Solomon was the one who built the Temple. "But the Most High God does not live in houses built by human hands. This is what the prophet writes: 'The Lord says, Heaven is my throne, and the earth is where I rest my feet. So do you think you can build a house for me? Do I need a place to rest? Remember, I made all these things!'" Then Stephen said, "You stubborn Jewish leaders! You refuse to give your hearts to God or even listen to him. You are

always against what the Holy Spirit wants you to do. That's how your ancestors were, and you are just like them! They persecuted every prophet who ever lived. They even killed those who long ago said that the Righteous One would come. And now you have turned against that Righteous One and killed him. You are the people who received God's law, which he gave you through his angels. But you don't obey it!" When those in the council meeting heard this, they became very angry. They were so mad they were grinding their teeth at him. But Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit. He looked up into heaven and saw the glory of God. And he saw Jesus standing at God's right side. Stephen said, "Look! I see heaven open. And I see the Son of Man standing at God's right side." Everyone there started shouting loudly, covering their ears with their hands. Together they all ran at Stephen. They took him out of the city and began throwing stones at him. The men who told lies against Stephen gave their coats to a young man named Saul. As they were throwing the stones at him, Stephen was praying. He said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!" He fell on his knees and shouted, "Lord, don't blame them for this sin!" These were his last words before he died. Saul agreed that the killing of Stephen was a good thing. Some godly men buried Stephen and cried loudly for him. On that day the Jews began to persecute the church in Jerusalem, making them suffer very much. Saul was also trying to destroy the group. He went into their houses, dragged out men and women, and put them in jail. All the believers left Jerusalem. Only the apostles stayed. The believers went to different places in Judea and Samaria.

250. STEPHEN
ACTS 6:2-8:2



"And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." **ACTS 7:59**

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MEMORY VERSE:

"...Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people...." **ACTS 6:8**

Review Questions

True or False

1. The apostles said, "It IS good that we should leave the Word of God and go serve people food to eat."
2. They said, "Choose seven of your men who have a good reputation, full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit."
3. And the Word of God was reaching more and more people, and the number of believers in Jerusalem became larger and larger.
4. And Stephen, who was full of faith and power, was not able to do any wonders or miraculous signs.
5. There was a group of Jews from the synagogue of Freed Men who were arguing with Stephen.
6. They told some men to say, "We heard Stephen say bad things against Moses and against God!"

Questions

1. When the men were arguing with Stephen, who helped him speak with great power and wisdom? (the Holy Spirit)
2. When the men couldn't find any way to argue with Stephen, what did they tell some other men to do? (to say lies and bad things about him)
3. When the men said that Stephen was trying to teach people not to follow the teachings of Moses and God and the High Priest asked Stephen if these things were true, what stories from the Scriptures did Stephen tell everyone? (let the children answer "Abraham", "Isaac", "Jacob", "the Israelites went to Egypt", "Moses", etc.)
4. What did Stephen say about the Jewish leaders?
5. Were they happy or angry when Stephen told them they were stubborn and refused to obey God?
6. What did the Jewish leaders and people do to Stephen?
7. What did Stephen say just before he died?

Lesson 250 Activity

Stump the Witness Game

Have the children role-play witnessing to one another. (Younger children – have them witness to you, the teacher.) Have one child, the “believer” share his faith, and have the other, the “skeptic,” ask as many questions as he can about Christianity. If the sharing child gets stuck, have the class help him out; if the class can’t, then help the student find the right answers for the “skeptic.” (It is easier for the younger children to “witness” to you, that way you can be a skeptic and ask questions like, “How do you KNOW Jesus died? How do you KNOW Jesus rose from the dead? Why wouldn’t I get to go to heaven if I didn’t believe in Jesus?, etc)

OPTIONAL CRAFT IF YOU CAN’T DO THE WITNESS GAME:

Share Your Faith

Have your class make copies of the “Wordless” book. You will need a piece of black, red, white, green and gold or yellow construction paper for each child in your class (cut the construction paper into 4” x 3” pieces to make it easier – cut a whole sheet down the middle long-ways, then cut it in 3 sections – that way you can have 6 pieces for each sheet of construction paper cut).

Staple a small booklet of the sheets in the following order and explain what each color stands for:

BLACK: The condition of each of our sinful hearts.

RED: The blood that Jesus shed to wash away our sins.

WHITE: The condition of our hearts after we receive Jesus.

GREEN: Our growth by the Holy Spirit after receiving Jesus.

YELLOW: The streets of gold in Heaven promised to all believers.

Have the children think of someone in their lives they can share the gospel message with. Pray with the class for boldness to share this message with the person they think of, or any other needy person the Lord brings into their lives.

PRAYER

Lead the children in a prayer of commitment to share their faith in Jesus Christ with anyone the Lord brings into their lives. If there are any children who have not yet responded to the gospel, give them an opportunity to do so.