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Stephen , The First Martyr

Scripture: Acts 6:8-8:1

Theme: Following Jesus may cost us everything, but He is worth it

Nursery (Ages 0-2)

Free curriculum for small and rural churches

Lesson Overview

Lesson Overview: This Sunday school lesson introduces little ones to the story of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, who trusted God even when facing danger. The Bible tells us that Stephen did great miracles and signs, blessing the people of Jerusalem (Acts 6:8). Even though he spoke kindly about Jesus, some jealous people became angry and started stoning him to death. Despite his fear, Stephen prayed and asked Jesus to forgive them, showing that God's love is stronger than hatred. Kids will learn that following Jesus means sometimes facing hard times, but we can always trust Him with our hearts. Optional reflection: children can draw a picture of Jesus helping their friends, then share one way they can help someone else this week. This extra activity supports the lesson's theme and gives teachers a simple, lowprep option for extending the discussion.

Bible Story

The apostles, including Philip, were doing great work, but some Jewish leaders became jealous. They said, 'These men are teaching without being trained!' (Acts 6:12).

The apostles gathered the twelve men together and said, 'It's unfair to have one man serve food to everyone while others sit by. We should pick seven men, wise and full of the Holy Spirit, to help serve meals.' (Acts 6:2-3).

They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and wisdom, and others like him. The apostles prayed, 'Lord, fill them with Your Spirit so they can do this work.' (Acts 6:6).

Stephen began teaching the people, speaking so powerfully that many believed in God. Some, however, couldn't accept it. They whispered to their friends, 'Let's kill him!' (Acts 6:11).

Stephen stood before the leaders and said, 'You're wrong to think this way. You're just like those who killed Moses, the prophet! They didn't believe God's word, so God sent him elsewhere. But you have rejected Him!' (Acts 7:25).

The crowd grew angry and grabbed Stephen, dragged him outside the city, and began to stone him. As they threw rocks, Stephen knelt down, prayed, and said, 'Lord Jesus, take my spirit.' Then he fell to his knees and prayed, 'Lord, forgive them for they don't know what they're doing.' (Acts 7:59-60).

The people who stoned him were filled with fear and stopped. Stephen saw the glory of God and Jesus standing beside him, so he didn't die. Instead, he went to heaven with God. The believers were sad, but they kept praying for him.

Key Verse

Acts 7:59-60a , 'While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.'"

Key Verse Explanation: The verse says, "While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' Then he fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.'" For little ones, this means even when people hurt us or do bad things, we can pray to God and ask Him to forgive them, just like Stephen did. God loves everyone, even when people are mean, and we can trust Him to help us.

>> Missions Spotlight

An estimated 365 million Christians worldwide face high levels of persecution. In countries like Nigeria, Egypt, and Iraq, believers are martyred for their faith. Stephen's story reminds us that the cost of following Jesus is real , but He is worth it.

-> To the Cross

Stephen was killed for preaching about Jesus. As he died, he said, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them' , just like Jesus on the cross. Stephen had been so changed by the cross that he died like Jesus. The cross transforms us to love even our enemies.