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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**

*PreK-K (Ages 3-5)*

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Free curriculum for small and rural churches

## Lesson Overview

In this Sunday school lesson, children will learn that even when we follow Jesus, things may not always go the way we want, sometimes, it even means hard things like being hurt or unfairly treated. Stephen was one of the first Christians who loved Jesus so much that he shared God's good news with others, but the people who hated him started to get angry. When they tried to hurt him, Stephen prayed a special prayer and trusted Jesus completely. This story shows that even when things get tough, we can still love God and follow Him, even if it costs us something. Kids will discover that Jesus is always with us, even when we face hardships, and that we can pray like Stephen to trust Him even when we don't understand. The key verse teaches that when Stephen faced trouble, he asked Jesus to take care of him. 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

Long ago, when the followers of Jesus were many, some people started arguing. They said, 'These new men, Stephen, should be in charge of feeding and helping the hungry ones and the poor.' The apostles, who were wise men like Peter and Andrew, said, 'No, we should all help the people, not just one group.' So they picked seven men who were kind and full of the Holy Spirit, like Philip, to take care of the food and help.

One day, a man named Saul (who later became the very bad man named Paul) was watching these men work. He was angry because they were doing what God wanted. The people who were arguing against the apostles and Stephen started to grow mean, so they said, 'Let's make them stop!' The apostles and Stephen knew this was not right, but they kept on teaching the Good News about Jesus.

Meanwhile, the Holy Spirit told Stephen to stand up and speak to the crowd. He saw Jesus in heaven and told them, 'My heart is full of love for you, but you won't let Jesus help you.' The crowd got very angry and started to shout, 'We'll do whatever we want!' They grabbed Stephen and dragged him outside the city to stone him, meaning they threw stones at him. While they were doing this, Stephen looked up to heaven and prayed, 'Lord Jesus, take my spirit. Don't hold this sin against them.' Then he fell down and was dead.

## 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.'"**

The 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.'") calls us to respond to God's truth.

### >> 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.