

Lesson 10

Family Sunday School Helps

Sunday May 10, 2020

Enduring Faith: Unit 3 - Lesson 10

This week, students will study "A Servant Speaks." The twelve apostles select Stephen as one of the first seven deacons in the Early Church. Synagogue leaders twist Stephen's words, falsely accusing him of blasphemy. Stephen's testimony before the high priest recalls Israel's rejection of God's promise and their rejection of Jesus, the promised Savior. When Stephen says he sees a vision of Jesus standing at the right hand of God, the enraged officials cast Stephen out of the city and stone him.

Opening Prayer: Gracious Heavenly Father, thank You for the forgiveness that You give us in Jesus. Help us to learn about serving You and sharing the Good News of Jesus. Bless our time together. In Your name we pray. Amen.

Bible Reading: Acts 6-7 (Acts 6-7 is likely too long and complex a passage for most elementary students to read aloud directly from the Bible. You may choose to have the children open their Bibles and find passages such as Acts 6:2-5; Acts 7:51-54; and Acts 7:55-56 to review the narrative. See below)

Bible Verse: Be kind to one another. Ephesians 4:32

BIBLE NARRATIVE:

(For younger children draw faces on two plates, and use them to show happy and sad moments in the story. The children may like drawing pictures of the events in the story and arranging them in order of their occurrence for review.)

As the twelve apostles taught about Jesus in the temple, many Jews believed and were baptized. The Early Church started to grow very quickly. Among the Christians, there were many widows, women whose husbands had died and who

didn't have money to take care of themselves. The Christians took up offerings to buy food for them. This helped some of the widows, but not all of them.

When the apostles learned about it, they were concerned. They wanted to make sure everyone who needed help got it, but Jesus had sent them to preach the Good News, not to serve food. They said, "Brothers, pick out seven men who are full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty." These men would make sure every person got help. One of those seven men was named Stephen.

Stephen was full of grace and power from the Holy Spirit. He did great miracles, just like the apostles were doing. When some Jews who didn't believe in Jesus started arguing with him, the Holy Spirit made Stephen so wise he proved they were wrong. Sadly, they didn't believe Stephen. They just got more angry with him.

They took Stephen to the high priest, Caiaphas, and also to the same Jewish court that had decided to put Jesus to death. The Jewish court looked at Stephen and noticed that his face was glowing, which showed that he had talked with God.

The Holy Spirit made Stephen very wise. Stephen told the Jewish leaders about all the times in the Old Testament when God had raised up a leader for His people Israel but the Israelites had refused to follow him. He talked about leaders like Joseph, Moses, and King David—and how the Israelites had grumbled against them and refused to obey them. And now, when God had sent His own promised Son, they had done even worse to Him—they had betrayed and murdered Jesus.

When the priests and other leaders heard this, they got so mad they put their fingers in their ears, rushed together at Stephen, dragged him outside, and picked up big stones and rocks to throw at him and kill him.

As Stephen was being stoned, he prayed to Jesus, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." He said, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." Then Stephen died, and his spirit went to heaven.

Family Discussion:

How did the Early Church help care for people who were hungry?

Who was Stephen?

What did some angry men do to Stephen?

Can we be like Stephen and the other deacons and serve God's people? *We may not be threatened with death like Stephen was, but it can still be hard sometimes to tell others about Jesus.*

How does the Holy Spirit help you stand up for your faith when people challenge your beliefs? *Sometimes we get angry with people and they get angry with us. The Holy Spirit gives us kind hearts as well as the strength to tell the truth of Jesus— even to those who don't want to hear it and who may not like us.*

How can we show God's love and forgiveness, even when we are very hurt or angry? *Say the Bible verse together: Be kind to one another. Ephesians 4:32*

Key Discussion Points:

- Acts 6 provides a great opportunity to talk about other ways to serve in the Church besides being a pastor or teacher.
- Everyone—not just pastors—can talk about Jesus and spread the Good News of the Gospel.
- How did Stephen help in the Early Church? List the people who do this same kind of work in the Church today.

These two chapters of Acts are full of action. First, Stephen is chosen for the important position of deacon. He goes around doing great wonders among the people. Then, he is seized by the Jewish leaders who were his enemies, and those enemies spread lies about him. Stephen is taken to the council (a court-type setting); the same council that convicted Jesus. Stephen stands up and gives a big speech, his face glowing like an angel's, basically recounting all of Old Testament history. The council grinds their teeth at him and the angry mob stones Stephen to death. Stephen gazes up and sees heaven while he is dying (Wow! Jesus is welcoming him into heaven!), and he asks the Lord to forgive his murderers.

- *The Early Church is growing and needs people to help the needy. Stephen is a*

good helper. He is full of the Holy Spirit. Stephen also preaches well and does miracles. The Holy Spirit helps us serve God. What are some of the ways you can serve God?

CHRIST CONNECTION: *Though Satan still attacks the Church, nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus, our Lord.*

CLOSING PRAYER: *Dear Jesus, thank You for sending Your servant Stephen. Thank You for sending the Holy Spirit to help all the people throughout history and today who speak Your Word even though people hate them for it. Help us to have the courage to share Your Word with others, especially when people don't like us for being Your children. In Your name we pray, Jesus. Amen.*

SING: *The Doxology, "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow"*

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;

Praise Him, all creatures here below;

Praise Him above, ye heavenly host:

Praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Amen

BIBLE READING:

Acts 6:2-5 (ESV)

2 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brothers,[a] pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch

Acts 7:51-56 (ESV)

51 "You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. 52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, 53 you who received the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it."

The Stoning of Stephen

54 Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. 55 But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. 56 And he said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

ACTIVITIES: *Choose from the following activities and crafts to help connect Bible learning to life. Perhaps you would like to use one or more of these to help review the lesson during the week.*

Action Rhyme

Do this action rhyme together:

I have little ears (point to ears) that hear of Jesus' love (hug self). I have little lips (point to mouth) to tell about His love (cup mouth). I have little feet (point to feet) to follow Jesus' way (walk in place). I have little hands (hold out hands) to serve Him ev'ry day (fling arms wide). Act out ways to serve others.

Bible Verse Actions

The Bible tells us (read from Ephesians 4:32): "Be kind to one another." Stephen showed love for others and told about Jesus. Let's think about ways we can be kind to one another.

Act out situations for the children to guess, or whisper the situation to a child to act out (e.g., cold, hungry, thirsty, hurt, lonely/scared). How can they help? We show our love for Jesus when we do kind things for others.

Portrait of a Servant

Guide students to make a portrait of Stephen on a piece of white paper using both words and pictures together. Brainstorm words that describe Stephen. and Encourage the children to make their portrait in their own way.

Help Us Forgive

Use two puppets to tell a story about fighting over a toy. Ask, What did Stephen do when people were mean to him? Jesus helps us forgive others. Say, Think about Jesus dying on the cross to forgive us. When we say the Lord's Prayer, we think about the people who have hurt us and ask God to forgive them and help us to forgive them too.

Helping Others

Ask children to think about how we can show love for others. Ideas: Collect canned food for the food pantry, and have children use markers to draw crosses on the cans.