



ACTS

Of All the Apostles

**You Will Be
My Witnesses:**

Running the Race

Lesson 17



Stephen's Death

Acts 7:54-8:3

Supplemental Scripture

Hebrews 12:1-3

John 15:18-27

John 16

Acts 1:8

Galatians 2:20

1 Timothy 1:1-19

Philippians 1:12-30

Philippians 2:1-11

Memory Verse

Be faithful, even if it means you must die. Then I will give you a crown. The crown is life itself. Revelation 2:10 (NirV)

Lesson Goals

Understand that Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit and faithful to God

Understand that the world doesn't always reward faithfulness to God

Understand that Stephen was faithful, even until death

NOTE: Familiarize yourself with this story. Study the supplemental Scripture and make notes on, but do NOT read from, these pages. To reinforce that these ideas are not your own, hold your Bible as you tell the story.

What does it really mean to run the race? Do you run when it hurts? Do you continue if it's hard? What about fellow competitors who tell lies about you? What do you do when they make others believe you cheated? Let's look at our verses from Hebrews, "Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how He did it. Because He never lost sight of where He was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—He could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever." (Hebrews 12:2 MSG) How far will you go? Let's see what Stephen did.

Remember, Stephen was one of the believers chosen to lead by serving tables for the widows. He was full of the Holy Spirit. He did a lot of wonderful things and he allowed the Holy Spirit to have control of his life. But men who didn't like him told lies about him. The Sanhedrin arrested Stephen. When asked about the lies that had been told, Stephen reviewed their history with God through the Old Testament and told them that they were always opposing the Holy Spirit. They knew what God's word said and they refused to follow it.

"When the Sanhedrin heard this, they became very angry. They ground their teeth at Stephen." (Acts 7:54 NirV) "But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, hardly noticed—he only had eyes for God." (Acts 7:55 MSG) An amazing thing happened to Stephen. He looked up and God actually allowed him to see into heaven! He saw Jesus standing beside God, at His right hand. He told the Sanhedrin what he saw and they went wild. They covered their ears. They yelled at the top of their voices. They ran towards Stephen, grabbed him, and dragged him out of the city.

Once outside of the city walls, these respected religious leaders then rushed towards Stephen, picked up stones, and began throwing them at him. Others stood around and watched. A young man named Saul was one of the spectators. He agreed with the others that Stephen should die; in fact, he was pleased with Stephen's death. (Acts 8:1 AMP) As they were watching the stoning of Stephen, they removed their coats. They laid them at Saul's feet.

In complete contrast to the rage and hate of the Sanhedrin, Stephen prayed as he was being pelted with rocks. "Lord Jesus, receive my

Application

Did you notice anything significant in Stephen's death? What did he say when he was being stoned? He said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees. He cried out, "Lord! Don't hold this sin against them!"

Who else said things like that when he died? Jesus did. Even in his death, Stephen was following Christ's example.

So, we began by thinking about a few questions. What does it really mean to run the race? Do you run when it hurts? Do you continue if it's hard? What about fellow competitors who tell lies about you? What do you do when they make others believe you cheated?

Our memory verse is clear, "Be faithful, even if it means you must die. Then I will give you a crown. The crown is life itself. (Revelation 2:10 NIV)

spirit," he said. Then he fell on his knees. He cried out, "Lord! Don't hold this sin against them!" When he had said this, he died." (Acts 7:59-60 NIV) Some of the godly Jews buried Stephen and they cried and cried.

On the very day of Stephen's death, the church in Jerusalem came under attack. They were severely persecuted and treated very badly. Everyone except the apostles were scattered all over the surrounding areas of Judea and Samaria. The young spectator, Saul, went wild. He cruelly mistreated the church. Saul went from house to house dragging men and women away to jail.

That's hard to hear, isn't it? Stephen was faithful and he did the right thing. Do you remember what Jesus told His disciples on the night before He was crucified? He said that the world would hate us just as it hated Him because we are not like the things of the world. (John 15:18) He also said, "A time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing God a favor. They will do things like that because they do not know the Father or me. Why have I told you this? So that when the time comes, you will remember that I warned you. (John 16:2-3 NIV)

It seems like such a waste that Stephen had to die. But where did Stephen go when he died? Remember, he was full of the Holy Spirit. He went to Heaven. As soon as he closed his eyes in death, he met his Savior! What a day!

It also seems awful that the church began to be persecuted as well. But what happened because of the persecution? The church was scattered all over the surrounding areas of Judea and Samaria. God's Word spread to new places. And it simply furthered what Jesus had asked the church to do, "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you. Then you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem. You will be my witnesses in all **Judea and Samaria**. And you will be my witnesses from one end of the earth to the other." (Acts 1:8 NIV)

Review

1. How can you describe Stephen? (faithful, full of the Holy Spirit)
2. What happened when Stephen accused the Sanhedrin of opposing the Holy Spirit? (They stoned him to death.)
3. What happened to the church that day? (They began to be persecuted and they were scattered.)

Next Week
Revival in Samaria
Acts 8:4-24

Preschool Lesson

Let's see what happened to Stephen after he talked to the temple leaders. Remember, Stephen was one of the seven men chosen to serve tables for the older women who had no husbands. He was full of the Holy Spirit. He did a lot of wonderful things and he let the Holy Spirit control his life. But men who didn't like him told lies about him. The Sanhedrin, the temple leaders, arrested Stephen. They asked Stephen about the lies that had been told. Instead of talking about the lies, Stephen told them that they were always saying "no" to the Holy Spirit. They knew what God's word said and they didn't follow it.

"When the Sanhedrin heard this, they became very angry. They ground their teeth at Stephen." (Acts 7:54 NIV) "But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, hardly noticed—he only had eyes for God." (Acts 7:55 MSG) An amazing thing happened to Stephen. He looked up and God let him to see into heaven! He saw Jesus standing beside God. He told the Sanhedrin what he saw and they went wild. They covered their ears. They yelled at the top of their voices. They ran towards Stephen, grabbed him, and dragged him out of the city.

Once outside of the city walls, these respected religious leaders then rushed towards Stephen, picked up stones, and began throwing them at him. Others stood around and watched. A young man named Saul was one of the ones watching. He agreed with the others that Stephen should die; in fact, he was pleased with Stephen's death. (Acts 8:1 AMP) As they were watching the stoning of Stephen, they removed their coats. They laid them at Saul's feet.

Stephen prayed as he was being hit with rocks. "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," he said. Then he fell on his knees. He cried out, "Lord! Don't hold this sin against them!" When he had said this, he died." (Acts 7:59-60 NIV) Some of the godly Jews buried Stephen and they cried and cried.

Is it a bad thing to die? If we don't know Jesus yet, then yes it is. But once we trust in Jesus and let God's Holy Spirit be in control of our lives like He was in Stephen's life then we have nothing to fear when we die. We just wake up and see Jesus! It is hard to hear that Stephen died for doing the right thing. Who else died for doing the right thing? Jesus did!

Jesus had never done anything wrong. He died because you and I have. We are sinners. We do bad things. (Romans 3:23) The Bible says that we deserve to die because of the bad things we have done. (Romans 6:23) But while we were still doing those bad things, Jesus died for us. (Romans 5:8) To accept God's free gift of life forever with Him (instead of death forever away from Him) you must believe that Jesus is God's Son, and the way to God. Believe that God raised Jesus back to life after He died for your sins and let Jesus have control of your life. Then you will be saved from the death you deserve because of the bad things you have done. (Romans 10:9)

Activities

Memory Verse Activity - Make crowns from long pieces of construction paper. Print the verses on the crowns. Practice the verse as you work.

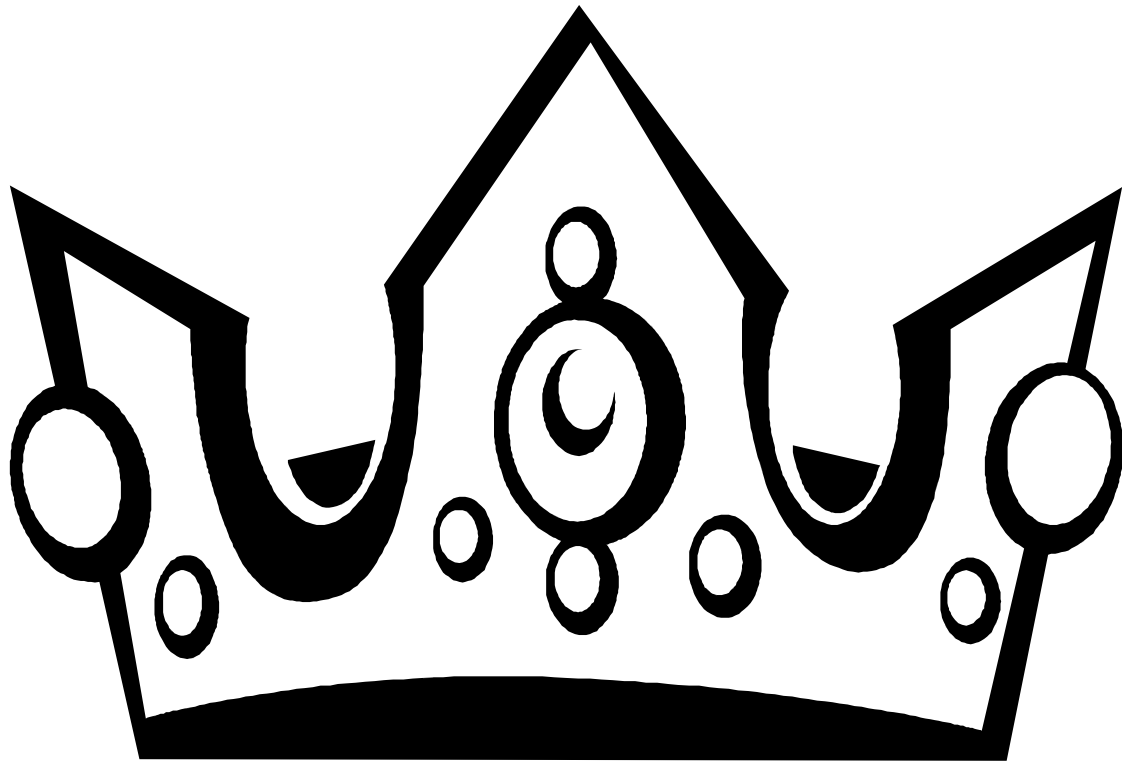
Sing “Knowing You,” “He Leadeth Me,” especially the last verse, “Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus,” “I Believe in a Hill Called Mount Calvary.”

Talk about persecution or teasing that students have experienced. Discuss Stephen’s final words in Acts 7:59-60. Compare them to Jesus’ last words in Luke 23:34, 46. Talk about forgiving others.

Share the story of Eric Liddell. The Torchlighters, a branch of Voice of the Martyrs, also has an animated DVD-*The Eric Liddell Story*, and student handouts.

Share stories from “Foxe’s Book of Martyrs” or “Jesus Freaks.”

As you continue memorizing Hebrews 12:1-2, be sure to read through Hebrews 11:1-12:3. Focus on the latter part of Hebrews 11 and how it relates to our lesson about Stephen. Discuss the faithfulness of their lives. Encourage your students to be faithful in prayer and Bible study, putting into practice what they know God requires. These steps will help them to lead faithful lives.



Be faithful,
even if it means you must die.
Then I will give you a crown.
The crown is life itself.

Revelation 2:10

Racing Riddles

Answer the questions below to fill in the blanks.

S _ _ _ _ _

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_ E _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _ P _ _ _

H _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _ E _

_ N _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _ _

The name of the Jewish Supreme Court. _ _ _ _ _

When the Sanhedrin became angry, they _ _ _ _ _ their _ _ _ _ _ at Stephen.

God let Stephen see into _ _ _ _ _.

Stephen was full of the _ _ _ _ _.

Were the members of the Sanhedrin exhibiting love or hate? _ _ _ _

What the Sanhedrin did to Stephen. They _ _ _ _ _ him.

On that same day the church came _ _ _ _ _.

Racing Riddles

Answer the questions below to fill in the blanks.

S A N H E D R I N

G R O U N D T E E T H

H E A V E N

H O L Y S P I R I T

H A T E

S T O N E D

U N D E R A T T A C K

The name of the Jewish Supreme Court. SANHEDRIN

When the Sanhedrin became angry, they GROUND their TEETH at Stephen.

God let Stephen see into HEAVEN.

Stephen was full of the HOLY SPIRIT.

Were the members of the Sanhedrin exhibiting love or hate? HATE

What the Sanhedrin did to Stephen. They STONED him.

On that same day the church came UNDER ATTACK.

Word Search

n e n o c a n e m e v a e t
e d o r r e g r t s j m h w
v r o i o m a e f o t e u m
e w l a l u o v v h h m c d
n h s p f s w e e e e e u n
s e i i c n l l e i n a d s
s e l f b o i a n a b i d e
o p u t e b e t o t s i f e
p o f l e s t i e f i l s r
r s h e t c r o e n a p p o
e t t s e e s n r a h i i w
d e i d t s u m u o y n t d
n e a l i f e r e w o r c h
a s f s u n p r a s o n e s

Be _____, _____ it means _____.

_____ I will give you a _____.

The crown is _____.

_____ 2:10

Word Search

n e n o c a n e m e v a e t
e d o r r e g r t s j m h w
v r o i o m a e f o t e u m
e w l a l u o v v h h m c d
n h s p f s w e e e e e u n
s e i i c n l l e i n a d s
s e l f b o i a n a b i d e
o p u t e b e t o t s i f e
p o f l e s t i e f i l s r
r s h e t c r o e n a p p o
e t t s e e s n r a h i i w
d e i d t s u m u o y n t d
n e a l i f e r e w o r c h
a s f s u n p r a s o n e s

Be faithful, even if it means you must die.

Then I will give you a crown.

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