

A Man Named Stephen

1st - 3rd Grade
Lesson 3

The Church's First Martyr

Jerusalem was an exciting place after the Feast of Pentecost. Thousands of people were being saved and baptized. The church was growing every day. God's people were very happy. But there was someone who was not happy about all this—the devil. He cannot take away your salvation, but he can make trouble for you. He can try to take away your happiness. He can tempt you to complain. He can tempt you to disobey the Lord. He will do anything to stop you from living for God.

This lesson is about a young man who was faithful to God. He loved and served God. He helped others. This man died for his faith in the Lord.

Stephen the Christian

This young man's name was Stephen. He was one of six men chosen to be deacons. Three men were chosen because they were "of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom" (Acts 6:3).

The way Stephen lived made people think he was a good Christian. He had a good reputation.

Reputation is what other people think you are. You can pretend to love God, but your actions will show if you really do.

Character is what you really are inside. Stephen had a good reputation and good character. God knew that Stephen really loved Him. That's why God let Stephen be one of the first deacons.

The devil had to try to stop God's work. He got some people in the church to start complaining. The disciples were very busy preaching God's Word. They couldn't help everyone in the church. So they decided to choose some godly men to help them. They chose six holy men to be deacons. Stephen was one of them.

The Bible says that these men helped the people in the church. The disciples preached God's Word. Also, many people were saved and baptized. Even many of the priests believed in Jesus and were saved (Acts 6:7). Stephen was a good Christian. He was also a good deacon. God's Word says that Stephen was "full of faith and power." It also says that he did "great wonders and miracles among the people" (Acts 6:8).

The devil tried something else to cause trouble. He got some of the religious people to argue with Stephen. They did not believe that Jesus was God's Son. They tried to argue with him about Jesus. But God's Spirit helped Stephen answer them (Acts 6:9-10). They were amazed at his answers. But they still hated him.

Stephen the Martyr

These religious people paid some evil men to lie about Stephen. These men said Stephen did not preach the truth about God and His Word (Acts 6:11-13). I wonder how Stephen felt when he heard their lies. What would you do? Would you yell back at them? Would you be angry?

Stephen trusted in the Lord. And God's Spirit gave him peace. He was calm. The Bible says in Acts 7:54-58 that Stephen looked up to heaven. He told the men that he could see Jesus standing by God's throne. That made the men very angry. They ran toward him and grabbed him. They took him outside the city. Then they picked up stones and began throwing them at him. As the stones were hitting him, he fell down on his knees to pray. With a loud voice, he asked God to forgive these men. And then he died.

Does this remind you of someone else about whom you have learned? Men hated Jesus because He told them they were sinners. They did not believe He was God's Son. They paid men to lie about him. Then they beat Him and killed Him. When Jesus was on the cross, He asked His Father to forgive the people who hated Him. And then He died.

Stephen could forgive these evil men because God's Holy Spirit was with him. If you are saved, God's Spirit lives in your heart too. Just ask Him to help you love and forgive people who are unkind to you. He will help you like He helped Stephen.

Teacher's Notes
