

A Man Named Stephen

4th - 6th Grade
Lesson 3

The Church's First Martyr

There was a great revival happening in Jerusalem! Do you know what a revival is? A revival is when people get their hearts right with God. Has your church ever had a revival meeting? Sometimes, a church will bring in a special speaker for a revival.

The first part of the book of Acts talks about the first revival that ever happened! People were getting saved and baptized. They were selling their possessions and giving the money to the church. It was a very exciting time! Satan does not like revivals. He does not want people to get right with God. Satan tries to stop revivals by causing trouble with work, friends, school, and family. He doesn't want you to do right. He wants you to sin.

This lesson is about a man who was part of the first revival. He loved God very much. He was a very good example. We are going to learn about Stephen's life and what happened to him.

Stephen the Christian

Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business... and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost.

—Acts 6:3-5

The Bible says that Stephen was "of honest report." That means he had a good reputation. It is important to have a good reputation, but more important than someone's reputation is someone's character. A reputation is what people think about you. Character is what you actually are. Having good character means you do what you are supposed to do even when no one is looking. Stephen was a man of character. We need to have good character so that we can be a testimony to others for Jesus.

Stephen the Deacon

Likewise must the deacons be grave, not doubletongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon, being found blameless.

—I Timothy 3:8-10

The Bible says that the people of the church wanted Stephen to be a deacon. The deacons were supposed to take care of people in the church. The verses in I Timothy that we just read describe how a deacon is supposed to be. The deacons help the pastor take care of the people in the church. They are supposed to be good examples. Stephen was one of the first deacons!

And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.

—Acts 6:8

Stephen was a very godly man, and God used him in many ways. The Bible tells us that he even did miracles! Stephen was a good example to people.

Stephen the Martyr

Although Stephen was living for God, there were some men who did not like him. Remember how the priests did not like Jesus? Some of the Jewish rulers did not like Stephen either. They did not believe in Jesus. They did not want Stephen telling people about Him.

Some of the Jewish rulers paid people to lie about Stephen. They said that he was lying about Moses and blaspheming against God. They were trying to get rid of Stephen because they were convicted by his teaching and preaching. But the Bible says that when the Jewish rulers looked at Stephen after they had accused him, his face was like an angel's (Acts 6:15). Then Stephen began to preach to the people again!

When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul.

—Acts 7:54-58

The Bible says that the people were angry with Stephen after he preached to them. They made him leave the city, and then they began to stone him! They threw big rocks at him. Stephen looked up and saw Jesus sitting next to His Father. When Stephen was hurt, Jesus was watching over him. Jesus is watching over us, too! No matter what happens and no matter where we are, Jesus is always with us.

And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

—Acts 7:60

Even though the people were very mean to Stephen, he wanted God to forgive them. He knew that these people were lost. He cared about the souls of men more than he cared about his own life.

Conclusion

Stephen was a faithful man. He served God until the very day that he died. Stephen was also very forgiving. We need to learn to be like Stephen. We need to forgive people when they do things that we don't like. Sometimes it is hard to forgive someone. We need to ask Jesus for His help. We need to be faithful by going to church every week and always doing what we are supposed to do. Stephen did what was right, and we need to do right as well.