









The Trial of Stephen

ACTIVITY	MINUTES	GRADE LEVEL	FOCUS	PITstops	*OTHER SUPPLIES
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPENING ACTIVITY Following The Leader	5	1-6			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LESSON The Trial of Stephen	10	1-6	 		basket, bread, artificial trees, coins, blankets, large metal bucket, stones
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MEMORY VERSE	5	1-6			index cards
REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITY (Choose One Option)					
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OPTION 1 Eyewitness News	5	1-6		 A	
<input type="checkbox"/> OPTION 2 Bead Necklace	10	1-6			colored beads, string
<input type="checkbox"/> WORSHIP PROGRAM Follow My Footsteps	10	1-6			
<input type="checkbox"/> LET'S DO IT! (LDI)					
Stoning Stephen	5	1-2			
I Will Follow Jesus!	5	3-4			
Following Jesus Is Amazing!	5	5-6			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DIALOGUE FOLDER					
iSPEAK	5	1-2			
iSPEAK	5	3-4			
iSPEAK	5	5-6			

INTENDED LEARNING OUTCOME

This lesson will help the junior soldiers understand how Stephen became a leader in the early Church. They'll realize that Stephen died because of his strong faith in Christ. Because of his death, many people became Christians, including Saul (who later was called Paul).

YOU ARE HERE!



Place the timeline marker on **32 A.D.** on the **New Testament** timeline.

*In addition to materials listed in this chart, you need Basic Classroom Supplies.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION FOR THE LEADER

BIBLE REFERENCES:

This lesson is based on the following Bible references:

Acts 6-7

UNIT AIM:

This unit will help junior soldiers understand that the trial and death of Jesus was a part of God's plan. The events that followed the resurrection of Jesus, and the events that transpired before and after Stephen's trial created the climate necessary for the spread of Christianity throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria.

WHEN THE CHIEF PRIESTS and elders of the Jews initiated the crucifixion of Christ, they intended to put an end to Christ, His teaching, and His influence. But only a few weeks after His death and resurrection the leaders realized that faith in Christ as Savior and Messiah wasn't dying. In fact, as the word of Jesus' death and resurrection spread throughout Jerusalem and Judea, faith in Christ as Savior and Messiah was increasing. The members of the infant Church "...studied what the apostles taught. They shared life together. They broke bread and ate together. And they prayed" (Acts 2:42 NIV). "They praised God. They were respected by all the people. Every day the Lord added to their group those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47 NIV).

The Sanhedrin persisted in their efforts to stop the spread of Christianity. Some of the apostles were arrested on more than one occasion and commanded to stop preaching in Jesus' name. The apostles were threatened and beaten but they continued to preach the Gospel.

As the Church continued to grow and to fellowship, each one began to share their possessions with the others, not claiming anything as their own, but treating everything as the property of all. However, there was a problem. The Hellenistic Jews claimed the native Hebrews were overlooking the Hellenistic widows in the daily distribution of food. Hellenistic Jews spoke Greek. They were mostly born in the provinces. Native Hebrews were born in Israel, and used their native language. The native Jews often looked at the Hellenistic Jews as an inferior class. However, overlooking the widows wasn't intentional.

The apostles didn't feel they should neglect their teaching to distribute food. The church was instructed to find seven men to handle the task. One of the seven deacons chosen was Stephen. Stephen is mentioned as a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. He met all of the qualifications to be a deacon. He was wise and full of the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:3 NIV). Stephen was a powerful advocate of the Gospel and therefore the Jewish leaders perceived him to be a threat. Jews of the Synagogue of the Freedmen and other Jews began to argue with Stephen, but they couldn't prevail over him because he spoke with wisdom and in the power of the Holy Spirit. They wanted to silence Stephen, so they produced false witnesses to testify that Stephen spoke against the Temple, Moses, and God. When the Sanhedrin looked at Stephen, his face appeared like the face of angel. The high priest asked Stephen to defend himself and Stephen began to preach to the Sanhedrin. Stephen spoke about the history of the Jewish people, their bondage in Egypt, and about Joseph and Moses. Using the history of the Jewish people, Stephen illustrated how hard-hearted the Jewish people were. They refused to obey God. Stephen said to them, "You are just like your people of long ago! You always oppose the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your



LESSON 3

people didn't try to hurt? They even killed those who told them about the coming of the Blameless One. And now you have handed him over to his enemies. You have murdered him. The law you received was brought by angels. But you haven't obeyed it" (Acts 7:51b-53 NIV).

The members of the Sanhedrin were enraged by Stephen's words and lost control. Then Stephen said, "I see heaven open. The Son of Man is standing at God's right hand" (Acts 7:56 NIV). They dragged Stephen out of the city and stoned him.

According to the account of Jesus' trial, the Sanhedrin had no authority to execute a prisoner. The Romans reserved the right of capital punishment for themselves. The practice of stoning usually involved dropping heavy rocks on the person until he was dead. It was a shameful death. Stephen was an outcast of the Jewish society, but God didn't cast him aside. He was eagerly waiting for Stephen to come home.

Stephen's last moments illustrated his character. He'd been chosen as a deacon because he was full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. He fell on his knees and cried out to God for forgiveness for the ones stoning him. Stephen was the first Christian martyr.

OPENING ACTIVITY

Following The Leader

Ask junior soldiers to stand in a line. Lead them in a game of follow the leader. Allow junior soldiers to take turns being the leader. After each child has served as the leader, lead them back to their seats and begin the lesson.

LESSON

The Trial Of Stephen

Before class, prepare four areas in your classroom, or around the corps building as follows:

Area One: Stephen Becomes A Deacon

In this area set out a basket of bread. Make sure you have enough bread to share with your junior soldiers. If your corps has artificial trees or shrubbery, place several of them in this area to create an atmosphere of being outdoors.

Area Two: Stephen Is Arrested

In this area set out a pile of coins. Attach several dark blankets to the ceiling and walls to create an atmosphere of being in a secret place. If your corps building has a large storage closet, ask your corps officer if you may use it during the lesson. In the closet, place a container with the coins.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- basket
- bread
- artificial trees
- coins
- blankets
- crate
- large metal bucket
- stones



Area Three: Stephen On Trial

In this area place a sturdy crate or small platform for you to stand on. Set aside an area for the junior soldiers to sit facing you.

Area Four: Stephen Is Stoned

In this area have a large bucket, metal if possible, and one stone for each junior soldier.

Say: **For our lesson today we're going to play follow the leader to learn about the life of Stephen. Stephen is a very important man in the history of the Church. Listen carefully as we explore his life together.**

Instruct junior soldiers to form a line, and follow the leader. Lead junior soldiers to area one.

Say: **After Jesus died, the apostles continued teaching like Jesus did before He died. They knew it was very important for people to hear about God and how much He loved them. But the people had many needs. The Greek-speaking Jews felt that their people were being overlooked when food was being handed out each day. The apostles thought that it'd be wrong to stop teaching God's Word so they could distribute food. They gathered the people together and told them to choose seven men to become deacons. The seven men would be in charge of making sure everyone got an equal amount of food. The people thought this was a great idea!**

The Bible says that Stephen was a man full of the Holy Spirit. He did many great and wonderful things for the people; he proved to them that God was among them. Stephen was chosen by the people to be a deacon.

Give each junior soldier a piece of bread from the basket. Remind them that Stephen was chosen to distribute the food to everyone because he was full of the Holy Spirit. Lead junior soldiers to area two. If area two is a large storage closet, turn off the lights, and use a flashlight to create an atmosphere of secrecy. If you placed dark blankets on the walls and ceiling, ask junior soldiers to huddle close together to create an atmosphere of secrecy.

Say: **Who remembers why Jesus was arrested? (Allow response.) Jesus was arrested because the Jewish leaders didn't like what He was teaching. They were afraid of what would happen to them if all the people started following Jesus.**

Stephen was also arrested. The leaders of the Synagogue of the Freedmen didn't like what Stephen was teaching. They tried to argue with him, but it didn't work. Stephen was so full of the Holy Spirit that nothing they said could prove him wrong. This made the men angry.



They went off to a secret place and offered people money to lie about Stephen. (*Jangle the coins.*) They paid men to say that Stephen said terrible things about Moses and God.

The Synagogue leaders brought Stephen to the Sanhedrin. Everyone who was sitting in the Sanhedrin looked at Stephen. The more they looked at Stephen the more they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

Lead junior soldiers to area three. Stand on the crate/platform during this portion of the lesson. Ask junior soldiers to sit down facing you.

Say: While Stephen was at the Sanhedrin, he started to preach. He talked about all the important events in the history of the people. He talked about Joseph and how his brothers sold him to be a slave, but how Joseph went on to become a mighty leader. Stephen talked about Moses and how he was born and lived with his family for three months, but was placed outside and the Pharaoh's daughter raised him as her own. He talked about how Moses became a great leader.

Stephen reminded the leaders that their fathers persecuted each prophet. Stephen said, "You are just like your people of long ago! You always oppose the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your people didn't try to hurt? They even killed those who told them about the coming of the Blameless One. And now you have handed him over to his enemies. You have murdered him. The law you received was brought by angels. But you haven't obeyed it" (Acts 7:51b-53 NIV).

Say: When Stephen finished preaching, the people were furious! They were angry with Stephen for what he said. Stephen was still full of the Holy Spirit. He looked up toward heaven and saw the glory of God. He also saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Stephen said to the Sanhedrin, "Look! I see heaven open. The Son of Man is standing at God's right hand" (Acts 7:56 NIV).

Lead junior soldiers to area four.

Say: After Stephen said he saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God, the Sanhedrin covered their ears and yelled as loudly as they could. (*Ask junior soldiers to cover their ears and yell.*) They grabbed Stephen and dragged him out of the city to be stoned. (*Pick up and give one stone to each junior soldier. Throw your stone into the bucket, and ask junior soldiers to do the same.*)

Say: As the people were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" (Acts 7:59b NIV). The people continued to stone him. Stephen fell to his knees and cried to Jesus, "Lord! Don't hold this sin against them!" After he cried toward heaven, Stephen died.



Lead junior soldiers back to their seats. Ask them the following questions:

Why was Stephen on trial? (*Because the leaders of the Synagogue didn't like what he was teaching.*)

Was Stephen's trial fair? (*No, they had false witnesses.*)

Say: **Stephen was the first martyr. A martyr is someone who dies for what they believe in rather than say they don't believe it. Stephen died because he was a Christian, and no matter what happened he wasn't going to stop being a Christian or stop telling people about Jesus.**



MATERIALS NEEDED:


- index cards
- pen/marker



The portion of the memory verse printed in *italics* is the portion of the verse for younger junior soldiers to memorize.



MATERIALS NEEDED:

-  A
- crayons/markers
- pencils/pens

MEMORY VERSE

1 Peter 4:16 (NlrV) 

"But suppose you suffer for being a Christian. Then don't be ashamed. Instead, praise God because you are known by that name."


Before class, write each word of the verse on 3" x 5" index cards. If you have a large junior soldier brigade make two sets. Crumple the cards into balls, and place them in the bucket of stones used in area four.

Recite the memory verse several times with junior soldiers. Instruct junior soldiers to remove the "stones" from the bucket, and place the words in the correct order.

REINFORCEMENT ACTIVITIES

(CHOOSE ONE OPTION)

Eyewitness News (Option 1) 

Before class, make a copy of  A for each junior soldier. Review today's lesson as junior soldiers draw a picture related to the lesson. Encourage each junior soldier to write a brief description of their picture.



Bead Necklace (Option 2)

Give junior solders their materials for this activity. Instruct junior soldiers to add the colored beads to the string as you explain each bead.

Say: **The first white bead reminds us that God created mankind in purity and without sin.** *(Add white bead.)* **The first red bead reminds us that Adam and Eve sinned, causing sin to enter mankind. In Scripture, sin is referred to by the color red: “Even though your sins are bright red, they will be as white as snow” (Isaiah 1:18 NIV).** *(Add red bead.)* **The second red bead reminds us that the red blood of Jesus will take away our sins.** *(Add red bead.)* **The second white bead reminds us that after we ask Jesus to forgive us from our sin we’re clean like pure white snow.** *(Add white bead.)* **The green bead reminds us that God wants us to grow to be more like Jesus. Stephen studied the Word so he could grow to be more like Jesus.** *(Add green bead.)* **The yellow bead reminds us that if we believe in Jesus, and ask Him to forgive us from our sins, we’ll meet Him in heaven.** *(Add yellow bead.)*



MATERIALS NEEDED:

- colored beads: white, red, green, yellow
- string



WORSHIP PROGRAM

CHORUS: Song #72: "I Have Decided to Follow Jesus"
(Track #22, *Great Big Praise* CD 2)

SCRIPTURE: Matthew 28:19-20 (NirV)

CHORUS: Song #69: "I Want to Be a Witness"
(Track #19, *Great Big Praise* CD 2)

DEVOTIONAL

Follow My Footsteps

Say: Jesus told the disciples to preach and teach the wonderful story of God's love to people everywhere. He wanted them to go way up to the highest mountaintop and tell people about God's love. He wanted them to go to the lowest valley and tell people about God's love. Jesus wanted them to tell the richest person on earth about God, and He wanted them to tell the poorest person on earth about God's amazing love.

Jesus wants us to help tell everyone about God's love. He wants us to tell family and friends about all the stories in the Bible. We need to tell them that God sent Jesus to die on the cross to forgive our sins.

Stephen followed in Jesus' footsteps by caring for people and telling them about God's great love. If we tell people about Jesus through words and actions, we'll be following in Jesus' footsteps, too.

PRAYER



Remember to fill out
the *What Do You Think*
Evaluation on page 111.

