



UNIT 31 | SESSION 3

## STEPHEN WAS ARRESTED

ACTS 6-7

### KEY PASSAGE:

Isaiah 53:5

### BIG PICTURE QUESTION:

Why did Jesus become human? Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners.

### CHRIST CONNECTION:

Jesus told His followers that they would be persecuted—hated, hurt, or even killed—for loving Him. Jesus also said that those who suffer for Him would be blessed. We can face suffering in this life because Jesus suffered first. He died and then rose again, and He is waiting for us in heaven.



## PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION



## LEADER Bible Study

Acts 6 and 7 detail the story of Stephen, the first follower of Jesus martyred for his unwavering boldness in proclaiming Jesus as Lord. Despite the rejection Stephen faced, he remained firm in his gospel witness to those in the Sanhedrin. Recounting the stories of the Old Testament, Stephen declared God's faithfulness to bring the Messiah into the world, even through the rebellious nation of Israel.

How was Stephen able to boldly declare the gospel and endure persecution? What parallels can we make between Jesus and Stephen that encourage us in our faith?

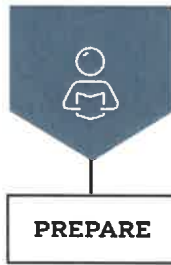
When asked for confirmation of the accusations against himself, Stephen's response was to walk the high priest through the Old Testament's accounts of God's promises. Stephen made known the rebellion of the Jewish people—how they rejected God's Word and resisted the Holy Spirit. He spoke of what God declared back then and how God's promises came to completion in the death and resurrection of His only Son, Jesus. Stephen believed the promises of God and had faith in the Righteous One who died for the sins of the world. Stephen was able to face such terrifying persecution and death because he was filled with the Holy Spirit.

As Stephen stood among the Jewish leaders, Scripture tells us that "his face was like the face of an angel." While the leaders' countenances only displayed anger and outrage, Stephen mirrored the ways of Jesus on his face, in his boldness, and through the forgiveness he prayed over the Sanhedrin members' sins. As Jesus' followers, we also will face opposition from others. Yet, while we await the return of Christ, we can reflect His love and truth to those around us.

Consider what it looks like for followers of Jesus to be so filled with the Holy Spirit that they remain on mission for the gospel no matter the cost. How could God use our faithful witness of the gospel to save even those most hostile to the good news? Explain to your kids that when we find our comfort and hope in Jesus, we can withstand rejection we may face, as we exchange the momentary approval of man for the eternal favor and blessings of God.

### TERMS TO KNOW

**Martyr:** the transliteration of a Greek word meaning "witness," in particular one who gives his life for a cause. It is used to describe those who died because of their faith in Christ rather than recant.



## PRIOR TO TEACHING THE SESSION

### GATHER Supplies

Keep a regular supply of the following items available at all times: Bibles, pens or pencils, markers, crayons, colored pencils, scissors, glue or tape, paper.



#### Activity Page

- ☐ "What's the Order?" activity page

#### Session Starter (Option 2)

- ☐ dry erase board
- ☐ dry erase marker



#### Introduce the Session

- ☐ countdown video

#### Big Picture Question

- ☐ Big Picture Question Poster

#### Review the Timeline

- ☐ Giant Timeline

#### Tell the Bible Story

- ☐ "Stephen Was Arrested" video
- ☐ Bible Story Picture Poster
- ☐ Small Group Timeline (optional)

#### Questions from Kids

- ☐ "Unit 31, Session 3" questions from kids video

#### Missions Moment

- ☐ "The Jones Family in Germany" missions video

#### Key Passage Activity

- ☐ Key Passage Poster
- ☐ "By His Wounds (Isaiah 53:5)" song
- ☐ worship song of your choice (optional)
- ☐ ball



#### Review & Bible Skills

- ☐ Small Group Timeline and Map Set (optional)



#### Activity Choice (Option 1)

- ☐ pretzels in various shapes (mini twists, sticks, snaps)
- ☐ paper towels, 1 per kid

#### Reflection and Prayer

- ☐ Bible Story Coloring Page (optional)



## WELCOME Kids

Greet each kid as he or she arrives. Use this time to collect the offering, fill out attendance sheets, build relationships, and help new kids connect to your group.

**SAY** 🗨️ Do you know what the word reject means? Explain it to me. How does it feel to be rejected? Why? 🗨️

### 1 ACTIVITY PAGE (5 minutes)

Invite kids to complete “What’s the Order?” on the activity page.

**SAY** 🗨️ Today, we will see how a follower of Jesus named Stephen shared the gospel by showing how the stories from the Old Testament point to Jesus as the Messiah. 🗨️

### 2 SESSION STARTER (10 minutes)

#### ☐ OPTION 1: WHAT DO YOU REJECT?



Invite kids to form a large circle. Tell kids that you will say two items and they need to reject one over the other option. Remind kids that reject means to choose not to accept or believe something or someone. Lead kids to stay seated in the circle if they reject the first option or stand up if they reject the second option. Consider using the examples below or create your own:

- Popcorn or ice cream cone
- Video game or board game
- Riding a bike or rollerskating
- Pizza or hot dog
- Pool or beach

**SAY** 🗨️ This game showed us that we rejected something over a different option. Today, we’ll learn how the religious leaders rejected the truth about Jesus over their own unbelief. Our Bible story helps us understand how a man named Stephen shared the gospel, but the religious leaders rejected him and refused to believe his words. 🗨️

#### ☐ OPTION 2: PICTURE THIS!

Direct kids’ attention to the dry erase board and explain that they will have an opportunity to create a picture. Invite a volunteer to draw a sun and then return back to her seat. Choose another kid to draw a mountain. Continue inviting kids to draw the following elements one at a time: rocks, sand, bush, and fire on the bush. Direct kids to look at the picture and have them describe it to you.

**SAY** 🗨️ The picture you helped create illustrates a scene from the Bible. Does anyone remember a Bible story about a bush that was on fire but the fire didn’t burn the leaves? **[Allow responses.]** God spoke to Moses through a burning bush and called Moses to rescue His people from Egypt. Today, we will learn how a man named Stephen used Old Testament Bible stories to create a picture of how God was working to bring the Messiah—Jesus—into the world. Let’s get ready to learn more. 🗨️

Transition from **WELCOME** to **LEARN**







LEARN

## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

### INTRODUCE the Bible Story

#### 1 INTRODUCE THE SESSION (3 minutes)

Show the countdown video as you transition to introduce the Bible story. Set it to end as the session begins.

**SAY** “Welcome, kids! My name is [your name]. I’m so glad you are here to learn more about Jesus and how He died to save you. God’s Word is full of good news, but it can also have some sad news. Today, our Bible story has some sad news as we’ll learn about a man who died because of his faith in Jesus. But there’s good news too! As we’ll also learn, death is not the end for those who trust in Jesus.”

Did you bring your Bible today? Will you please take out your Bible if you brought it? [Distribute Bibles to kids who need one.] The Bible teaches us that even though followers of Jesus will face suffering, we can trust that Jesus is with us. He understands our suffering because He suffered on the cross for our sins. As we read our story, give thanks to God for Jesus’ sacrifice.”

Worship

#### 2 BIG PICTURE QUESTION (1 minute)

**SAY** “Our big picture question is, Why did Jesus become human? What is the answer? [Allow responses.] The answer is, Jesus became human to obey His Father’s plan and rescue sinners. Let’s repeat the answer together: Jesus became human to obey His Father’s plan and rescue sinners.”

God’s plan for His Son, Jesus, wasn’t easy. Jesus was arrested, beaten, mocked, and crucified for our sins. But Jesus went through all that pain so that we could be saved from our sin. Jesus believed following God was worth it, no matter how hard. Even if we have hard times, we can have hope knowing that those who trust in Jesus will live with Him forever. In our story today, we will be reminded that Jesus is waiting for us in heaven and that one day there will be no more suffering for those who trust in Him.”

\* I believe  
\* By His Wounds

\* offering

#### 3 REVIEW THE TIMELINE (1 minute)

Show the giant timeline. Point to individual Bible stories as you review.

**SAY** “The apostles preached the gospel and thousands of people trusted in Jesus. The church continued to grow. But as the church grew, they faced trouble. Many apostles were questioned, arrested, and beaten for trusting in Jesus. A couple of weeks ago, we learned that Peter and John were told to never preach the gospel again. Did they stop? [Allow responses.] No! They obeyed God rather than men.”

Last week, we learned that believers also faced problems within the church. But God gave the church wisdom to choose men to serve the needs of the church, and the church continued to grow. Today, we will learn about a follower of Jesus named Stephen who preached the gospel with boldness in front of a group of angry Jewish leaders.”



## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

### LEARN the Bible Story



#### 1 TELL THE **BIBLE STORY: VIDEO OR STORYTELLER** (10 minutes)

Open your Bible to Acts 6–7. Use the Bible storytelling tips to help you tell the story, or show the Bible story video “Stephen Was Arrested.” Use the bold text to retell or review the story.

#### STEPHEN WAS ARRESTED

“**Stephen was one of Jesus’ followers.** God blessed Stephen and gave him power to do great wonders and signs. **One day, some Jews began to argue with Stephen. The Holy Spirit helped Stephen speak with wisdom,** so no matter how hard the Jews tried, they could not win the argument.”

**But the Jews lied about Stephen; they said he had spoken against God. The people dragged Stephen to the Sanhedrin (san HEE drihn), the Jewish court, and told more lies.** “We heard Stephen say that Jesus will destroy the temple and change the laws that Moses gave us,” they said. “Is this true?” the high priest asked Stephen.

**Stephen began to preach about Jesus. He reminded the court about Abraham. God had made promises to Abraham and his son Isaac. He reminded them about Joseph and Moses.** God kept Joseph safe when his brothers tried to hurt him, and God used Joseph to help all His people during a famine. **When God’s people lived in Egypt, God called Moses to rescue His people from Pharaoh.** Moses led God’s people away from Egypt, but they turned against Moses and against God. **God did not give up on His people, though. He was working out a plan.** God worked through Joshua and David and Solomon.

**The religious leaders knew these stories from the Old Testament. Stephen told them these stories to explain that Jesus was the Messiah God had promised!** But just like their ancestors rejected and killed the prophets in the Old Testament, these Jewish leaders had rejected Jesus and murdered Him!

**Stephen’s words made the Jewish leaders so angry! Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit. He looked up to heaven and saw Jesus standing there.**

**“Look!” he said. “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”**

**The Jewish leaders screamed at the top of their lungs.** They covered their ears and rushed at Stephen. **They** threw him out of the city and **began throwing stones at him. Stephen called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit!” Then he said, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” After this, Stephen died.**

Christ Connection: Jesus told His followers that they would be persecuted—hated, hurt, or even killed—for loving Him. Jesus also said that those who suffer for Him would be blessed. We can face suffering in this life because Jesus suffered first. He died and then rose again, and He is waiting for us in heaven. ”

#### STORYTELLING TIPS

**Use the timeline:** Point to the stories on the timeline or refer to past Bible story posters as you tell about the Old Testament stories. Remind kids of God’s faithfulness to follow His plan to send Jesus into the world to rescue sinners.

**Use dramatic voice:** Tell the story with a dramatic voice to emphasize the emotions of each character.



LEARN

## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

### 2 REVIEW THE BIBLE STORY

**SAY** 🗨️ Stephen loved Jesus, and he was even one of the men chosen to serve the church in last week's story. He was full of the Holy Spirit and performed signs and miracles. Who argued with Stephen and made up lies about him? **[Allow responses.]** The religious leaders didn't like how they couldn't win arguments against Stephen, so they arranged for people to lie about Stephen. When the leaders asked Stephen to defend himself, Stephen began to preach about Jesus.

What stories from the Old Testament did Stephen share to show the religious leaders that Jesus is the Messiah God promised? **[Allow responses.]** Stephen spoke about God's promise to Abraham, Joseph in Egypt, Moses and the burning bush, Joshua's conquering of the promised land, and even how Solomon built God's temple. Stephen reminded the Jewish leaders that even though God's plan was at work to send Jesus into the world, His people rejected His prophets' messages.

Who did Stephen say the religious leaders rejected? **[Allow responses.]** Stephen reminded the Jewish leaders that they had rejected and murdered Jesus. **Jesus became human to obey His Father's plan and rescue sinners.** But the religious leaders did not accept the truth of the gospel.

The Jewish leaders became incredibly angry. They threw large stones at Stephen. But Jesus was with Stephen. Who did Stephen see as he was being stoned? **[Allow responses.]** As Stephen was being killed for preaching about Jesus, he saw heaven and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. This gave Stephen hope as he faced death. We can have the same kind of hope Stephen had. If we have trusted Jesus as Savior, we can face any type of suffering or death knowing that Jesus is waiting for us in heaven. 🗨️

### 3 CHRIST CONNECTION

**SAY** 🗨️ Jesus told His followers that they would be persecuted—hated, hurt, or even killed—for loving Him. Jesus also said that those who suffer for Him would be blessed. We can face suffering in this life because Jesus suffered first. He died and then rose again, and He is waiting for us in heaven. 🗨️

(Tip: Use Scripture and the Gospel Plan Poster to explain how to become a Christian. Make sure kids know when and where they can ask questions.)

### 4 QUESTIONS FROM KIDS (3 minutes)

Show the "Unit 31 Session 3" questions from kids video. Prompt kids to discuss:

1. What type of persecution do Christians today face for their faith in Jesus?
2. How can we pray for persecuted Christians?

### 5 MISSIONS MOMENT (3 minutes)

**SAY** 🗨️ One challenge that Casey and Amy Jones have when they are trying to tell German people about Jesus is that the people do not know the stories of the Bible. They do not believe there is only one true God and that His Son, Jesus, came to save us from sin. Another challenge is that the older



## THE STORY OF THE GOSPEL

people in the area lived during a time when people in their country could not freely talk about Jesus or about being a Christian. Even though you can now talk in Germany about Jesus, it's still hard for some people to want to hear about Jesus. 33

Play the missions video. Pray that God will help the Jones family and other missionaries in Germany find ways to boldly tell people about Jesus and that God would open people's hearts to believe the truth of the gospel. Remind kids that Jesus said that those who suffer for Him would be blessed. We can face suffering in this life because Jesus suffered first.

### 6 KEY PASSAGE ACTIVITY (5 minutes)

Show the key passage poster. Lead kids in reading aloud Isaiah 53:5 together.

**SAY** 33 Jesus suffered and died to pay for our sins. As Jesus' followers, we can have hope when we suffer or go through hard times because Jesus died and rose again. 33

Form kids into a circle. Hold a ball in your hand and say the first word of the key passage. Then toss or roll the ball to a kid and challenge him to say the next word in the key passage. Continue tossing or rolling the ball until the entire key passage has been said. Repeat, making sure each kid has a turn.

Lead kids to sing "By His Wounds (Isaiah 53:5)." You may also choose to sing a worship song of your choice.

### 7 PRAY (2 minutes)

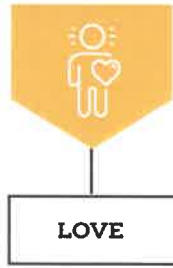
Invite kids to pray before transitioning to Love.

**SAY** 33 Thank You, Lord, that You are always with us and for giving us hope through Jesus. Help us face hard times with courage, knowing You will give us strength. In Jesus' name, amen. 33

Transition from **LEARN** to **LOVE**







## THE GOD OF THE GOSPEL

### **LOVE** God by Applying the Story

#### **1 REVIEW & BIBLE SKILLS (5 minutes)**

Distribute Bibles and display the New Testament Israel Map. Guide kids to open their Bibles to Acts 7. Remind kids that the Bible is divided into two large sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. Discuss how the Old Testament begins with the creation of the world and tells of God's plan to send Jesus into the world through the nation of Israel. Remind kids that Stephen's sermon included stories from the Old Testament.

Consider pointing out the location of Jerusalem (H4) on the New Testament Israel Map. Choose a volunteer to read aloud Acts 7:60.

**SAY** 🗨️ As Stephen was being stoned, he prayed that God would forgive the religious leaders. This prayer reminds us of the words Jesus prayed when He was being crucified. He asked God to forgive the people that hung Him on the cross.

We can forgive others even when they hurt or wrong us as well. Because Jesus suffered and died so that we can be forgiven, we can choose to forgive others too. Forgiving others shows that Jesus has changed our hearts and is helping us live for Him. 🙏

#### **2 GROUP DISCUSSION (10 minutes)**

Ask the following questions. Lead the group to discuss.

**SAY** 🗨️ Do we have a choice of whether we choose to accept or reject Jesus? Why? 🗨️ 🙏

Discuss how some people reject Jesus and some choose to believe in Jesus. Remind kids that Jesus died on the cross for our sins, and everyone who believes in Him will be forgiven.

**SAY** 🗨️ How does Jesus' death and resurrection give us hope? 🙏

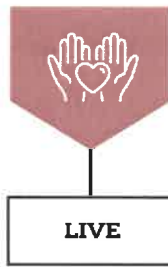
Prompt kids to think about how Stephen saw Jesus in heaven standing at God's right hand waiting for him. Remind kids that because of Jesus' death and resurrection we have the hope of eternal life with Him. Discuss how any hardship we go through will not compare to the joy that awaits us in heaven.

**SAY** 🗨️ Why did Jesus say Christians would suffer for following Him? 🙏

Tell kids that just as the world hated Jesus, it will also hate those who follow Jesus. Explain that the world is against God because the world is God's enemy. Tell kids that before we accept Jesus as our Savior, we are God's enemy too. Share how we are forgiven of sin and accepted into God's family when we trust in Jesus.

Transition from **LOVE** to **LIVE**





## THE MISSION OF THE GOSPEL

### **LIVE** the Mission

#### 1 **ACTIVITY CHOICE** (10 minutes)

##### ☐ **OPTION 1: PRETZEL PICTURE**



Distribute a paper towel and assortment of pretzels in the various shapes to each kid. Mention that pretzels have been a part of German baking traditions for centuries. Tell kids that traditional pretzels of Germany are soft and doughy.

Display a pretzel sample formation such as pretzels positioned to form the shape of a house. (Use stick pretzels for the frame and snaps pretzels for the windows.) Encourage kids to use their pretzels to create their own pictures and shapes such as a flower, a cross, or any other pattern they think of.

**SAY** “Pretzels have a long history with the German people. We can pray that God will help people in Germany understand the history and truth of the Bible. Let’s pray that the people who hear Bible stories from the Jones family will come to know and love Jesus.”

##### ☐ **OPTION 2: WHAT DO YOU SEE?**



Form kids into pairs and invite them to describe a picture of an animal to their partners. For example, one might say to his partner “I see an animal with a long neck and a long tongue.” Lead the kid’s partner to guess what animal is being described. Allow each partner to describe several animals.

Then invite kids to listen as you describe what Stephen saw while he was being stoned.

**SAY** “I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!” Who saw this heavenly scene? **[Allow responses.]** Yes, Stephen saw Jesus waiting for him in heaven. Stephen was able to suffer with courage and hope because Jesus was waiting for him. If we have trusted in Jesus, we have this same hope too. **Jesus became human to obey His Father’s plan and rescue sinners.** Jesus died so that we can be forgiven and live with Him forever.”

#### 2 **REFLECTION AND PRAYER** (5 minutes)

Distribute a sheet of paper and pencil to each kid. Ask the kids to write about or draw a picture to answer the following questions:

- What does this story teach me about God or the gospel?
- What does this story teach me about myself?
- Who can I tell about this story?

Be sure to send the sheets home with the kids along with the activity pages so parents can continue to discuss the Bible story with their kids.

If time remains, take prayer requests or allow kids to complete the Bible story coloring page. Pray for your group.