Preschool–Grade 6

Stephen

Sunday School Lesson for 3rd to 5th Grade, 45–60 minutes

Main point: Stand strong for Jesus. Full of faith and the Holy Ghost, we can tell the truth when others are against us, and forgive the people who hurt us.
Bible passage: Acts 6:1–15 and 7:54–8:2. Read it before class.
Memory verse: "And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people." *Acts 6:8 (KJV)*
You need: a Bible for each child (or one for every two children), paper and a pencil for each child, a whiteboard or large paper, a marker, and one take-home sheet for each child.
Before class: write the memory verse on the board.

1. Opening game: Would You Stand? (5–10 minutes)

Read each situation. If the kids think they would stand up for what is right, they stand up; if it would be too hard, they stay seated. 1) A friend says church is boring and laughs at you for going. 2) Someone tells a lie about a classmate. 3) Your team wants to cheat to win a game. 4) Someone is unkind to you, and later they need help. Ask: *What makes it hard to stand strong? What helps?* Say: "Today we will meet Stephen, who stood strong for Jesus, and then did something even harder."

2. Bible story: Full of Faith and Power (15 minutes)

Kids open their Bibles to Acts 6. When you reach a **Look up** line, a child finds the verse and reads it out loud. Tell the rest in your own words.

Chosen to serve. The church in Jerusalem was growing fast, and some widows were being missed in the daily **ministration**, which means the daily care (Acts 6:1). **Look up Acts 6:3.** The apostles asked the believers to choose seven men "of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." **Look up Acts 6:5.** The first one named was Stephen, "a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost."

Lies about Stephen. Look up Acts 6:8. Stephen did great wonders and miracles among the people. Some men from a synagogue argued with him (6:9). **Look up Acts 6:10.** They "were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." So they **suborned** men, which means they secretly got men to lie, and said Stephen spoke against Moses and against God (6:11). They brought him to the **council**, the leaders who judged the people, and set up **false witnesses**, people who told lies about him (6:12–14). **Look up Acts 6:15.** Everyone in the council looked **stedfastly** (steadily, without looking away) at Stephen, and saw his face "as it had been the face of an angel."

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What Stephen saw. Stephen told the council how God had led His people, from Abraham to Joseph to Moses (Acts 7:2–50). They were **cut to the heart**, which here means very angry, and they **gnashed on him with their teeth**, grinding their teeth at him (7:54). **Look up Acts 7:55–56.** Full of the Holy Ghost, Stephen looked up into heaven, saw the glory of God and Jesus, and said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened."

Stephen forgives. The men stopped their ears and ran at him "with one accord," all together (7:57). They cast him out of the city and stoned him. The witnesses laid their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul (7:58). **Look up Acts 7:59–60.** Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit," then kneeled down and cried, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge," which means, "Don't hold this sin against them." Then Stephen died. Devout men buried him and mourned for him (8:2). Saul, who was there, later met Jesus and became the apostle Paul (Acts 9; 13:9).

3. Questions to ask (10 minutes)

Thinking questions (no single right answer; let kids talk)

1. Stephen was chosen to serve widows (6:1–5). Why do you think God used someone who served others to do great wonders?
2. People told lies about Stephen (6:11–13). How should we act when someone tells lies about us?
3. Stephen's face was like an angel's while he was being blamed (6:15). How can someone stay calm and peaceful when people are against them?
4. Stephen prayed for the people who were hurting him (7:60). Why is that so hard? Who did the same thing on the cross (Luke 23:34)?
5. Saul was there that day (7:58), and later Jesus saved him. What does that tell us about praying for people who are unkind?

Recall questions

1. How many men were chosen to serve? *(Seven, Acts 6:3)*
2. What did the council see in Stephen's face? *(It was like the face of an angel, 6:15)*
3. Whose feet did the witnesses lay their clothes at? *(A young man named Saul, 7:58)*

4. Memory verse: Erase a Word (5 minutes)

Explain the words: **faith** means trusting God, **power** means God's strength working in him, and **wonders** are amazing things only God can do. Read the verse on the board together. Erase two words and read it again. Keep erasing two words at a time until the board is empty and the class can say it alone. Then kids say it to a partner.

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5. What this means for us (5 minutes)

Say: "Stephen was full of the Holy Ghost (Acts 6:5, 7:55), and God wants to fill you too. God loves you. The Bible says: 'For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23, KJV). That means all of us have done wrong, and none of us is as good as God. Jesus is God manifest in the flesh, which means God came to earth as a man (1 Timothy 3:16). Christ died for our sins, was buried, and rose again the third day (1 Corinthians 15:3–4). How do we obey the gospel? 'Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.' (Acts 2:38, KJV) To **repent** means to turn away from sin; our old self dies (Romans 6:6). We are **buried with Jesus in baptism**, all the way under the water, in Jesus' name. **Remission** means our sins are washed away, and we come up to live a new life (Romans 6:4; Acts 22:16). And God fills us with the **Holy Ghost**, and we speak with other tongues as the Spirit gives the words (Acts 2:4). The Bible calls this being born again (John 3:5)."

Pray with the kids, and encourage them to talk with their parents and pastor about being baptized in Jesus' name and filled with the Holy Ghost. Never pressure a child.

This week: stand strong for Jesus in one hard moment. Pray by name for someone who has been unkind to you.

6. Activity: Bible Look-Up Race (10–15 minutes)

Kids work in pairs with one Bible. Read a reference and a question. The first pair to find the verse and read the answer out loud wins the point.

1. Acts 6:3: How many men did the apostles ask them to choose? *(Seven)*
2. Acts 6:5: Stephen was full of what? *(Faith and of the Holy Ghost)*
3. Acts 6:8: What did Stephen do among the people? *(Great wonders and miracles)*
4. Acts 6:10: What could the men not resist? *(The wisdom and the spirit by which he spake)*
5. Acts 6:15: What did Stephen's face look like? *(The face of an angel)*
6. Acts 7:56: What did Stephen say he saw? *(The heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God)*
7. Acts 7:58: What was the young man's name? *(Saul)*
8. Acts 7:60: What did Stephen pray? *("Lord, lay not this sin to their charge")*

7. Prayer

"Dear God, fill us with faith and with Your Spirit like Stephen. Help us stand strong for Jesus and forgive people who hurt us. Thank You for loving us and coming to save us in Jesus. In Jesus' name, amen."

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Notes for the teacher

Telling Stephen's death gently: say it once, in the Bible's words ("stoned him," 7:58), with no details. If a child is upset or grieving, say: "Stephen asked the Lord Jesus to receive his spirit (7:59). God's people who die are with the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:8)."

If a child asks about "the right hand of God": in the Bible, the right hand means power and honor (Exodus 15:6). Stephen saw Jesus in the place of all power, and he prayed to the Lord Jesus himself (Acts 7:59).

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