

LESSON PLAN

STEPHEN STONED

Acts 6:1 – 8:4

Lesson Memory Verse: 2 Timothy 2:12 - **“If we suffer, we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us.”** (Grades 1 & 2 memorize portion in **bold.**)

Lesson Aim: To rejoice when suffering for Christ because we will reign with Him some day.

Lesson Plan: Use the KEY – HE – SEE – WE – BE plan (explained in the Introductory Notes).

KEY (for Attention): Have you ever tasted the things that your mother uses to make a chocolate cake? Many of the things taste awful! (Maybe you can bring some of the awful tasting things that go into a chocolate cake and let the children taste them. You should also bring a small piece of cake for the class, too. Then they can see how bad tasting things mixed in the right amounts with good things can produce a delicious chocolate cake.)

Some of the awful tasting things that are put into a chocolate cake are bitter chocolate, raw eggs, sour cream and baking soda. It seems impossible that a good tasting cake needs these bad tasting things, but it does. Your mother knows just how much to put into the cake to make it taste good.

Sometimes bad things like trouble and suffering come into our lives. We may find it hard to believe that these bad things are good for us, but it is true. Just like the bad tasting things in the cake make it good, so trouble and suffering can help make Christians good. Do not be angry when you suffer, especially when you suffer for Jesus.

HE (for Authority): Before we hear the Bible story, let us read our memory verse from God's Word. It gives us a very good reason why we should be happy when we suffer for Jesus. See if you can find it in II Timothy 2:12. Explain that Christ will be the King of the whole world and we shall reign with Him for a thousand years on this earth. That will more than repay any suffering that we now endure for Jesus' sake. (You might also read any of these verses: Matt 5:11-12; II Tim 3:12; I Pet 1:6-7; 4:12-13; Rom 8:17; Phil 1:29.)

SEE (for Apperception) and WE (for Application): PLEASE do not read these comments until you have read the Scripture for this lesson. First let the Holy Spirit teach you directly from His Word. Today we are going to hear a story about a man who suffered much for being a Christian. God used his suffering to make out of him a very good man. As a result, he was highly honored by Jesus Christ. This made him very happy. His name was Stephen. (Teachers are reminded to prepare their lessons so that Stephen's suffering is emotionally understood by the children. Be sure to show the joy and peace Stephen had during this suffering and give them reasons why he must have been so happy.)

I. Stephen Was Heralded by the Saved - Acts 6:1-8

Stephen was a godly man and the church recognized this by choosing him to be one of seven men to do the work of a deacon in the church of Jerusalem. His godliness was also the basis for his joy which was specifically seen as follows:

- A. He was honest – 6:3.** An honest person's life is crowned with joy.
- B. He was full of the Holy Spirit – 6:3, 5; 7:55.** The fruit of the Spirit is joy – Gal 5:22.
- C. He was full of wisdom – 6:3.** Wisdom is the right use of knowledge, so it brings joy – Prov. 8:30.
- D. He was responsible – 6:3.** People could count on him to do a good job and that brings joy.
- E. He was full of faith – 6:5, 8.** Faith is a source of joy – Rom 15:13; 1 Pet 1:8.
- F. He was full of power – 6:8.** The use of spiritual power from God brings joy – Lk 10:17,

WE: We can have joy, if we follow the godly example of Stephen.

II. Stephen Was Hated by the Unsaved - Acts 6:9 – 7:60).

Stephen was hated, attacked and finally killed by those who had killed Jesus Christ because he preached that Jesus Christ was God and also our Savior. In spite of persecution from the unsaved, he kept his joy through all of it.

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A. They argued with him – 6:9-10. Arguing with the unsaved discourages some Christians and it takes away their joy, but not Stephen. He knew that the unsaved were really arguing with God, not him. He was God's messenger and he was doing what God wanted him to do; therefore, he was joyful.

B. They stirred up the people against him – 6:11-13. Satan knows that some Christians lose their joy when their friends and neighbors turn against them, but this did not happen to Stephen. His joy was in the Lord, not in friends and neighbors – Phil 4:4.

C. They brought him to the rulers of the city – 6:12. Satan knows that many Christians lose their joy because they fear the power of evil men, but this was not true of Stephen. He did not lose his joy because he trusted in the Lord and was not afraid of men – Prov 29:25.

D. They lied about him – 6:11, 13-15. Some Christians let lies about them take away their joy, but not Stephen. When his enemies lied about him, Stephen's face looked like that of an angel. He was joyful because he was confident that the Lord knew the truth, and that was all that mattered to him.

E. They heard his bold speech – 7:1-53. Stephen was bold in his God as he preached to the Jewish leaders. The joy of the Lord was his strength – Neh 8:10.

F. They stoned him to death – 7:54-60. Even death could not take away Stephen's joy; it only made his joy greater when he stood in the presence of the Lord – Ps 16:11.

III. Stephen Was Honored by Jesus Christ - Acts 6:15; 7:55, 59-60; 8:1-4

Jesus Christ stood up in honor of His servant who had been faithful to Him in the midst of persecution.

A. He gave Stephen a glowing face – 6:15. Everyone saw the glow of joy on Stephen's face because it looked like that of an angel.

B. He let Stephen see the glory of God – 7:55. Before Stephen was killed, he saw the glory of God in heaven and spoke of it in the hearing of his persecutors. Few people have had the joy of such an honor.

C. He let Stephen see Himself standing on the right hand of God – 7:55. This is the only place where we hear of Jesus standing. Usually He is described as sitting at the right hand of God. It is as though Jesus was standing to welcome home this good man. What an honor! What joy!

D. He let Stephen talk to Him as a friend – 7:59. He asked Jesus to let him come home to heaven. Great is the privilege to talk to Jesus as a friend; great is the joy when He answers our prayers – John 16:24.

E. He gave Stephen a forgiving heart – 7:60. Jesus will honor all believers who have a forgiving heart. It is a source of much joy. However, we must remember that forgiveness cannot bless the sinner until he receives it. Forgiveness is a two-way street. It must be offered and then it must be received before it can be a blessing. Stephen was willing to offer it.

F. He brought great revival through Stephen – 8:14. What an honor to be used by God to bring revival and salvation to many, many people. The joy that Stephen had was experienced by others (8:8).

WE: If we want to be honored like Stephen, we must learn to rejoice when things go well and when they go bad. "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, rejoice" (Phil 4:4). How can we always be joyful? We need to make sure we get our joy from the Lord, and then no one can take it away from us.

BE (for Action): Do you ever get unhappy and complain when you suffer for Jesus' sake? This is sin. Ask God to forgive you and then ask Him to help you to be joyful, no matter what happens.

Give two invitations. Have the children raise their hands if they want to make either of these decisions:

1. Tell God that they are sorry for complaining and being unhappy.
2. Ask God to help them to rejoice, no matter what happens.

Close with a prayer for the children.