

June 23, 2024

Bible Passage: Acts 6:8—7:60
(Stephen Is Martyred)



God Is the One True God

Remember Verse

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8

LESSON OVERVIEW

CONNECT//
10 minutes



Adding to the Story

SUPPLIES

- None

GATHER//
30 minutes



Remember Verse

Game: Remember Verse
Basketball

SUPPLIES

- Marker
- Paper (17 sheets for every 4–5 children)
- Basket or trash can (1 for every 4–5 kids)
- Masking or painter's tape

Storytelling

SUPPLIES

- Optional: Investigate Questions*
- Bibles
- Gavel (or other object to serve as a gavel, such as a rubber mallet)
- Optional: costumes

Discussion Questions

RESPOND//
15 minutes



Worthy of My Life

SUPPLIES

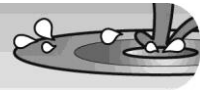
- String or yarn (1' per child)
- Plastic beads (12 per child, various colors)
- Optional: "You Are," TruWorship *You Are*

(Optional) Order the
Candy

SUPPLIES

- Colored candies (1 large bag per team)
- Disposable cups (2 for each color of candy)

BLESS//
5 minutes



SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards*
- At Home Weekly: Lesson 4*
- Bible

Further Resources

To help you plan and lead:

**Customizable copy of Lesson 3
2018–19 Scope and Sequence
TruStory How It Works
Small Group Enhancement**

At Home Weekly: Lesson 3

The weekly for the next lesson—to be sent home for preteaching by parents—is found in BLESS.

LEADER PREP

Each week you'll find a list of resources along with encouraging articles that help you prepare your heart to present the lesson.

Inspire *Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives*

I am quite pregnant right now. I have a giant belly, aching hips, and a bit of a waddle, and I experience frequent bathroom visits. I also have an ever-growing terror of the labor coming in a few short weeks.

Each day I feel my baby boy move within me. It has been an amazing process to go through pregnancy—to see and feel my baby grow, to read about all of the things that have come together in my womb and happened in my body without me doing a thing. It is a reminder of the one true God—the God who is knitting my baby together within me.

Soon my baby will be introduced to this world—a world where God isn't recognized as true, where people are invited to discover truth for themselves. So I ponder what it looks like to teach him, from an early age, about our one true God. How do I best convey God's big story to him? How do I show him that no matter what anyone says, our God is true and right and the only way?

This is where I must trust the Holy Spirit. He is and always has been working to bring us back to God. As we look throughout The Big God Story, we see that God's redemptive work began long before us and will continue long after. He is the one true God, and He will make that known forever and ever. Amen.

Denise Snyder
Crossroads Church

Equip *Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage*

In Acts 6, the young church of Jewish people who believe in Jesus as Messiah is growing and causing trouble for the Jewish establishment. One of these “troublemakers” is Stephen, a man filled with God's grace. He's brought before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish court, and accused of blaspheming God and Moses. To the Jewish leadership, Stephen's claims are blasphemous—they're afraid that he's rejecting God's teaching on the land of Israel, the Law He gave them, and the temple where His presence rests. These are serious concerns for the Jewish leadership because they want to protect what they believe to be true.

Stephen, however, is quite eloquent and prepared to defend himself against these claims. He gives legitimate reasons for the fulfillment Christ brings to these three areas. He also points out Israel's historic pattern of disobeying and ignoring God. Stephen resists with a clear defense and paves the way for a deeper understanding of just how far the implications of Jesus' message reach.

However, the leaders aren't interested, and they begin to stone him. According to Roman law, the Sanhedrin have no right to apply a death sentence in this situation, but they do anyway. After Stephen is stoned, we see the first mention of Saul (later Paul), who approved Stephen's murder (Acts 8:1).

Stephen's martyrdom—the first in Christian history—actually serves to do just what Jesus asked of His followers: to spread His message to the ends of the earth. Persecution breaks out, and disciples scatter to Judea and Samaria, outside of Jerusalem. The message of the one true God spreads far and wide.

Support *Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word*

It's common to see current news headlines about people suffering for their faith. This isn't new. People have been martyred for their faith throughout time, and, unfortunately, history often repeats itself. Consider: What was the last story you heard about people suffering for their faith?

Many of us have no clue about what it means to suffer for our faith—to be under the threat of death for claiming that

God is the one true God. The children you lead probably haven't faced this threat either, but they're not immune to the news of the world, and they may feel the pressure of proclaiming their faith to their friends at school. As you prepare to lead your children this week, ask God to show you how to help them be bold witnesses for Him. What does this look like for their age group, for their young minds? Pray that the Holy Spirit would speak to them and give them confidence in the one true God. Pray also that your heart and the hearts of your kids would be filled with compassion for those around the world taking a stand for their faith.

CONNECT//10 minutes



Children develop relationships with their leaders and one another through simple activities and conversation starters.

Adding to the Story

Today have your third and fourth graders work together to add to a story.

SUPPLIES

- None

RELATE

CONNECT QUESTION: Welcome and greet children. Open your time by asking this question: **When was a time you saw something get bigger and bigger?**

The book of Acts tells the part of The Big God Story that describes the early church and how its numbers continued to grow through the power of the Holy Spirit. Ask your children to sit in a circle, and choose one child to start telling the story by sharing one or two sentences. After that child shares the beginning of the story, the next person in the circle should add another sentence or two. Continue around the circle until each person has contributed to the story or the story reaches a satisfying ending.

Developmentally Speaking

Third and fourth graders will likely enjoy making up this story together as they're learning in school about the literary genres of myths, legends, and fantasy.

GATHER//30 minutes



Children experience and learn more about God through prayer, storytelling from The Big God Story, an investigation into God's Word, and creative ways to memorize Scripture.

Remember Verse

Each week children will spend time memorizing a portion of Scripture together. The Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8

Game: Remember Verse Basketball

SUPPLIES

- Marker
- Paper (17 sheets for every 4–5 kids)
- Basket or trash can (1 for every 4–5 kids)
- Masking or painter's tape

SET UP

Write the Remember Verse across 17 sheets of paper, with just two words on each sheet (count the Scripture reference as one word). Then crumple the papers into small balls. Make a set of 17 balls for each team of four to five kids. Place the baskets or trash cans on one side of the room. Using the tape, make a line on the floor about 10 feet from the baskets.

RELATE

To help the children learn the Remember Verse, let them play a game of basketball. To play, divide the children into teams of four to five, and assign each team to a basket or trash can. Then give each team a set of paper balls. Have the members of each team take turns standing at the line and shooting the balls into the basket. When the team makes a basket, the team members get to open the paper forming that ball to learn two of the words of the Remember Verse. The first team to open all of the papers with the words of the verse and put the verse in order wins the game.

Storytelling

Bible Passage: Acts 6:8—7:60

Storytelling Technique: Acting Out the Narrative
God is the One True God

SUPPLIES

- Optional: Investigate Questions (see Resources)
- Gavel (or other object to serve as a gavel, such as a rubber mallet)
- Bibles
- Optional: costumes

SET UP

Let your children know they'll be acting out today's portion of The Big God Story. Ask for one volunteer to play the role of Stephen, one to be Abraham, one to be Moses, and one to be an Old Testament prophet. Also ask two or three volunteers to play the religious leaders of the Sanhedrin, and out of those volunteers, choose one child to be the high priest and give him the gavel. Encourage the rest of the kids to be members of the crowd. (If you don't have enough kids for every part, children can repeat the roles of the Old Testament characters, or just have one child play the Sanhedrin.) Tell the volunteers to listen for your cues so they know when to act out their parts.

RELATE

Before we get started, I have a question for you: What are some times in The Big God Story when God revealed Himself as the one true God? Allow children to share. **Let's pray and ask God to reveal Himself to us through today's part of The Big God Story.** Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

Invite children to turn to Acts 6. **After the Holy Spirit filled the disciples at Pentecost, they began speaking about God with boldness. The disciples had seen God show Himself as the one true God and that's why they gave everything—even their lives—for Him. One of the people who came to believe in Jesus was a man named Stephen.** Have the child playing Stephen step forward, and have the children playing the crowd sit down around him as they listen to him. **Stephen loved God, and the Holy Spirit filled him with grace and power. Stephen preached about the one true God to anyone who would listen, and he did many miracles.** Have Stephen heal a member of the crowd.

Ask a volunteer to read vv. 8–10 as everyone follows along. **The religious leaders from the Sanhedrin didn't like what Stephen was saying.** Have Sanhedrin listen to Stephen while looking angry. **They started to argue with Stephen, but they couldn't win any arguments because Stephen was so wise and filled with God's Spirit.** Have Sanhedrin and Stephen argue.

Ask a volunteer to read vv. 11–14. **Eventually the leaders of the Sanhedrin stirred up the people to get angry at Stephen. They told lies about him and said he was saying bad things about God and Moses. The leaders had Stephen arrested and brought him before the court.** Have Sanhedrin members take Stephen's arms and lead him to the other side of the room. Have them line up before Stephen like they're judging him. **The religious leaders told lies about Stephen, so the high priest looked at Stephen and asked him if these lies were true.** Have high priest point gavel accusingly at Stephen. **Stephen knew he had the responsibility to share the truth about Jesus no matter what might happen to him. He might be put in jail or even face death, but he was willing to speak out for the sake of the good news of Jesus.**

Have Stephen take a deep breath and look determined. **Stephen began to give a speech before the members of the Sanhedrin. He talked about The Big God Story and all the things God had done. He told how God had chosen Abraham to be the father of the nation of Israel and how God had planned to bless the entire world through his descendants.** Have Abraham walk across room as Stephen talks about him. **Then Stephen told how the Israelites eventually ended up as slaves in Egypt. But God raised up a man named Moses to help lead the Israelites out of Egypt.** Have Moses walk across room. **After that, God gave His people their own land. They built a temple for God, but eventually they began to ignore Him. God sent His prophets to lead the people back to Him, the one true God** (have Old Testament prophet walk across room), **but they wouldn't listen to God's truth.**

As Stephen boldly told The Big God Story to the Sanhedrin, he told them they were just like their ancestors—they wouldn't listen to God's prophets, and they had even rejected God's Son, Jesus, and hung Him on the cross! When Stephen said this, the religious leaders became very angry and gnashed their teeth at Stephen. They didn't know he was telling the truth about the one true God. They grabbed him and led him outside of the city to kill him by throwing stones at him. Have Sanhedrin lead Stephen to another corner of room, and have Stephen kneel. Thank the actors for their performances and have everyone sit down together.

Invite children to turn to Acts 7:55–56 and follow along as a volunteer reads. **As the religious leaders threw stones at Stephen, he looked to heaven and saw Jesus and the glory of God. He asked God to forgive the people killing him, just like Jesus did when He died on the cross. Stephen died that day, but he was faithful to share the good news of Jesus with people who didn't believe in Him. Stephen loved Jesus so much, and because he knew Jesus was the one true God, Stephen was willing to give up his life to follow Jesus.**

Stephen is known as the very first Christian martyr. A martyr is someone who sacrifices his life for something he believes is true about God. What does *truth* mean? Invite answers. If something is *true*, it is right and real. God is truth, and He is the one true God. The disciples knew this, and they knew He was the only One worth following. They were willing to stand up for God no matter the cost.

Jesus changed Stephen's life, and the Holy Spirit enabled Stephen to care for the people around him. Stephen saw that the religious leaders didn't believe in Jesus, so he told them the good news about Jesus' salvation, even though they didn't believe him and ended up hurting him for what he said. Once God shows us that He is the one true God, He entrusts us with sharing the truth with others. Share a personal story of when God showed you or someone you know that He is the one true God.

Discussion Questions

- **What were some of the parts of The Big God Story that Stephen shared?**
- **Why did the religious leaders get so angry with Stephen?** Acts 7:51–54
- **Why was Stephen willing to give up his life?** Acts 7:55–56
- **What does it mean that God is the one true God?**
- **How has God shown you that He is the one true God?**

RESPOND//15 minutes



Children reflect on what the Holy Spirit is teaching them and respond to God through creative activities and games.

Worthy of My Life

SUPPLIES

- String or yarn (1' per child)
- Plastic beads (12 per child, various colors)
- Optional: "You Are," TruWorship *You Are*

RELATE

Stephen loved God so much, and his whole life belonged to God. There truly is no one like God! He holds the words of truth and life, and He gave His Son, Jesus, as the ultimate sacrifice for us. Nothing and no one else can help us like God. Take a few minutes to think about what God has done for you in your life. How do you want to praise the one true God today?

Invite your children to spend time thanking God for sending Jesus to be the ultimate sacrifice for us. Optional: Play "You Are" as the kids ponder Jesus' sacrifice for them and encourage them to listen closely to the words.

Jesus is the one true God, and He is worthy of our lives! Through Him we've received so many blessings, and we can share with others out of what God has given to us. We can offer others our gifts and our time, and we can show love to others by providing for their needs.

Hand each child a piece of string or yarn and a set of beads. Invite the children to tie a knot on one end of the string and slide the beads on it. As they pick up each bead, they can think of a blessing God has given to them. Then, as they place that bead on the string, they can think of a way to share that blessing with someone else. Once the kids slide on all the beads, have them tie off the other end of the string. They can take the strings of beads home, where the beads can remind the kids to give God every area of their lives this week.

(Optional) Order the Candy

Children will race to put a bag of candies in “order.”

SUPPLIES

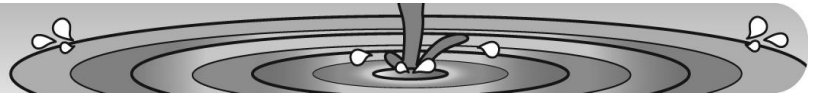
- Colored candies (1 large bag per team)
- Disposable cups (2 for each color of candy)

RELATE

When Stephen appeared before the Sanhedrin, he led them through The Big God Story as he highlighted in order the major events that happened throughout history, from Abraham all the way to Jesus.

Invite your children to race to put a bag of candies “in order.” To play, break your class into two teams. Give each team a bag of colored candies and a cup for each color. On your signal, have the teams race to sort their candies by color and place each color into its own cup. The first team to successfully sort their candy wins the game. After the game, discuss: **Why is it so important to know The Big God Story? When you look back at The Big God Story, what does it tell you about God?**

BLESS// 5 minutes



Children receive a blessing from their leaders and sometimes one another. A blessing can be a prayer of commission, a portion of Scripture, or words to encourage and guide.

SUPPLIES

- Remember Verse cards (see Resources)
- At Home Weekly: Lesson 4 (see Resources)
- Bible

RELATE

Gather the children and invite them to kneel in a circle with you. Encourage them to lift their hands high in praise to the one true God as you read the blessing from Psalm 97:9, 12:

For you, LORD, are the Most High over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods ... Rejoice in the LORD, you who are righteous, and praise his holy name.

Then speak this blessing over the children:

May you worship the one true God with your whole life. May you serve and follow Him with great joy.

Send home Remember Verse cards and the At Home Weekly with your kids.