

# Bible Stories for Adults

## Stephen

Acts 6-7

### Opening

Gathering: What different ways might someone respond to the conviction of the gospel message?

Today's Focus: Stephen saw to his trial before the Sanhedrin as an opportunity to witness and became the first Christian martyr after his listeners were convicted by their rejection of Jesus.

Key Verses: *These men began to argue with Stephen, but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke. Acts 6:9-10*

*But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. Acts 7:55*

Opening Prayer

### Lesson

The Early Christian Community (*Acts 4:32-35*)

How tight of a community existed in the early Christian church?

Acts 4:32

What does it mean that they shared everything they had? Did they loan lawnmowers, or what?

Acts 2:44-45

Did this communal living become the main focus of this group?

Acts 4:33

How extensive was the charity within the church?

Acts 4:34-35

Charity Problems (*Acts 4:36-5:11*)

What member helped provide an example to encourage others?

Acts 4:36-37

How were the believers shown that charity is to be based on love, not on desire for praise?

Acts 5:1-11

How did Jesus tell us not to give for the sake of being praised by men?

Matthew 6:1-4

Another Charity Problem (*Acts 6:1*)

What other problem popped up relating to charity in the early church?

Acts 6:1

Note that the first contention in the Christian church was a money matter

Grecian Jews - Those who spoke only Greek (the language of the world)

Hebraic Jews - Those who spoke Aramaic (likely also spoke Greek)

Why did widows receive a daily food distribution?

1 Timothy 5:3-5

Every Friday morning, synagogue members collected donations from market and homes

Distributed to needy that afternoon enough for 2 meals/day for the coming week

*Kuppah* (Basket)

*Tamhri* (Tray)

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### The Size of the Problem

How big of a problem could this have been?

Acts 2:41, 47b; 4:4; 5:14

Jews from other parts of the world (*diaspora*, dispersed) moved to Jerusalem for various reasons

Many did so out of religious yearning to be close to the temple (Zionists)

Many older Jews moved to Palestine to die honorably as a faithful Jew in Israel

Some rabbis said the dead would rise only in Israel

Righteous dead of other lands had to roll back to Israel underground

When diaspora Jews died in Israel, their widows were left with no family to care for them

### The Solution (Acts 6:2-4)

With twelve apostles to manage the church, why couldn't this be easily corrected?

Acts 6:2

Were they saying that serving the needy was not important enough for their attention?

1 Corinthians 12:14, 17-18, 27, 29

So how could the needy be cared for?

Acts 6:3

*Diakonia* - serve or minister

What would the apostles do with all of the extra time they would now have?

Acts 6:4

### The Result (Acts 6:5-7)

Did the Hebraic Jews stack the deck of these 7 deacons with Hebrews?

Acts 6:5

What does this show us that the early church understood about Christian life?

Philippians 2:1-4

How were these first lay ministers inducted into this ministry?

Acts 6:6

What happened to the church after its first conflict was resolved in this manner?

Acts 6:7

Note: Nearly 20,000 priests rotated into Jerusalem in 1-week shifts twice per year

### Stephen (Acts 6:8-10)

Did any of the seven deacons (servers) have any other spiritual gifts?

Acts 6:8

With the apostles teaching in Solomon's Colonnade in the temple, where did Stephen teach?

Acts 6:9

Who was likely a member of the synagogue mentioned here?

Acts 21:39

How effective was Stephen in this debate?

Acts 6:10

Was Stephen so effective because he had received such good training by the apostles?

Luke 21:15

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### If You Can't Beat 'Em, Take 'Em to Court (*Acts 6:11-14*)

Did Stephen's debaters become Christians or at least honorably concede defeat?

Acts 6:11-12

What charges did they present against Stephen?

Acts 6:13-14

Who was similarly charged with such false accusations before the Sanhedrin?

Matthew 26:59-61

### The Defense (*Acts 6:15-7:1*)

How did Stephen respond to these accusations?

Acts 6:15

Of whom does the appearance of this blasphemer against Moses and God remind us?

Exodus 34:29-30

How did Jesus respond to the accusations made of Him?

Matthew 26:62-63a

The high priest was able to get Jesus to talk. Who persuaded Stephen to talk?

Acts 7:1

### God is Not Restricted to a Place (*Acts 7:2-8*)

How did Stephen begin to state his point that God is everywhere, not just in the temple?

Acts 7:2-4

How did he show that God may work in ways we can't understand, but must accept by faith?

Acts 7:5-8

How could Abraham accept such a ridiculous promise that wouldn't be realized for 500 years?

Hebrews 11:8-13

### God's Men Rejected, Then Accepted (*Acts 7:9-36*)

Did Stephen accuse the Jews of being the first to reject one chosen by God?

Acts 7:9a

How did God turn this rejection into good?

Acts 7:9b-10

Was Joseph ever accepted by his brothers?

Acts 7:11-16

Who was the next one chosen by God that the Jews rejected?

Acts 7:17-28

How did God turn this rejection into good?

Acts 7:29-34

Was Moses ever accepted by his brothers?

Acts 7:35-36

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#### The Customs Moses Handed Down (*Acts 7:37-43*)

What were *the customs Moses handed down* that Stephen was accused of wanting to change?

*Acts 7:37-38*

The Jews always respected and kept these laws they were trying to protect from Stephen, right?

*Acts 7:39-41*

They must have learned to respect and keep these laws over time, right?

*Acts 7:42-43*

#### This Holy Place (*Acts 7:44-50*)

Were the Jews right in protecting the temple, God's house, that they said Stephen spoke against?

*Acts 7:44-47*

But now the temple was God's house and should be treated as such, right?

*Acts 7:48-50*

#### Speech Summary (*Acts 7:51-56*)

How did Stephen summarize his speech in his concluding comments?

*Acts 7:51-53*

Did Stephen's speech persuade them to repent and accept Jesus this second time?

*Acts 7:54*

How did God bless Stephen for so boldly stepping out in faith and witnessing?

*Acts 7:55-56*

#### The Prosecution Rests (*Acts 7:57-60*)

Had the Sanhedrin heard anything like this before?

*Matthew 26:64-66*

Did they respond to it better this second time?

*Acts 7:57-58*

Did Stephen apologize for his comments and beg for his life?

*Acts 7:59-60*

What promise did Jesus give that Stephen was the first to realize?

*Matthew 10:39*

#### Closing Prayer

### Response - Consider and meditate on one each day this week

1. When have I shared from what God has given me to help meet the needs of others?  
(*Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37; 20:35; Deut 15:14; 16:17; Ps 116:12; Luke 6:30-31, 35, 38; 2 Cor 9:6-15*)
2. How have I short-changed God?  
(*Acts 5:1-11; 1 Chronicles 29:14-17; Malachi 3:8-10; Matthew 22:21*)
3. What have I done in order to receive praise from others instead of giving glory to God?  
(*Acts 5:1-11; ; Isaiah 64:6; Matthew 6:1-18; 23:1-12; 2 Corinthians 10:12-18*)
4. What gifts has God given me to serve as an effective part of His Body?  
(*Acts 6:1-4; Luke 4:10; 1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:7-16; 1 Timothy 4:14-16*)
5. How do I react when others attack me?  
(*Acts 7:57-60; Matthew 5:38-48; Luke 23:34; John 15:20; Romans 12:14-21; 1 Peter 2:23; 3:8-14*)