

Persecution

This week, you will need...

- Balloons
- A stone
- Some paper
- Colouring pens or paints

What's in the Box?

See if you can guess what we are doing today from these pictures...



Photos: Rene Asmusentico, Bob Smith (freemages.com), Markus Spiske (unsplash.com)

What's happening today?

Last time we learnt about opposition the apostles faced. This week, we focus on Stephen, an apostle who tells the truth about Jesus – but the Jewish leaders don't want to hear the truth, so they stop him.

Let's get started

Inflate some balloons – but don't tie a knot in them. Let them go and see if you can catch them whilst they whizz around the room!

Bible Time

In today's true story from the Bible, we will see that the Jewish leaders were trying to stop the news about Jesus spreading, but they couldn't. No matter what they did, the good news spread further and further away from them.

This is a long passage, so you may want to focus on the five scenes below. You could draw the scenes together using stick people and speech bubbles, or try positioning yourselves into freeze frames for the scenes!

The story can be found in **Acts 6: 7–8: 4**. You can read it from a Bible or find it here at [BibleGateway.com](https://www.biblegateway.com).

If you wanted to tackle some of Stephen's speech **with older children**, try focussing on the issue of the temple (Acts 7: 9, 31, 38 & 48) and then spend most of your time in 7: 51–8: 4.

The five scenes

1. Introduce Stephen, show what he was like and what he did (Acts 6: 3, 5, 8 & 10). Explain that the miracles he did showed that he really did have God's power – everyone should have listened to him.
2. The Jewish leaders wanted to stop him (6: 9) but the only things they could find to say were lies. (6: 13)
3. Stephen told the truth. The Jewish leaders became really angry. (7: 51-53)

4. The Jewish leaders stoned Stephen. The difference between the angry gang of leaders and Stephen is made very clear. The Jewish leaders should have been responsible and fair. Stephen saw the truth of Jesus with his own eyes and prayed for his murderers to be forgiven. (7: 54-60)
5. The Jewish leaders could not stop God from spreading the good news about Jesus (8: 1-4). Jesus' command from Acts 1: 8 is being obeyed in the strangest way we can imagine. God's plans are sometimes strange and difficult, but they always work!

You may like to watch [this video on YouTube](#) that tells the story.

Explore

The questions are split by age groups this week – although you might want to answer them all!

Climbers

Who was telling the truth about Jesus?
Stephen or the Jewish leaders?

Explorers

How did the Jewish leaders try to stop Stephen?

Pathfinders

Why did Stephen pray for those who were hurting him?

Everyone What happened next?

Explorers & Pathfinders – there is a worksheet for you with more questions on page 4.

Reflection

Try pondering these questions now and throughout the week.

- Even though Stephen died, how did Jesus win?
- Can you think of a time when you have faced opposition when talking about Jesus?
- How did it make you feel?
- How are we tempted to act? Compare this with how Stephen acted, how was Stephen helped?

Prayer

Write the words STRENGTH, COURAGE and FORGIVENESS on some pieces of paper and scrunch them up to look like stones (you may also want to colour in the paper).

Talk about how when people are unkind to us because we talk about Jesus, we might feel like being unkind back. If people 'throw stones', we want to 'throw stones'

Today's passage has helped me see some:

- Sin** I need to turn from
- Promises** I can trust in
- Examples** I can follow
- Commands** I need to obey
- Surprises** – things that surprised me or things I didn't understand

back. Talk about what some of these stones might be.

- Is that what Stephen did in today's story?
- Did he try to get back at those who were hurting him?
- What did he pray?

Unwrap a 'stone' each and ask what we should be praying for instead.

Pray for **STRENGTH** to stand firm, **COURAGE** to keep speaking about Jesus and **FORGIVENESS** for those who treat us badly because we love Jesus.

Games

High Priest's Footsteps

One person is the 'High Priest' and stands facing the wall. Everyone else is a 'Christian' – their aim is to sneak up to the 'High Priest' and touch them. Occasionally the 'High Priest' can turn around and, if they see someone moving, all the 'Christians' run back to the safe zone before the 'High Priest' tags them. If you're tagged, then it's your turn to take over as 'High Priest'!

Remember that when the Christians were chased out of Jerusalem, they spread out. They could not be stopped and the good news spread with them.

To the Ends of the Earth

Place the words **SAMARIA, JERUSALEM, JUDEA** and **ENDS OF THE EARTH** in four corners of a room.

One person stands in the middle of the room with their eyes covered. Everyone else chooses a corner to stand in. The person in the middle calls out a corner. If you are in that corner then you are **out** and the remaining people pick a new corner. When you have a winner, change the person in the middle. As your household is unlikely to be very big this will go quickly, so you can play a few rounds!

Remember that the Jewish leaders were trying to catch the Christians out and stop them from spreading the news about Jesus.

Activity

Stone Decorating

Use a stone from your garden or keep an eye out for a stone whilst out on a walk. Use pens or paints to decorate a stone. Maybe you could use some of the words from your prayer or a favourite Bible verse.

Photos: Pete Beard, Eric Ray, Evelyn Giggles (flickr.com)



There is a colouring sheet on page 5 you may like to colour in too.

Today's story is an ideal opportunity to learn more about persecuted Christians around the world. Visit the [Open Doors website](#) for some great resources for families. You could also look up the work of [Release International](#) and [Christian Solidarity Worldwide](#).

Songs

See if you can make up some actions, or learn some Makaton or British Sign Language words to worship along with your family! Click the title to view these on YouTube.

King of Me Rend Co. Kids

Strong and Brave Big Ministries

God is with Me Nick & Becky Drake

We are the Church Awesome Cutlery

Challenge

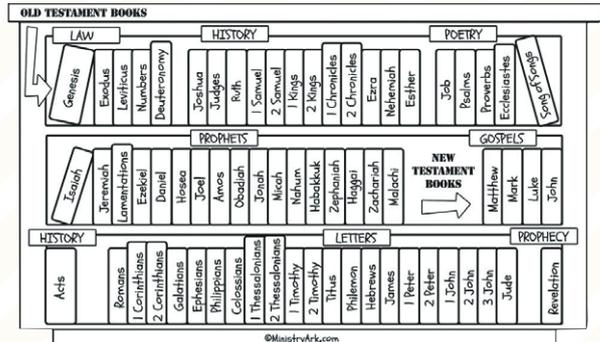
Why not use this time at home to learn the books of the Bible?

Which book of the Bible are we looking at this week?

🎵 **Books of the Bible** North Point Kids 🎵

(click to view the song on Youtube!)

Books of the Bible



Has someone hurt or upset you? Maybe write down somewhere "I will forgive..." and then their name.

Does anyone need to forgive you? Can you help them by saying sorry?



Mini Challenge

E	D	P	A	Y	P	E	K
L	N	F	F	A	V	R	I
R	E	O	R	I	E	D	N
E	E	D	G	S	A	N	D
D	O	R	T	Y	L	E	N
N	O	O	E	O	B	I	E
F	R	E	V	E	A	R	S
E	D	E	O	E	A	F	S

Can you find these words lurking somewhere in the grid?

- FORGIVE**
- LOVE**
- KINDNESS**
- FRIEND**
- RESTORE**
- BYGONE**
- PARDON**

Persecution

This true story can be found in Acts 6:7 - 8:3

Discover

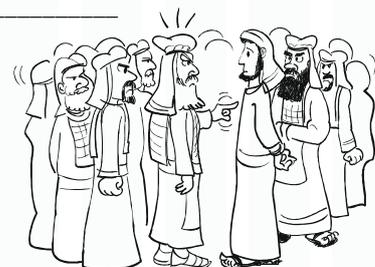
Why were the people and the religious leaders angry with Stephen? (7:51-53) _____

How did they first try to stop him? (6:9-13)

What did they do when this didn't work? (7:57-58)

What two things did Stephen see which encouraged him? (7:55-56)

What happened to Jesus' church after this? (8:1-2) _____



Think Spot

How did this persecution (8:1), help Jesus' promise in Acts 1:8 to come true?

Who has the real power in this story?



Discuss

Why does Stephen keep speaking? What made him so bold?
Why can we also be bold?

Do you know some people today who don't like to hear about Jesus? Why do you think that's so?

What are some of the different ways people who don't like to hear about Jesus persecute those who speak about Jesus?
Has any of this ever happened to you?

What can we do when this happens?

