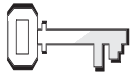


The Face of an Angel



References

Acts 6:1–8:4; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 87-106



Memory Verse

“Let us not give up meeting together . . . but let us encourage one another” (Hebrews 10:25, NIV).

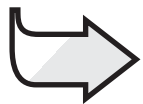


Objectives

The children will: **Know** that we help one another grow in faith.

Feel a desire to have a strong faith.

Respond by finding ways to encourage one another when faith is tested.



The Message

Believers encourage one another to grow in faith.

Monthly Theme

We learn about God together.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

The number of believers continues to grow so fast that the apostles can't take good care of all of them. So seven deacons are chosen to care for the poor widows and the elderly. Stephen, one of the deacons, does great wonders by God's grace and power. The Jewish leaders try to stop his work. Lies are spread about him, and he is brought to trial before the Sanhedrin. He presents a defense speech, outlining the history of God's people. When he brings Christ into the story, and reminds them that they killed Him, the Sanhedrin members are furious and have Stephen stoned to death.

This is a lesson about community.

Christ's church is constantly assaulted by the enemy. It's members are caught in the crossfire. Trials and discouragement plague believers everywhere. We are told to “carry each other's burdens” (Galatians 6:2, NIV). Believers encouraging one another in the church will strengthen the church to do great things for God. Children can learn to encourage others too.

Teacher Enrichment

“As trouble, difficulty, and persecution should increase, mutual exhortation and encouragement would prove to be of even greater benefit. The danger to personal safety that might be incurred by attending public worship would be far outweighed by the courage and strength that result from Christian fellowship” (*The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 464).

Interesting point: Saul was chosen by Christ to take the martyred Stephen's place. (See *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 102.)

Room Decorations

See Lesson 1.

Program Overview

Lesson Section	Minutes	Activities	Materials Needed
Welcome	ongoing	Greet students at door; hear pleased/troubled	none
1 Readiness Options	up to 10	<i>A. Crossing the Poison River</i> <i>B. Puzzled</i>	masking tape, 8 1/2" x 11" (or A4) sheet of paper for each child, Bible a simple puzzle with at least as many pieces as children in class, Bible
Any Time Prayer and Praise*	up to 10	Fellowship Songbook Mission Offering Prayer	none <i>Sing for Joy</i> <i>Children's Mission</i> offering container used last week class prayer request book or chalkboard and chalk
2 Bible Lesson	up to 20	Experiencing the Story Memory Verse Bible Study	none Bible, <i>Sing for Joy</i> Bibles
3 Applying the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Lift Off</i>	one balloon, Bible
4 Sharing the Lesson	up to 15	<i>Lifting Spirits</i>	balloon for each child

***Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.**

TEACHING THE LESSON

Welcome

Welcome students at the door. Ask how their week has been—what they are pleased/troubled about. Give directions for the Readiness Activity of your choice.



Readiness Activities

Select the activity that is most appropriate for your situation.

You Need:

- masking tape
- 8 1/2" x 11" (or A4) paper for each child
- Bible

A. Crossing the Poison River

Create a "river" (wide enough that no one can jump over it) on the floor by marking banks with masking tape. (Large church option: divide the class into smaller groups or take them outside.) Give each student an 8 1/2" x 11" (or A4) piece of paper and read the following instructions: **You have to cross the river, but it flows with poison and immediately kills anything that it touches. The piece of paper you're holding is a safe stepping stone across the river. You and your "stone" both have to cross the river.**

Allow time to develop a strategy. If the children haven't figured it out after several minutes, show the group how to cross the river by giving all the papers to one person who lays them down ahead of herself as she crosses, and by having the last person across pick up the papers behind him as he crosses.

Debriefing

Ask: **What happened?** (We found a way to cross the river.) **How did crossing the river make you feel?** (I needed help; worried that I couldn't do it alone.) **What did you learn from this activity?** (That we can work together to accomplish difficult things.) Read aloud Hebrews 10:25. **How might crossing the poison river help us understand this verse?** (Encouraging people is a way to work together; working together encourages people.) **How can we encourage one another? And that brings us to our message for today:**



BELIEVERS ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER TO GROW IN FAITH.

Say that with me.

You Need:

- a simple puzzle with at least as many pieces as children in class
- Bible

B. Puzzled

Give each person in class one or more pieces of a simple puzzle. (Be sure to distribute all pieces.) Tell the group to put the puzzle together. (To make this more difficult, do not show the finished picture until the children have tried for some time.)

Debriefing

Ask: **What was hardest about putting the puzzle together?** (nothing; no picture; placing first pieces) **What was easiest?** (placing the last piece, etc.) **Were anyone's pieces unimportant?** (no) **Could you have done this puzzle without everyone helping?** (no) **Why not?** (Because we needed every piece.) Read aloud Hebrews

10:25. **What other ways can we help encourage one another?** (Accept any reasonable response.) **In today's lesson we will learn more. Today's message is:**



BELIEVERS ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER TO GROW IN FAITH.

Say that with me.

Prayer and Praise

Any
Time



Fellowship

Report the students' joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). Review the memory verse and allow time for sharing experiences from last week's lesson study. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special warm greeting to all visitors.



Suggested Songs

- "The Family of God" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 139)
- "Jesus Bids Us Shine" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 133)
- "We Are the Church, Everyone" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 143)
- "Anywhere With Jesus" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 45)



Mission

Share a story from *Children's Mission*. Help the children identify people who helped each other grow in faith.



Offering

As you collect the offering, say: **Our gifts of money go to help others become part of the family of God and to grow in faith.**

You Need:

- offering container used last week



Prayer

Give the children a chance to share their needs and to pray for and encourage one another. Write their concerns in the class prayer request book, or on the chalkboard. Put a star by answered prayers. Thank God for your church family and pray for help to find ways to help each other grow in faith. Suggest prayer partners and invite the children to pray specifically for their partner during the coming week.

You Need:

- class prayer request book or chalkboard and chalk

Bible Lesson

Experiencing the Story

Involve the children in an interactive story. (To dramatize this story would be a negative experience.) The children will respond to the following words in the ways described below.

When you say ...	The students will ...
Stephen	Put thumbs up.
calm	Fold hands as for prayer.

Read or tell the story.

As the number of believers grew, the apostles became too busy with all the preaching and teaching. So the believers chose seven deacons. **Stephen** [*thumbs up*] was one of them.

The deacons took care of the poor widows and elderly people. As **Stephen** [*thumbs up*] worked, he comforted and encouraged the people by telling them Jesus' story. And God blessed his work with power from the Holy Spirit. God also worked miracles through **Stephen** [*thumbs up*].

The believers loved **Stephen** [*thumbs up*], but the Jewish leaders did not. They hated his teaching about Jesus. As a way to stop **Stephen** [*thumbs up*], some of the Jewish leaders paid some men to tell lies about him.

The lies upset everybody—the people, the leaders, and the teachers of the law. So the men who hated **Stephen** [*thumbs up*] had a good excuse to hunt for him. They brought him before the Sanhedrin, a sort of Jewish government.

Liars came to the meeting, also. Their false reports must have hurt **Stephen's**

[*thumbs up*] feelings, but he trusted God and stayed **calm** [*fold hands*]. Everyone noticed the glow on **Stephen's** [*thumbs up*] face. The Bible says his face looked like the face of an angel because he was so **calm** [*fold hands*].

The high priest glared at **Stephen** [*thumbs up*]. "Are these things true?" he demanded.

Stephen [*thumbs up*] didn't answer yes or no. Staying **calm** [*fold hands*], he began to tell God's story—how God chose the Jewish people and made them part of His plan for saving the world.

Stephen [*thumbs up*] spoke about God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. **Stephen** [*thumbs up*] reminded the leaders that their ancestors had turned against Moses.

"You stubborn leaders!" he said. "You have not given your hearts to God! You won't listen to God! Now you have killed the Sinless One!"

That did it. Everyone started shouting at once. Some of the leaders were so angry that they ground their teeth. But **Stephen** [*thumbs up*] stayed **calm** [*fold hands*]. Their anger could not touch **Stephen** [*thumbs up*] because he was looking to Jesus. He saw something no one else could see.

"Look! I see heaven open. And I see the Son of Man standing at God's right side!" (Acts 7:56, ICB).

The leaders covered their ears with their hands and ran for **Stephen** [*thumbs up*]. They hurried him from the building. They dragged him through the streets, all the way outside the city. There they tore off their coats, rolled up their sleeves, and tried to bury him in a hail of stones.

Stephen [*thumbs up*] fell on his knees and cried, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" Even with his last breath **Stephen** [*thumbs up*] stayed **calm** [*fold*

hands). How he wished that his attackers could find salvation. And later at least one of them did.

The Holy Spirit wants to make you and me **calm** [*fold hands*] today. He wants to make us encouragers too.

Debriefing

Ask: **If you lived in Jerusalem and knew Stephen, would you want to be his friend? Why or why not?** (No, I might get killed too; Yes, he was always calm, etc. Accept any reasonable response.)

Suppose the believers in Bethany are thinking about inviting Stephen to be their church pastor. They ask you to describe Stephen as a minister; what will you say? (He teaches about Jesus; he helps people; he is an encourager; he doesn't get angry; some of the Jewish leaders hate him; etc.)

What did the Holy Spirit do to encourage Stephen? (He showed Stephen a vision of heaven; He helped him stay calm, etc.)

In what ways was Stephen's death like that of Jesus? Read aloud Acts 7:60 and Luke 23:34. (He did not try to get even; his last words were to ask forgiveness for the people who hurt him, etc.)

How can you have faith like Stephen's? (Read the Bible and pray; go to church; share about Jesus with others.)

Memory Verse

Read aloud
Hebrews 10:25, NIV.
("Let us not give up meeting together . . . but let us encourage one another.")

Say: **This text encourages believers**

You Need:

- Bible
- *Sing for Joy*

to meet together for worshiping God because that is an important way that we encourage each other to grow in faith.

Sing the memory verse to the tune of "Give Us Your Peace" (*Sing for Joy*, No. 103). (See page 36.)

Let us not give up
Meeting together,
But let us encourage
One another.

Bible Study

Say: **Stephen told the Sanhedrin many Bible stories that you know too. Let's read parts of Stephen's speech to find some of them.**

Adults assist as needed. Choose the verses you want the children to read. After each, ask the children what they remember about the Bible character.

Abraham - Acts 7:2-5 (The story goes to verse 8.)

Joseph - Acts 7:9-15

Moses - Acts 7:17-22, 30-33, etc.
(Story is in verses 17-44. Select verses.)

David and Solomon - Acts 7:45-47

Debriefing

Ask: **Where do you think Stephen learned about these people?** (church, synagogue, reading scripture) **How did remembering these men help Stephen?** (It gave him confidence to know God was with him.) **How can these stories help us?** (They encourage us; help us know that God cares about us.) **Let's say our message together:**



BELIEVERS ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER TO GROW IN FAITH.

You Need:

- Bibles

3

Applying the Lesson

You Need:

- a balloon
- Bible

Lift Off

Blow up and tie a balloon. Ask the children to stand in a circle and lock arms. Toss the balloon into the circle of children and tell them to keep the balloon afloat with their feet. At first this will be fun, but after a little while this activity will become a chore.

Debriefing

Ask: **How does it feel to have to keep the balloon up? Did you feel responsible for it? Did you get tired? What were you thinking?**

Read aloud Galatians 6:9, 10. **How is this text like the balloon game?**

(Sometimes we can become weary while doing good.)

How can you and your friends help each other to grow in faith? (We can help each other study and pray; do all the study activities the best we can; don't disturb others; etc.)

Read aloud Hebrews 10:25. **How can you encourage someone this week? Let the children give suggestions. So what is the point of getting together at church? Why do we come?** (We come to lift the spirits of those in our church family.) **Let's say today's message together.**



BELIEVERS ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER TO GROW IN FAITH.

Hebrews 10:25

Let us not give up Meet-ing to - ge - ther,

But let - us en - cour - age one - a - noth - er.

4

Sharing the Lesson

Lifting Spirits

Form pairs and give a balloon to each pair. The child who lives closest to the church blows up the balloon, keeping the air in with his fingers. (Don't tie it off.)

The child holding the balloon passes it to the other child without letting the air out.

The second child lets the air escape while the first child says as many compliments or encouraging comments about him or her as possible until the air is all gone. (If the child holding the balloon lets the air out slowly, the "encouraging" child will talk longer.) Give out new balloons and repeat. (The second child blows up the balloon.)

Debriefing

Have everyone say the memory verse together. ("Let us not give up meeting together . . . but let us encourage one another" [Hebrews 10:25, NIV].) Ask:

How do you feel when you encourage someone? (happy, good, etc.) **How do you think the person you encouraged feels?** (better than before) **That's what our message for today is about:**



BELIEVERS ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER TO GROW IN FAITH.

Say that with me.

Closing

Ask a child to pray and thank Jesus for encouraging us every day. Then pray that the children will remember to encourage one another.

You Need:

- balloon for each child

The Face of an Angel

References

Acts 6:1–8:4; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 87-106

Memory Verse

“Let us not give up meeting together . . . but let us encourage one another” (Hebrews 10:25, NIV).

The Message

Believers encourage one another to grow in faith.

One Sabbath the pastor told the church that Brother Santana’s wife was in the hospital. Pedro and Sarita wanted to encourage Brother and Sister Santana. So they made a pretty card. Mother helped them write a note in the card. They helped make some food to take to the Santanas’ home.

The Santanas were so happy! Pedro and Sarita were happy too. They had encouraged their friends.

A long time ago another church had people who needed help. Today’s Bible story tells how they were encouraged.

The apostles were very, very busy. Many believers were joining the new church. Some of the believers were widows. Others were elderly. All needed food and care. The apostles couldn’t preach and teach and give out food too. So the believers chose seven men to help. They called these men deacons.

Stephen was one of these deacons.

Richly blessed by God, he comforted and encouraged the people. He made them think of Jesus. And God gave him power to do great miracles.

Everyone in the church loved Stephen.

However, Jews in the city didn’t love him. They hated his teaching about Jesus. Stephen’s

words were so power-

ful that these Jews couldn’t argue with him. They decided that they had to stop him! What could they do? They decided to pay some men to tell lies about Stephen.

The lies upset everybody—the ordinary people, the leaders, and the teachers of the law. The leaders sent men to bring Stephen to a meeting. And they had the liars come too, so they could accuse him. The leaders watched Stephen carefully. They expected him to be nervous. Instead, Stephen’s face glowed. The Bible says his face looked like the face of an angel.

The high priest glared at Stephen. “Are these things true?” he growled. He was speaking of the lies that had been told about Stephen.

Stephen didn’t answer yes or no. Instead, he began to tell the story of the Jewish people. He told about God’s plan for sending a Saviour to the world.

First, Stephen reminded them of God’s promise to Abraham. Then he talked about Abraham’s son, Isaac. And Isaac’s son, Jacob. And Jacob’s son, Joseph, who, through God’s power, became a ruler in Egypt. Stephen reminded the leaders how God had used Joseph to protect Jacob’s family during the terrible famine.

Then Stephen reminded them of Moses. “Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt. But our ancestors turned against Moses. You stubborn Jewish leaders!” he said. “You have not given your hearts to God! You won’t listen to Him! You do not hear what the Holy Spirit is trying to tell you. Your ancestors were like this! And you are just like them! Your fathers tried to hurt every prophet who ever lived. Those prophets said long ago that the Righteous One would come. But your fathers killed them. And now you have turned against the Righteous One and killed *Him*.”

That did it. Everyone started shouting at once. But Stephen stayed calm. Filled



with the Holy Spirit, he was looking up. He saw something no one else could see. "Look! I see heaven open. And I see the Son of Man standing at God's right side!" (Acts 7:56, ICB).

The leaders covered their ears with their hands and ran for Stephen. They dragged him through the streets, all the way outside the city. There they tore off their coats. And they threw stones at Stephen.

Stephen died calmly, just as Jesus did. He didn't fight against the Jewish leaders. He fell on his knees and cried in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them!" After this prayer of mercy, he died.

Stephen encouraged the believers as he cared for their needs. The Holy Spirit filled him with love for others. The Holy Spirit wants us to help and encourage others as Stephen did.

Daily Activities

Sabbath

- Take a walk with your family. Find a quiet place and read your lesson story together.
- Look for examples in nature of something encouraging. (For example, a river provides water for the trees along its banks.)
- Thank God for things that encourage us.
- Read Hebrews 10:25 in your Bible.

Sunday

- During family worship talk about the work of deacons and deaconesses in your church. Write below four things deacons and deaconesses do.

- Make a thank-you card for a deacon or deaconess. Pray for each one.
- Read part of your Bible story in Acts 6:1-10.
- Make 14 church-shaped cutouts—one for each memory verse word, and one for the Bible text. Write a word on each.

Monday

- Together with your family, read more from Acts 6:11-7:7, 54-60.
- Write the letters of Stephen's name one under the other. Beside each letter write a word or sentence that tells something about this Bible hero. For instance: S—servant of God.
- Arrange your memory verse cutouts in order. Why is it good for believers to meet together?

Tuesday

- At family worship talk about the following: If Stephen was your age, would you choose him for a friend? Why? What would Stephen probably say if you did not do your homework? Or study your Bible and pray?

- Your friends want to do something you know is wrong. And you want to be an encourager, like Stephen. What might you say to your friends?
- Read Proverbs 3:5-8. Pray that God will help you encourage others.

- Put your memory verse cutouts in order.

Wednesday

- Look at the sky. Read Acts 7:55. Draw a picture of what Stephen saw.
- During worship pass a stone around. Whoever has the stone is to say something encouraging to others in the family.
- Say your memory verse to an adult.

Thursday

- Encouragement helps us grow in faith. Read Galatians 6:2. With your family, talk about how you could encourage the following people:

An adult who is feeling tired.

A child who is lonely.

A friend who feels left out.

- Make a plan to encourage a lonely person today.

Friday

- Tell your Bible story to your family. Tell what you learned about encouraging others.
- Act out one good deed you did this week. The person who guesses it will act out a good deed. Continue until everyone has a turn. Read together 2 Thessalonians 3:13. Thank God for encouraging Bible verses.
- Write short notes to encourage your family. Decorate your messages. Seal them and trade envelopes. Open a note when you need encouragement.
- Say the memory verse with your family.