

Acts 7:1-53

Stephen Takes Us “Back to School”

Scripture: Acts 7:1-53 (various passages)

Memory Verse: Romans 15:4 *“For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope.”*

Lesson Focus: Stephen makes his defense before the religious leaders and provides us a grand tour of Old Testament history. We will use this lesson as an opportunity to take the kids “back to school” teaching some Bible basics about the Old Testament and challenge them to be good students of the Word like Stephen was!

Activities and Crafts: Know the Word Coloring Picture, Word Search of different terms from lesson, Bring it Home Discussion for 3rd – 5th.
Craft for 1st/2nd Grade: Books of the Bible

Starter Activity: History Challenge

Consider starting off the lesson quizzing the kids a little bit on their history. * Most kids should be familiar with some of the more famous people in history. Have some discussion before you quiz them.

Q: What is history? A: Events or people of the past. For example, whatever you had for breakfast today is now history! *

Q: Besides Jesus, who would you say are some of the most known or famous people of history and why?

Time Magazine has a listing of 100 of the most significant or important people in all of history (and they give Jesus #1!). I’d like to see if any of you can guess who some of these other famous people of history are. Let’s play “Guess Who”! *

- 1) I was the first president of the US. (George Washington)
- 2) I was the head of the Nazis. (Adolf Hitler)
- 3) I was a Jewish teenage girl hiding during Nazi Germany. Millions of people have read my diary. (Anne Frank)
- 4) I’m on the two dollar bill and I wrote the Declaration of Independence. (Thomas Jefferson) *
- 5) I invented the lightbulb. (Thomas Edison)
- 6) My face is on every penny and I successfully fought for the end of slavery in the USA (Abraham Lincoln).
- 7) In 1492 I led a voyage across the Atlantic Ocean that began the mass migration of people into the Americas. (Christopher Columbus)

As we continue in the book of Acts, we pick up where we left off with Stephen. Last week we saw him get arrested by the bad guys for teaching about Jesus. Today he is going to “school” them all with a **history** lesson of his own! * Let’s take a look!

Bible Study:

Acts 7:1-2a: Remember Stephen was arrested and is now surrounded by all of the Jewish religious leaders pointing fingers at him with lies and false accusations. The rest of this long chapter is his response to them. (**Teachers:** I recommend reading only sections of this long chapter and highlighting each figure of history as you see below. Also use this lesson as an opportunity to help the kids become better acquainted with their Bibles)

Stephen is about to “school” the Jewish religious leaders with a history lesson. But before we continue, let’s pause and talk about some Bible basics. (**1st-2nd Grade Teachers:** Consider passing out the Bibles * you have in your lower-left cabinet and using them throughout the lesson. See also the craft for the lesson and consider referring to it as you march through different books of the Bible)

1. Have the kids close their Bibles and then re-open to the book of Matthew. *
2. From Matthew, ask them what the first four books of the New Testament are (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John).
3. Have them turn through these books and as they do tell them that these are called the “Gospels” that tell us about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. *
4. Now ask them what book is next? Acts! And all we have been reading in Acts so far is what happened RIGHT AFTER Jesus’s life, death, and resurrection!
5. Q: What are all of the books from Matthew to the end of the Bible called? A: The New Testament. They cover everything from Jesus’s first coming until His return!
6. But what about all of the books of the Bible that came before Matthew? (Point out how large a chunk of the Bible this is!) This is called the Old Testament! *
7. Q: What is the first book of the Bible? Genesis. Read **Genesis 1:1**. * This describes the beginning of EVERYTHING! Stephen’s history lesson starts all the way back in Genesis and he will take his audience (and us) on a tour of many of the famous historical figures of the Old Testament. Let’s go! *

Acts 7:2b-3: We saw God created all things in **Genesis 1**, but now we “fast-forward” many years to **Genesis 12** to learn about another important man of OT history. *

Q: Who did the God of glory that created all things appear to? A: Abraham (different man than Abraham Lincoln!).

Read Genesis 12:1-3. * This is what Stephen quoted and we see God made some pretty amazing promises to Abraham which set the stage for the rest of the story of the Bible (and are ultimately fulfilled through Jesus)! As you continue reading through Genesis you learn about how from Abraham came Isaac, and from Isaac came Jacob, and from Jacob came the twelve patriarchs or brothers who were the leaders of the Jewish people. * Next, Stephen will teach us about the most famous of those twelve brothers.

Acts 7:9-10: This man was sold as a slave by his brothers to the Egyptians and was even thrown in jail for something he didn’t do. But God was with him and he even became the Egyptian King’s (Pharaoh) right-hand man!

Q: Who is this man that God was with and delivered out of trouble? A: Joseph! *

Read Genesis 41:38-41. This shows the favor God had on Joseph. And his brothers and father end up moving to Egypt where they dwelled and lived for generations growing as a people. But after many years there was a new Pharaoh who did not like them and forced them to become slaves. That brings us to our next figure Stephen teaches about.

Acts 7:20: Who was born at this time? Moses! Stephen now takes us into the book of Exodus which comes after Genesis. In this book we read about how Moses was raised by the Egyptian princess even though he was Jewish. Eventually he flees from Egypt where God meets him in a burning bush.

Acts 7:32-34: God sends Moses back to Egypt to rescue the Jewish people that have been slaves in Egypt. This is the same Moses through whom God brought miraculous plagues upon Egypt to persuade Pharaoh to let the Jewish people go. But it wasn't until the tenth and final plague that the King finally let them go. * But afterwards King Pharaoh changed his mind and chased the people all the way to the Red Sea.

Q: Who knows what happens next? A: God split the Red Sea so that the people could cross on dry land. But when the King's army chased after them the waters came down on them! Wow!

Read Exodus 14:31: The people saw the works of God and they believed in Him! But as Stephen points out, it wasn't for long.

Acts 7:37-39: Their hearts quickly turned away from God. And as you continue to read through more books of the Old Testament (**Teachers:** Consider having the kids flip thru the pages of the OT) you see this troubling pattern continue and worsen: While God constantly loves and rescues these people, they continue to reject and ignore Him!

As Stephen continues, he does mention a few bright spots. Let's look at two examples:

Read Joshua 6:27: Joshua was a man who loved the Lord and God used him to bring the people into the land He had promised to them (now known as the land of Israel). He is most famous for leading the people around a city named Jericho.

Q: What happened after they marched around it the seventh time? A: The walls came tumbling down!

Read 1 Samuel 17:44-46: David was made famous by his defeat of Goliath, but was even more famous because God promised that the Savior of the world would come through him. And we see in Matthew that Jesus's family tree indeed goes back to David!

Acts 7:51-53: Stephen now wraps up his history lesson with a final challenge showing how the religious leaders of his day all have the same hardened hearts against God that the people had throughout all of the pages of the Old Testament.

Read Isaiah 1:2: This Isaiah is one of the many prophets who warned the people to repent and turn back to God. But just as the people then were guilty of ignoring and persecuting those whom God sent, so were the religious leaders who murdered Jesus whom God had sent!

Key Point: Many of you know what happens next, but we will cover that next week. The challenge for this week is that we recognize the patterns of sin and rejection of God in our own lives! Stephen would challenge us to repent and turn from our sin as well! God is still gracious and loving and proved it by sending Jesus to rescue us from our sins.

I also think Stephen would have us know our Bibles better, so we would see how all of the history in the OT points to Jesus Christ's coming for us. Be a student of the Word! *

FIND THE TREASURE



Read
Jeremiah 32:33
What did these people do wrong?

PARENT CHALLENGE
Besides Jesus, who do you think is the most important person in history?

Read Romans 15:4
Why should we be good students of the Bible?

