

# A SERVANT SPEAKS

Stephen  
Acts 6–7

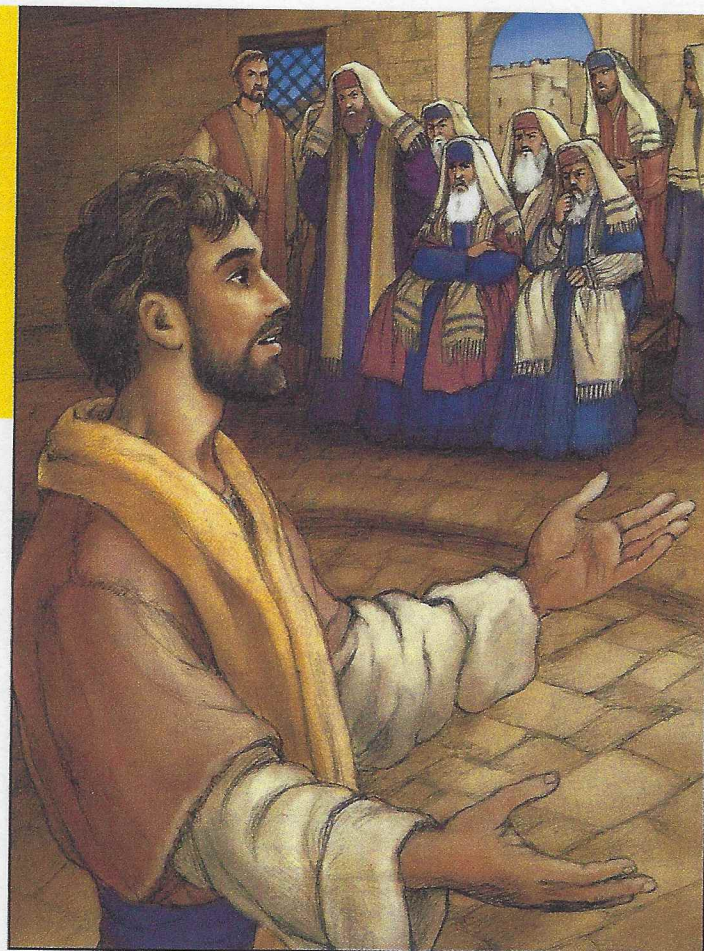
**A**s the twelve apostles taught about Jesus in the temple, many Jews believed and were baptized. **The Early Church started to grow very quickly.** Among the Christians, **there were many widows**, women whose husbands had died and who didn't have money to take care of themselves. The Christians took up offerings to buy food for them. This helped some of the widows, but not all of them.

When the apostles learned about it, they were concerned. **They wanted to make sure everyone who needed help got it, but Jesus had sent them to preach the Good News, not to serve food.** They said, "Brothers, pick out seven men who are full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty." These men would make sure every person got help. One of those seven men was named Stephen.

**Stephen was full of grace and power by the Holy Spirit.** He did great miracles, just like the apostles were doing. When some Jews who didn't believe in Jesus started arguing with him, the Holy Spirit made Stephen so wise he proved they were wrong. **Sadly, they didn't believe Stephen. They just got more angry with him.**

They took Stephen to the high priest, Caiaphas, and also to the same Jewish court that had decided to put Jesus to death. The Jewish court looked at Stephen and noticed that his face was glowing and showed that he had talked with God.

**The Holy Spirit made Stephen very wise.** Stephen told the Jewish leaders about all the times in the Old Testament when God had raised up a leader for His people Israel but the Israelites had refused to follow him.



He talked about leaders like Joseph, Moses, and King David—and how the Israelites had grumbled against them and refused to obey them. **And now, when God had sent His own promised Son, they had done even worse to Him—they had betrayed and murdered Jesus.**

**When the priests and other leaders heard this, they got so mad** they put their fingers in their ears, rushed together at Stephen, dragged him outside, and picked up big stones and rocks to throw at him and kill him.

**As Stephen was being stoned, he prayed to Jesus, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."** He said, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." Then Stephen died, and his spirit went to heaven.

## Stephen

The name *Stephen* means "crown."

Stephen was not one of the twelve apostles. He was one of the seven who were chosen to help people in need.



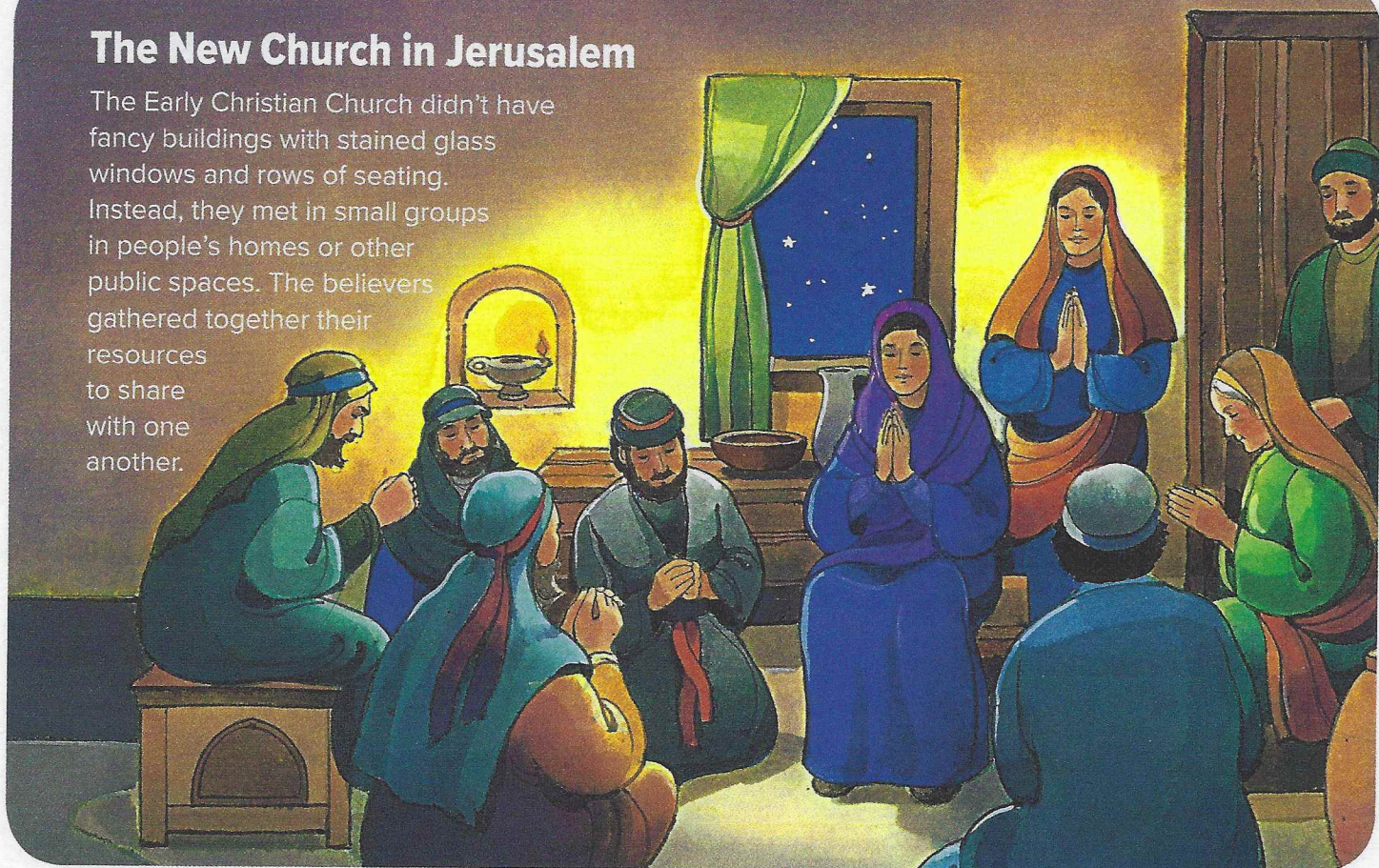
God gave Stephen the power to work miracles and to speak powerfully.

Stephen was the first martyr. A martyr is a person who dies for Jesus.



## The New Church in Jerusalem

The Early Christian Church didn't have fancy buildings with stained glass windows and rows of seating. Instead, they met in small groups in people's homes or other public spaces. The believers gathered together their resources to share with one another.



### Widows

Things were very different for women during Bible times.

A widow is someone whose husband has died. If a woman's husband died, she could not easily get a job to pay for the expenses of daily life. Often adult children would care for their widowed mothers. But if a woman had no family, she would have no way to support herself. First Timothy 5 gives detailed instructions for caring for widows.

### Deacons and Deaconesses

*One way that God cares for people who need help today is through workers in the church called deacons and deaconesses. They share the love of Jesus through spiritual care, teaching the Christian faith, and physically caring for people in many different ways.*



### Bible Verse: Ephesians 4:32

Be kind to one another.

### Scripture Connections

Read these verses for more connections to serving those who have needs.

- Galatians 5:13
- 1 Peter 4:10



## A SERVANT SPEAKS—STEPHEN

### Unit 3, Lesson 10

## Stephen Serves God

**Directions:** The Holy Spirit helped Stephen to boldly speak the truth of God's Word as he served God. Use the words found in the Word Boxes below to complete the Bible account of Stephen's service.

Stephen was full of grace and \_\_\_\_\_. He did great \_\_\_\_\_ and signs among the people. Some people in the synagogue where Stephen preached \_\_\_\_\_ with him. These people did not \_\_\_\_\_ the \_\_\_\_\_ the Holy Spirit gave Stephen. So they stirred up the officials in the \_\_\_\_\_ and brought Stephen before them. \_\_\_\_\_ witnesses told lies about Stephen. As Stephen sat there, those who saw him saw his face was like that of an \_\_\_\_\_.

#### WORD BOX

temple  
False  
power  
argued  
wonders  
angel  
wisdom  
understand

When Stephen was allowed to speak, he first told those in the temple the truth about \_\_\_\_\_. As he continued to speak God's Word, Stephen also told the truth about Isaac, Jacob, and Jacob's son \_\_\_\_\_. Stephen also preached about Moses and about how the people \_\_\_\_\_ him and all the other prophets \_\_\_\_\_ sent to them. Then Stephen told the people that they were the ones who betrayed and murdered \_\_\_\_\_.

#### WORD BOX

persecuted  
Abraham  
God  
Joseph  
Jesus

When the people in the temple heard what Stephen said, they became very \_\_\_\_\_. But Stephen, filled with the Holy Spirit, gazed into \_\_\_\_\_ and saw God's \_\_\_\_\_. In his vision, Stephen saw Jesus as He stood at God's \_\_\_\_\_ hand. When Stephen told the people what he saw, the people rushed at him, cast him out of the \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ him. A young man named \_\_\_\_\_ saw all that was going on. As Stephen died, he asked Jesus to receive his spirit. Stephen also asked Jesus to \_\_\_\_\_ the sin of the people.

#### WORD BOX

glory  
Saul  
forgive  
right  
angry  
city  
heaven  
stoned

**"Be kind to one another"** (Ephesians 4:32). How did Stephen show kindness to those who hated him?

How are we able to show kindness to others, even those who may not like us?