Peter Preaches on Pentecost

LESSON 40

Unit 11: The Church Begins

Lesson Aim

Students will tell others the good news about Jesus

Scripture

Matthew 28:19, 20; Luke 24:49; Acts 2:1-42 (The Lord works through Peter and the other apostles to spread the good news of His kingdom)

Experience It

(5-10 minutes)

Purpose
Find two promises and a command from God

Materials
Bibles
Dry erase board

Prepare It

Write on the dry erase board:
Can you find these things?
A Promise—Luke 24:49
A Command—Matthew 28:19, 20
A Promise—Matthew 28:20

Do It

As the group gathers, let them look for these items in their Bibles. Have slips of paper available for them to write down their answers.

Guide the discussion afterwards using these questions: What was the promise? Who made it? Who was it promised to? Is it conditional—does something have to be done in order for the promise to be fulfilled?

After Jesus went back to Heaven to be with His Father, the apostles returned to Jerusalem. One of those who waited for Jesus to fulfill His promise of the Holy Spirit was Peter. How much do you know about Peter?

Study It

(10 minutes)

Purpose
Participate in a balloon burst quiz on Peter

Materials
Quiz balloons—minimum of 10 or one for each student

Prepare It

Prepare answers for a balloon burst quiz on Peter by writing the following on strips of paper: rock; Andrew; fishing; apostles; Christ; denied; water; Pentecost; Jerusalem; two. Before class, insert the strips and blow up the balloons.

Do It

Optional: If you have less than ten students, give two balloons to some of them. If you have more than ten students, make duplicates of the slips so there will be one slip and balloon for each student.

Let students select balloons and burst them by poking them with pins or sitting on them. Read the statements and let students answer with the

word that completes the sentence.

If more than one person has the correct word, let them all give it.

1. **Peter's name means** (rock).
2. **His brother's name was** (Andrew).
3. **His occupation was** (fishing).
4. **He was chosen as one of the twelve** (apostles).
5. **He confessed that Jesus was the** (Christ), **the Son of the living God.**
6. **He** (denied) **Jesus three times.**
7. **He tried to go to meet Jesus when Jesus walked on the** (water).
8. **He preached the sermon on the Day of** (Pentecost) **when three thousand became followers of Jesus.**
9. **He became one of the leaders of Christ's church at** (Jerusalem).
10. **In his later years, he wrote** (two) **books of the New Testament.**

In Jerusalem the apostles waited together as Jesus had told them for the promised Holy Spirit. Jesus told His followers that the Spirit would come to help them as they introduced the gospel message to the world. Prayerfully, the eleven apostles had chosen Matthias to replace Judas, who had betrayed Jesus. Now these twelve men waited eagerly for the Spirit to come to give them the wisdom and power to do the job that God had given them to do. **Let's see what happened on the day the Holy Spirit came.**

Purpose
Complete a skit of Peter and John talking about Pentecost

Materials
Bibles
"Tell Somebody" Activity Sheet

Express It

(20 minutes)

Prepare It

Photocopy activity sheet—one per student

Do It

Distribute copies of the "Tell Somebody" activity sheet. Have students work in pairs on the first section of this exercise. Answers: PENTECOST, WIND, FIRE, HOLY SPIRIT, NATION, WINE, POUR, LORD, SIGNS, REPENT, SINS, BAPTIZED, FELLOWSHIP, BREAD.

Then have students complete the word search on their own and find the secret message. Answer: TELL OTHERS THAT JESUS IS ALIVE

What special day was it when God sent the Holy Spirit to the apostles? (Pentecost.) This was a Jewish holiday that came fifty days after the offering of the barley sheaf at Passover. Its name, Pentecost, means "fifty." Like Passover, it was one of the three great pilgrim festivals when the city was filled with Jews from nations other than Israel. Even Gentiles who had accepted Judaism were there. It was a family celebration where all members came together. Some scholars have estimated there may have been up to two and one-half million people in Jerusalem for Passover. For the followers of Jesus, it was fifty days since Jesus' resurrection.

Have volunteers read aloud Acts 2:5-8. **Why do you think God sent the Holy Spirit on this special holiday when Peter had an international audience?** (So they could all hear about Jesus at one time; take the message back home with them.) Unlike Passover, Pentecost was celebrated only one day. It was this one crucial day when people were gathered from every nation that God sent the Holy Spirit to start the apostles out on spreading the gospel to all nations. God used this miracle to show that

salvation is for all people regardless of their race, color, nationality, sex, or age.

Check out Acts 2:24. What was one of the very first things Peter told the people about Jesus? (That God had raised Him from the dead.) Perhaps many of the Jewish worshipers had stayed during these fifty days between Passover and Pentecost. The events of Jesus' trial and crucifixion were still fresh in their memories. Now these apostles who were witnesses of Jesus' resurrection and ascension were able to proclaim the highest proof that what Jesus had claimed was true. He was indeed the only Son of God, their Messiah, and the Christ!

What did Andrew say showed that the audience understood Peter's message? (They asked what they should do.) **What did Peter tell them?** (Repent and be baptized to have their sins forgiven.) We must not only be sorry for our sins, we need to do something about them. Only when we confess our sins, let God forgive them, and are determined to not do them again, can we really live as Jesus wants us to. Only then can we have God's help to guide us. Then He can work through us to carry out His plan for all people just as He did through the apostles.

What happened to the three thousand people who believed about Jesus? Ask a volunteer to read verse 41 aloud. (They were baptized.) This baptism showed that they were choosing to obey Jesus and wanted to follow Him.

Check out verse 42. What four things did the early Christians do together? (Devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.) "Baby" Christians need to grow. When new believers are in a group, they have a better chance to do that as they learn from more mature Christians.

What do you think is meant by the "breaking of bread"? This refers to the Communion service held to remember Jesus' sacrifice for sin. These services were modeled after the last supper Jesus had with His apostles on the night He was betrayed.

Peter said that Pentecost was the beginning of God's church. **What is the church?** (People who follow Jesus; building where they meet.) The word "church" is from a Greek word meaning "called out assembly." The church of God is like a family where believers are all brothers and sisters who have a common father—God.

Peter and the other apostles were willing to speak out for Jesus. We must be willing to confess Christ's name before others, too.

▼ Live It ▲

(15-20 minutes)

Purpose
Work in teams to find ways to reach others with the good news about Jesus

Materials
Bibles
"Think Tank" Activity Sheet

Prepare It

Photocopy activity sheet—one per student

Do It

Divide the group into three teams. Hand out copies of the "Think Tank" activity sheet. Ask a volunteer to read the directions. Assign one situation to each team. Explain that in a think tank, the members all contribute. They try to think of as many new ways to do something as they can. Encourage these teams to come up with as many ways as they can to resolve each situation. Have teams select someone to be a secretary and write down the ideas. Allow about five minutes to let the teams finish this

part of the exercise and choose one idea to role play.

When teams have worked out their role plays, have them present them to the group. Always encourage students who take part in these mini-dramas. In that way they will be more likely to participate in similar activities in the future. If students are having a hard time playing one person, suggest they reverse roles. You might want to step into a role yourself if students are having a difficult time. End the role plays when the point is made or students are stuck.

Discuss the role plays using questions like:

How did you feel playing the part of the Christian(s) trying to help the person in the situation? What do you think that person was feeling? Why did the characters act the way they did? Why do you think the characters reacted the way they did? Why is it so easy for Christian kids to ignore kids who are in these kinds of situations? What could we do to help carry out God's plan and reach hurting kids like these?

If you have never accepted Jesus as your Savior and Lord, you should consider making that great choice now. If you are already a Christian, you should tell others of God's plan of salvation.

Prayer/Praise

Close in prayer where you go around the class with each person adding one word to a prayer such as "thanks," "help," or name of a person to reach with the love of God.

Tell Somebody

Here are some clues to help you review the Scripture, Acts 2:1-47. The answers are hidden in the word search. Cross off the answers as you find them. The leftover letters will spell out a special message for you!

1. This is what we call the birthday of the church. v. 1 ________________
2. This blows in the tree tops. v. 2 _______
3. What is it called when there is light, heat, and flame at the same time? v. 3 _______
4. The trinity includes God, Jesus, and who else? v. 4 ____________________
5. Another word for country is ___________ . v. 5
6. This drink comes from aged smashed grapes. v. 13 _______
7. Joel prophesied about a day when God would do what with His Spirit? v. 18 _______
8. Who offers us the gift of salvation? v. 21 _______
9. What is another word for miracles and wonders? v. 22 _________
10. This word means to stop doing wrong and start doing right. v. 38 __________
11. From what do people need forgiveness? v. 38 _______
12. About 3,000 people believed and did what on the day of Pentecost? v. 41 ______________
13. Those who became believers were devoted to the apostles' teaching and this. v. 42 ________________
14. Many sandwiches are made with two slices of this food. v. 46 _________

F	E	L	L	O	W	S	H	I	P
I	T	E	L	W	I	N	E	D	E
R	L	O	T	H	N	E	E	B	N
E	R	S	T	O	D	Z	S	R	T
H	A	T	I	R	I	J	I	E	E
S	E	T	O	T	S	U	G	A	C
I	A	L	P	O	U	R	N	D	O
N	S	A	I	S	A	L	S	I	S
S	B	V	E	R	E	P	E	N	T
H	O	L	Y	S	P	I	R	I	T

Art by Dan Foote

Now, what should you do? _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _ _ _   _ _ _ _

_ _ _ _ _   _ _   _ _ _ _ _!

 © 2003 Standard Publishing. Permission is granted to reproduce this page for ministry purposes only—not for resale.

Think Tank

Suggest ideas of how you can carry out God's plan and help the person in each situation.

Art by Joe Boddy

Enrico has just moved to the United States. He grew up in a nation where the government wouldn't let the people learn about God's great plan of sending Jesus to be the Savior of the world. Enrico doesn't speak English very well yet. You don't speak his language at all. He smiles hopefully at you and your friends as you pass by on your way to church.

Allison is physically disabled. She uses a wheelchair and has difficulty getting around. She is often left out of fun activities and is lonely. She wishes she had a good friend to love her. She has never gone to church or heard very much about Jesus.

Ty's parents are divorced. He lives with his mom, who has to work two jobs. Ty works hard at home to help her and his younger sister. He can't afford a Bible so he hasn't read about how Jesus came to be his friend and Savior and restore his relationship with his heavenly Father.

© 2003 Standard Publishing. Permission is granted to reproduce this page for ministry purposes only—not for resale.

Peter and John Preach

LESSON 41

Unit 11: The Church Begins

Lesson Aim

Students will have faith in God's power and bravely follow the Lord

Scripture

Acts 3:1–4:21 (Peter and John use the miracle of healing through God's power as an opportunity to preach bravely about Jesus)

Experience It

(5-10 minutes)

Purpose
Show courage in serving Jesus

Materials
Dry erase board

Prepare It

Write "COURAGE" vertically down the middle of the board. Be sure to leave room on either side to add other letters.

Do It

As students gather, have them help you make an acrostic showing courage in serving Jesus. Each letter in the word "COURAGE" becomes the first letter of a word or phrase of your choosing, or one of the letters inside a word or phrase. Here are two examples: **CALL** a friend and invite him to Bible class, **PREACH** a sermon.

Study It

(10 minutes)

Purpose
Hear the story of one brave Christian's faith in God

Do It

Read or tell this story to your class.

"You can't get away from us now."

The street gang formed a tight circle around Mary. She looked around. Everywhere she turned there were boys with angry faces. She hadn't noticed them until they had surrounded her. Now it was too late to escape. She stood her ground and turned back to the ringleader. "What do you want?"

"We're tired of your coming down here to preach about Jesus. You give the girls and younger kids ideas we don't like. So now we're going to make you pay for it."

He stepped closer. In his hand he held a rope. Tied to the end of it was a big rock. He began to spin it around his head, closer and closer to Mary's face. "Will you give up and quit while you can?"

"No." Mary stood still. Although the rock whizzed closer she refused to move. She never stopped staring into the boy's face. Her lips moved silently in prayer.

"Go away and never come back!"

Still Mary held her ground. The rock scraped her forehead and

blood ran, but she never blinked or showed fear.

As suddenly as he began, the boy dropped the rope. "You're a brave girl! From now on you can come down here and nobody will bother you. We'll see to that!"

Mary's heart was racing so hard she was afraid the gang could hear it. She tried to swallow the big lump in her throat. "Then show me how brave you are. Come to my Bible study tomorrow night."

The next night, to Mary's surprise, the entire gang showed up and stayed throughout the meeting.

The Mary in this story was Mary Slessor. She later became a pioneer missionary to Nigeria, a country on the western coast of Africa. All through her life she bravely obeyed Jesus and used every opportunity to tell others about Him.

Optional: If you can tell this story rather than read it, you will have better attention from your students.

Have you had times when you were brave and told others about Jesus? Let students share their experiences briefly. Today we're going to learn about a time when two of Jesus' apostles, Peter and John, were courageous and used an event that showed God's mercy to tell others about Jesus.

Purpose
Learn more about Peter and John's brave preaching

Materials
Bibles
"Take Courage" Activity Sheet

Express It

(20 minutes)

Prepare It

Photocopy activity sheet—one per student

Do It

Hand out copies of the "Take Courage" activity sheet. This skit is written as a rap, which means that it is a rhyming poem done to a four-beat rhythm. The words to be accented are underlined for you.

Assign students to read the parts of Peter and John. The rest of the class can be divided into small groups to take the parts of the chorus, crowd, and priests. Allow the group to read the skit over silently a few times before they read it aloud. You will probably find it much easier if the class keeps the rhythm going by clapping or snapping fingers.

Have students turn to Acts 3:1–4:21 for a discussion time. **What were Peter and John going to the temple to do?** (Pray to God.) There were three main times of prayer when devout Jews went to the temple. The one at three o'clock was the last of these three. Although Peter and John were followers of Jesus, they still kept these prayer times.

The lame man was sitting by one of the main gates of the temple where he could be seen by the most people. **What do you think the lame man thought would happen when Peter told him to look at him?** (Peter would give him money.) Because he was lame from birth, there was little for him to do to earn money except to beg.

What did Peter offer him instead of money? (The use of his legs again.) **How did the man feel about this gift?** (Thrilled; happy; jumped and walked around to show his joy.) **Who did he thank for it?** (God.) **What do you think the lame man's praise to God showed about where he thought the miracle had come from?** (He recognized it was God's power, not Peter's, that made him well.) When someone helps you, you should remember to thank him/her. And when God blesses you, don't

forget to thank and praise Him, too!

How did Peter say the lame man was healed? (By the power of Jesus; by faith in Jesus.) Peter made it very plain that it was neither his power nor John's power that made him well, but the power of Jesus that accomplished this miracle. He was actually saying that by believing in the authority Jesus has as God's Son, the Holy Spirit can work powerfully through people to produce miracles.

Check out Acts 3:13-21. What four things did Peter tell the crowd about Jesus Christ? (Who Jesus was; that they rejected and killed Him; God brought Him back to life again; they needed to repent and let Jesus take away their sins.) Peter saw his opportunity and took advantage of it to clearly and briefly lay before the people the story of Jesus.

Why did the priests, temple guard, and the Sadducees arrest Peter and John? (They didn't want them talking about Jesus.) The Sadducees were a sect of Judaism that did not believe in the resurrection. The leaders of Jewish religion were the ones responsible for Jesus' arrest, trial, and death. They thought they were through with Jesus when they killed Him. Now here were two of His followers who not only claimed that Jesus was the Messiah but that God had raised Him to life again. When Peter said that the people must repent and obey Jesus, this was a direct threat to the authority of these leaders who thought more of their own power and positions than they did of obeying God. They responded by quickly throwing the two men into jail.

Look at Acts 4:4. What happened while Peter and John were in jail? (The number of followers of Jesus increased by 2,000, going from 3,000 to 5,000.)

How did Peter and John act the next day when they were brought before the Jewish high court, the Sanhedrin? (They courageously witnessed for Jesus.) How surprised these leaders must have been when instead of being on the defensive, Peter and John boldly proclaimed that only Jesus was able to save people from their sin!

What did Peter and John say about not speaking or teaching about Jesus anymore? (They had to do what God wanted; were going to continue speaking about the true things they had seen and heard.) **Peter and John had to decide whether to obey the voice of man or the voice of God. They were determined to obey God and carry out Jesus' command to take His message to all nations. How about you? Will you choose to obey God and tell others about Jesus—even when it requires great courage?**

Live It

(15-20 minutes)

Purpose
Choose the best way to courageously witness for Jesus

Materials
"Have Courage to Witness" Activity Sheet

Prepare It

Photocopy activity sheet—one per student

Do It

Distribute copies of the "Have Courage to Witness" activity sheet. Ask a volunteer to read aloud the directions and the situation. If you have a large number of younger students in your class, have them list possible outcomes on their own and then evaluate each one on the dry erase board. **Work on this activity by yourselves. When you are done, be ready to talk about your choices.** Allow about half the time period to do this.

Have students share their answers and reasons with the group.

Response 1

What are the good and bad outcomes for the first response? Do you think writing a witness like this is as good as telling someone personally why Christians obey God? Why or why not?

Response 2

What are the good and bad outcomes for the second response? While it requires real courage to face the possibility of undeserved criticism, it also gives your neighbor a chance to ask you why you admitted the accident and are now willing to help make things right. It is a perfect occasion to tell him about Jesus and what being a Christian is really all about.

Response 3

Why do you think people often choose a response like the third one to handle difficult situations? It allows the person to seek God's forgiveness and not get personally involved. However, it also ignores the opportunity for a personal witness.

Just like Peter and John, we must have faith in Jesus and bravely use every opportunity to tell others about Him.

Prayer/Praise

Close with prayer asking God for help to bravely witness for Jesus to others.

Take Courage

Peter: About three o'clock on one fine day, we were headed to the temple to kneel and pray.

John: We entered the gate and a beggar called to us. He wanted some money and he made quite a fuss.

Peter: I said, "I don't have silver and I don't have gold, but something much better than money to hold. In the name of Jesus, rise and walk." A crowd was gathering, they stood around to gawk.

John: Then Peter took his hand and pulled him to his feet. He jumped right up and walked in the street.

Chorus: Be brave now, Peter. And John, you be bold. God sends times like these so others can be told.

Crowd: We all saw him walking and praising God. We rubbed our eyes and said, "That's odd. Is this not the beggar who was lame from birth? Whose name did they use, that has such worth?"

Peter: It's Jesus— the name that we used to heal. All of you had Him killed, but His resurrection's real. God raised up His Son to be Lord of all. Repent, all of you, and on His name call.

John: Then all at once the priests arrested us. They hauled us off to jail and began to discuss.

Chorus: Be brave now, Peter. And John, you be bold. God sends times like these so others can be told.

Priests: By whose authority did you heal that man? Come on, speak up, say it loud if you can.

John: The Holy Spirit helped us know what to say. He gave us courage as on Pentecost Day.

Peter: It's Jesus, the Messiah, whom you nailed to the cross. But God raised Him up. It was Satan's loss. By Jesus' name this man can stand right here. His name will save you, so take some cheer.

Priests: What shall we do, for a miracle's been done? The man has been healed. See him jump around and run! We'll threaten them hard and warn them not to speak. This man called Jesus makes our power look weak!

Chorus: Be brave now, Peter. And John, you be bold. God sends times like these so others can be told.

John: To listen more to you than to God on high? You must judge for yourselves, but our Lord we can't deny.

Peter: We're going to speak the things that are true.

John: They let us go, for they couldn't punish us. They knew if they did, the crowd would make a fuss.

Crowd: Let's praise the Lord for all He has done! And praise Jesus too, God's own dear Son!

Chorus: We thank you, Peter and John so bold. God sends times like these so others can be told.

Art by Corbin Hillam

 © 2003 Standard Publishing. Permission is granted to reproduce this page for ministry purposes only—not for resale.

Have Courage To Witness

Your neighbor doesn't like Christians. He says they don't really live the way they talk. You accidentally broke his window while playing ball. No one saw you do it, but you are really sorry and you want to follow the Lord and tell others about Him.

There are many possible ways to react to this situation. Three are listed below. There are positive and negative consequences for each possible response.

Write all of the good outcomes and bad outcomes for each response. Then go back and cross out all of the outcomes that affect only you and circle all of the outcomes that affect your witness for Jesus.

1. Write an unsigned note apologizing for the broken window. Add, "Christians want to do the right thing because they obey Jesus." Put some money in it to help pay for the damage and leave it in his mailbox.

What is **good** about this response? _____

What is **not good** about this response? _____

2. Tell him that you broke the window accidentally. Offer to pay what you can and work out the rest of the damage expense by doing chores for him.

What is **good** about this response? _____

What is **not good** about this response? _____

3. Ask God to forgive you. Tell your parents about it and ask them to pay the neighbor for the damage. Say you will pay them back out of your allowance or by doing jobs for them.

What is **good** about this response? _____

What is **not good** about this response? _____

How will you respond?

Art by Corbin Hillam

© 2003 Standard Publishing. Permission is granted to reproduce this page for ministry purposes only—not for resale.

Stephen Gives His Life for the Faith

LESSON 42

Unit 11: The Church Begins

Lesson Aim

Students will be encouraged to be truthful and faithful to Jesus until death

Scripture

Acts 6:1-15; 7:1-60 (Stephen is not afraid to speak the truth and becomes the first to give his life for the faith)

Experience It

(5-10 minutes)

Purpose
Discover a message about faithful Christians

Materials
Shelf paper
3" x 5" cards
Tape
Optional: a copy of Foxe's Book of Martyrs, By Their Blood, or any other information about martyrs

Prepare It

Today you are going to put a secret message on the wall. The message is: "A martyr is someone who was killed for being a witness for Jesus." You will be writing some of the letters of this sentence on cards for the students to add to the coded statement. Because of that, you will need to leave space lines like the illustration below. On a large piece of shelf paper write:

A MARTYR _S
S_M_O_E _HO W_S
_IL_ED FO_ B_IN_
A _I_NE_S _OR _ES_S.

Write one missing letter on each 3" x 5" card, making sure there is at least one for each student. Tape the shelf paper on the wall where students can easily reach it.

Optional: If you have more than this number of students, you will have to leave out more letters. If you have fewer, let them draw more than one card.

Do It

As students arrive, have them draw cards. Explain that they have to tape the missing letters on the wall in order to crack the code and discover the secret message. After the group has solved the message, talk about martyrs. The word "martyr" was originally a Greek word that meant "witness." But as time went on it came to be widely used to mean anyone who was killed for being a Christian. **Do you know of anyone who was a martyr?** Most scholars agree that all of the apostles except John became martyrs because of their witnessing for Jesus.

Optional: If you have a longer time period and were able to obtain information about martyrs, allow students to look at it.

The first man to become a martyr in the early church was a godly man named Stephen.

Purpose
Learn more about the background of Stephen

Materials
Bibles
"Getting the Facts Straight" Activity Sheet

Study It
(10 minutes)

Prepare It
Photocopy activity sheet—one per student

Do It
In the early church the apostles felt that they should spend their time teaching and praying. But soon, because of the large number of people who were joining the group of Jesus' followers, other jobs needed to be done as well.

Hand out copies of the "Getting the Facts Straight" activity sheet. Ask someone to read the directions aloud. Students can do this page individually.

What was Stephen chosen to do? (Help in the distribution of food to the widows.) **Why did the group choose him?** (He had great faith and was full of the Holy Spirit.) Point out that although this job seemed to be a rather menial one, the believers felt that the men chosen for it should be godly, faithful men. This is true no matter what duty the Lord calls a person to do in His church—whether it be to lead in worship or help keep the building clean.

Stephen was an outstanding Christian man. People listened when he spoke. He talked about Jesus at every opportunity, and the Holy Spirit helped him.

Every church needs good leaders to help do the Lord's work. Some people are chosen to watch over God's people. They are like shepherds who watch the flock. **Another group is chosen to work with these people to take care of the many business matters of the church.** They see that the building is kept in repair and take care of the many details of the work of the church. **Today as in the early days of the church, people of good reputation, spiritual people, are needed as workers for the Lord.**

Optional: If you have a longer period of time, mention some names of leaders in your congregation.

Purpose
Learn why we should obey God

Materials
Bibles
"Stephen's Story" Activity Sheet

Express It
(20 minutes)

Prepare It
Photocopy activity sheet—one per student

Do It
Stephen's trouble started at the Synagogue of the Freedmen. These were Greek-speaking Jews who had been freed from slavery. Stephen also spoke Greek and probably went there to tell the people the good news about Jesus.

Soon some of the well-educated members started arguing with him. Have students look back over the Scripture passages they studied in Study It. **Why do you think these people got angry with Stephen?** (Didn't want to hear they were sinners who needed a Savior; were jealous of him.)

These men did not believe in Jesus as God's Son, and possibly they thought Stephen wouldn't have a chance against them. However, the Holy

Spirit helped him, and he spoke with such wisdom and power that those men couldn't say a thing. They became enraged when they were defeated in an argument. They were also jealous because people began listening to Stephen instead of them. **The angry Jews decided to do something to silence Stephen.**

What was the plan to stop Stephen from speaking the truth about Jesus? (Arrest him; bring him before the Jewish Supreme Court; have false witnesses lie about him.)

Check out Acts 6:14. What did these false witnesses testify about Stephen? (He said that Jesus would destroy the temple and change the customs Moses had handed down to them.) The majority of the ruling party of the Sanhedrin was Sadducees. This Jewish sect believed only in the laws of Moses. This meant that speaking against Moses was equal to blasphemy and punishable by death.

In his reply to the Sanhedrin, Stephen mentioned several great men of God. Distribute copies of the "Stephen's Story" activity sheet. Instruct students to complete the top portion of the activity page. Then review each of the people Stephen mentioned and discuss the meaning of the picture that goes with each name. Activity answers: 1. ABRAHAM, 2. ISAAC, 3. JACOB, 4. MOSES, 5. JOSEPH, 6. JOSHUA, 7. DAVID, 8. SOLOMON. **This speech showed that Stephen accepted Moses' account of the history of Israel.**

Ask someone to read aloud verses 51-53. **What did Stephen accuse the Sanhedrin of doing?** (Persecuting the prophets; betraying and killing Jesus, God Messiah; not obeying God's law.) **How did they react to this charge?** (The were furious; refused to listen; dragged him out of the city; killed him with stones.)

Stephen was brave to continue his message when he knew that his words didn't please the crowd. He also knew that this group had the power to kill him. As he was dying, what did he ask the Lord to do? (Receive his spirit into Heaven; not blame his enemies for killing him.)

Stephen was the first Christian to die for his faith in Jesus. No doubt Christians took Stephen's body and buried it. Perhaps as they buried it they thought, "He was the first one of us to be killed. But he won't be the last. Will the rest of us be as loyal to our Master as he was?" How faithful do you think you would be to tell others the truth about Jesus? Allow students to think about this. Instruct students to complete the rest of the activity. Discuss personal responses as time allows.

Live It

(15-20 minutes)

Do It

Have students sit in a circle on the floor. **This will be our sharing circle. I'd like someone to volunteer to be a Share Starter and comment on this question: Have you ever been afraid to tell the truth?** If it is difficult to get the discussion started, share a personal experience. After all those who want to share about this question have done so, continue in the same manner with these questions: Have you ever lost a friend because you told the truth? Have you ever wished someone had not told the truth? Have you ever been glad because someone did tell the truth?

Let this sharing time lead naturally into a group discussion about truth

Purpose

Share experiences about telling the truth

Help make a list of tips on how to faithfully tell the truth

Materials

Dry erase board

Small rock

Optional: some type of crown

covering questions like these: What is truth? Why is it important? What does telling the truth have to do with being faithful to Jesus?

Why do people often not like to hear the truth about Jesus? (They don't like to hear that they are sinners or are doing wrong.) **Why do you think people are afraid to speak the truth about Him?** (They don't want anyone to dislike them or be angry with them.) Have your students help you make a list of timely tips on how kids their age can faithfully tell the truth.

If you make a habit of telling the truth now, you'll be able to stand up to the big tests later on in life. Like Stephen, you won't be afraid to speak the truth, even if it means giving up your life.

Ask the group to turn to Luke 23 and read verses 34 and 46. **What did Jesus do just before He died?** (He prayed, asking forgiveness for the enemies who were putting Him to death; asked God to receive His spirit.) **Just before Stephen died, he also prayed to God. Check out Acts 7:59, 60. What did Stephen pray?** (Jesus to receive his spirit; not to hold this sin against them.) **Stephen followed the example of His Lord, even as he died. He was truly "faithful unto death."**

Read aloud Revelation 2:10. **What promise does this verse give?** (God will give a crown of life to those followers who are faithful to death.) **Yes, God has promised to reward His followers like Stephen, who are faithful to Jesus even if they become martyrs for being truthful. And God always keeps His promises!**

Prayer/Praise

Hold up the rock so others can clearly see it. **Let this rock remind you of the price Stephen paid for being faithful. But also remember that if you are truthful to Jesus even to death, He will give you a crown of life.** Pass the rock to the student closest to you. Have students pass the rock to each other and silently reflect on this truth.

Optional: Use a crown also and have students consider the reward for faithful Christians.

Getting the Facts Straight

The facts from Acts 6:1-15 are paraphrased below, but they are listed in the wrong order. Straighten them out and number the facts in the order they occurred.

Read Acts 6:1-7
and number these facts 1-6.

_____ The apostles told the whole group to pick seven men to be in charge of distributing the food.

_____ More and more people were following Jesus, including Jews and Gentiles.

_____ The twelve apostles gathered all the followers of Jesus together.

_____ The Greek-speaking Jews complained that their widows were not getting their share of the food each day.

_____ The apostles laid their hands on the men.

_____ The group chose Stephen because he was a man with great faith and full of the Holy Spirit.

Read Acts 6:8-15
and number these facts 7-12.

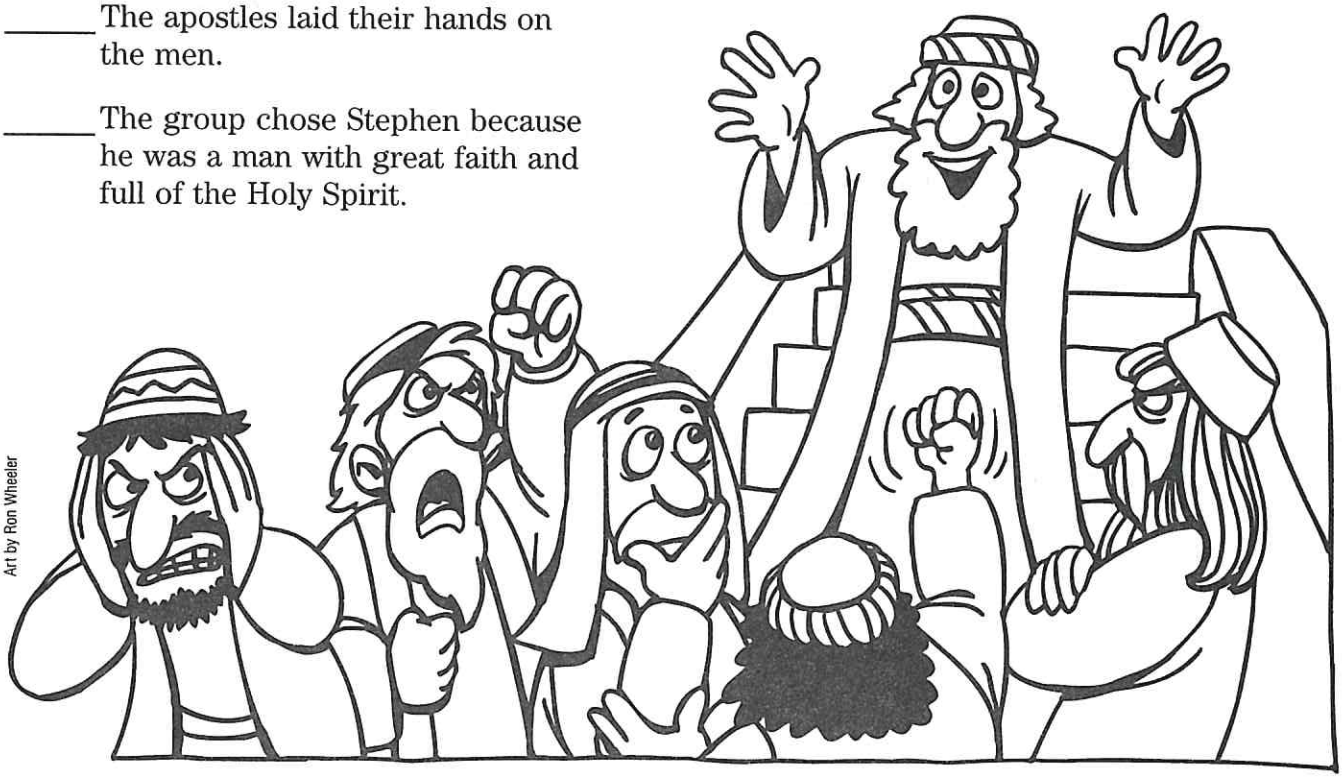
_____ Stephen's face looked like the face of an angel.

_____ False witnesses testified against Stephen.

_____ Stephen did great miracles and signs among the people.

_____ Stephen was arrested and brought before the Jewish Supreme Court.

_____ Enemies of Stephen persuaded some men to tell lies about him



Art by Ron Wheeler

 © 2003 Standard Publishing. Permission is granted to reproduce this page for ministry purposes only—not for resale.

Stephen's Story

Stephen spoke about several people who obeyed God in Jewish history. Cross out the letters under each picture that spell the name of the object in the picture. Write the remaining letters on the line below to spell the name of one of the people Stephen mentioned. Hint: each picture is a clue for the hidden name.

1. A T B R E A H N A T M

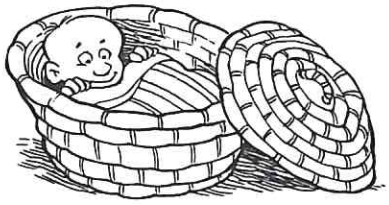
_____

2. R I S A A A C M

_____

3. J L A A D C O D E B R

_____



4. B A M O S S K E S E T

_____

5. J O C S E O P A H T

_____

6. H J O O S H R U A N

_____

7. D H A A R V I D P

_____

8. S C O R L O O W M O N N

_____

Now read what Stephen did to obey God. Then decide how you can follow Stephen's example and obey God.

Stephen told the truth even in opposition. "You stiff-necked people, with uncircumcised hearts and ears! You are just like your fathers: You always resist the Holy Spirit!" (Acts 7:51)

I can tell the truth even when . . .

Stephen stood before an angry crowd and spoke about Jesus. "They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin." (Acts 6:12)

I can talk to . . .

Stephen showed a forgiving attitude even as he was being killed. "Then he fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.'" (Acts 7:60)

I can show forgiveness when . . .

© 2003 Standard Publishing. Permission is granted to reproduce this page for ministry purposes only—not for resale.

Philip Preaches in Samaria

LESSON 43

Unit 11: The Church Begins

Lesson Aim

Students will be encouraged to tell others how Jesus can deliver them from sin

Scripture

Isaiah 53:7, 8; Acts 6:5; 7:4-8; 8:26-38 (The early Christians and Philip feel the urgency of the task Jesus gave them to bring others to Him for salvation

Experience It

(5-10 minutes)

Purpose

Identify places mentioned in the story of Philip and the Ethiopian official

Materials

Bibles

Optional: Map of Bible lands or modern day nations showing Jerusalem, modern-day Samaria, Gaza (Israel), and Sudan (Africa)

Prepare It

Display the map where it can easily be seen

Do It

As the group gathers, center the conversation on Philip and his willingness to bring others to Jesus for salvation.

Have you ever taken a long hike? Let students share briefly. Point out that in most cases, they took the hike because they knew there was something special to see or do. **Would you hike many miles to a deserted spot simply because you believed God wanted you to go? The Bible tells us about a man who did just that. His name was Philip.**

Who was Philip? Ask someone to look up Acts 6:5, 6 and read it aloud. This man was not the same as the apostle Philip. Philip, like the first martyr, Stephen, was chosen to help oversee the food distribution to the early church in Jerusalem. Also like Stephen, Philip was a godly man filled with the Holy Spirit.

After Stephen's death, there was a terrible persecution against the church. What group was behind this oppression? (The Jewish leaders.) **Many Christians had to leave Jerusalem to escape capture and possible death. Philip left Jerusalem to preach in a city in Samaria.** Point out Samaria. This area is northwest of Jerusalem.

Some scholars believe that the city Philip went to was Sebaste. It was a Hellenistic or Greek-speaking city whose citizens were Jews who had come from all parts of the Roman Empire. Since Philip was also Hellenistic, he would be accepted easily.

Southwest of Jerusalem a well-traveled route took travelers through a beautiful fertile valley just north of Mamre where Abraham first lived. This was near the place where the Hebrew spies brought enormous bunches of grapes back to Joshua. A spring of water known as the "Fountain of St. Philip" is located there where tradition has it that Philip baptized the Ethiopian official.

From there the road continued southwest across the coastal plain to Gaza. Gaza was a city near the coast of the Mediterranean Sea.

Finally, the road wound down into Egypt and Ethiopia. This ancient Ethiopia was not the country of Ethiopia as we know it today. Instead it was what is now Sudan. It was located in Southern Egypt and also known as Nubia. The people were East African, but had adapted Egyptian culture completely and were ruled by a succession of queens, each with the title of Candace.

Philip was soon to visit several of these areas as he faithfully carried out Jesus' command to tell others the good news of salvation.

Purpose
List the main events of Jesus' life

Materials
Dry erase board

Study It

(10 minutes)

Do It

What things do you think Philip told people about Jesus? Let students come up and write their suggestions of various events from the life of Christ on the board. List them as briefly as possible. Events could include: Born in Bethlehem; Spent some time in Egypt; Visited the temple at age 12; Baptized by John at age 30; Preached and healed people for three years; Arrested and tried before the Jewish council; Died for the sins of all people; Buried in Joseph's tomb; Came from the tomb alive; Appeared many times to His followers; Ascended into Heaven after forty days; Now King of kings and Lord of lords; Coming again to earth.

Since the Hellenistic Jews used a Greek version of the Old Testament called the Septuagint, Philip would probably tell them that Jesus is God's own Son, the Messiah, the one whose birth was foretold by Isaiah and other prophets.

While Philip was in Samaria, he won many people to the Lord. He did miraculous signs, drove out evil spirits and healed many people. **One day, an angel of the Lord gave him an important message from God.**

Purpose
Discover some principles you can use to bring others to Jesus

Materials
Bibles
"Philip's Preaching Principles" Activity Sheet

Express It

(20 minutes)

Prepare It

Photocopy activity sheet—one per student

Do It

Have students take turns reading aloud Acts 8:26-38.

Who did Philip find when he got there? (An Ethiopian official in charge of the queen's money.) The Hebrew word "eunuch" means officer. The title doesn't necessarily suggest physical conditions. There were married eunuchs.

What was the man reading? (The book of Isaiah.) **What did Philip do for the man?** (Explained the passage he was reading and told him about Jesus.) **What happened when Philip did that?** (The man believed and asked Philip to baptize him.)

What do you think happened when the man got back to his home? (He probably told others about Jesus.) **When Jesus went back to Heaven, He told His followers to tell others about Him. That includes us today. Let's see if we can learn something from this story about how to do that.**

Distribute copies of the "Philip's Preaching Principles" activity sheet. **When you are finished with this activity, we'll talk about it.** Answers are: 1. TALK ABOUT JESUS EVERYWHERE YOU GO; 2. BE ALERT FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT'S GUIDANCE; 3. OBEY GOD'S PLAN FOR YOU; 4. BRAVELY REACH OUT TO SOMEONE DIFFERENT THAN YOU; 5. BEGIN WITH THE PERSON'S INTEREST; 6. USE THE BIBLE TO TELL ABOUT JESUS; 7. TELL THE GOSPEL SIMPLY; 8. TRUST GOD TO TAKE CARE OF THE NEW BELIEVER.

Optional: If you have a shorter time period, save the word search at the bottom of the activity page for later. Students can take it home to finish if necessary.

Did it make any difference to Philip where he was when he talked about Jesus? (No.) **Think about the place where it is hardest for you to talk about Christ.** For many people their families are that place. For your students it might be when they are with peers. **Ask God to help you to also speak out for Jesus there.**

What do you think Philip thought about the message he received from God? Why? (It was strange because it didn't give a reason; meant leaving a successful preaching ministry; was a long way to go.) Point out that Philip was alert to the Holy Spirit's leading and recognized that the message was from God even though it didn't tell Philip what to do when he got there.

What did he do abut it? He followed it even if he didn't understand why. **Why do you think the Ethiopian official was there at the same time as Philip?** (Coincidence; God planned it; don't know.) God's timing is perfect. We can trust His plan even when we don't understand it.

Why do people hesitate about approaching someone different from themselves? (Afraid they'll be rejected or made fun of; don't know what to expect; have preformed ideas about them.) When God directed Philip to a man from a totally different culture, it was the birth of cross-cultural missions.

How did Philip begin to tell the man about Jesus? (Began with what the man was reading, which was about Jesus.) Encourage your students to follow the same pattern when they are witnessing and begin with the person's interest.

Which part of the Bible was the Ethiopian man reading? (The Old Testament; Isaiah 53.) The entire Bible points to Jesus so we can use all parts of it to tell others about Christ.

Why do you think the gospel should be kept simple? (So you don't confuse people; helps them understand it better.) A good witness doesn't have to know the entire Bible to tell others about Jesus. However, knowing key verses is helpful because you probably won't have a concordance handy to find the verses you need. The Holy Spirit will bring these verses to your mind once you have stored them in your brain and heart.

What happened to Philip after he baptized the Ethiopian official? (He was suddenly taken away from the man.) Philip never saw this important man again. Over and over again in the book of Acts we read how the evangelists had to leave new believers and go on to other places. God took care of these baby Christians and strong churches grew up everywhere the gospel was told. **We can trust God to lead and bless our witnessing today as He did for Philip long ago.**

Purpose
Discover how our entire bodies can be used to tell others about Jesus

Materials
"Live to Tell" Activity Sheet

Live It

(15-20 minutes)

Prepare It

Photocopy activity sheet—one per student

Do It

Suppose you are visiting a country that has never heard of Jesus. Would you know how to tell them about Christ? Hand out copies of the "Live to Tell" activity sheet. Select someone to read the directions aloud. Briefly review the list of events from Jesus' life that you made earlier. These and other events can be useful in talking to others about Jesus. Allow time for students to complete this activity. Some students may have time to color the drawing as well.

In the early days of the church, Christians told others about Jesus even when they knew they might die if they did. Why do you think they did that? (Because they loved Him and wanted to obey Him; knew they would go to be with Him in Heaven if they died anyway.) These people wanted to win others to Him. They knew that a person can be saved only through Jesus and so they told everyone.

Winning others to Christ is not only done by preaching to crowds. The Christian faith is also spread as believers share the good news about Jesus with one or two friends at a time. If we really believe God loves us, we have to tell others about it.

Prayer/Praise

Close in prayer, asking God to provide opportunities to share the gospel with others. Ask for His guidance and courage to tell others about Christ.

Philip's Preaching Principles

Unscramble these sentences to discover some tips on how to bring others to Jesus.

1. _____

ABOUT TALK YOU GO EVERYWHERE JESUS

2. _____

THE SPIRIT'S HOLY TO ALERT BE GUIDANCE

3. _____

PLAN FOR GOD'S YOU OBEY

4. _____

REACH YOU DIFFERENT OUT SOMEONE TO BRAVELY THAN

5. _____

THE WITH INTEREST PERSON'S BEGIN

6. _____

ABOUT TELL TO JESUS THE USE BIBLE

7. _____

GOSPEL THE TELL SIMPLY

8. _____

TAKE GOD CARE BELIEVER THE OF TO TRUST NEW

Find and circle these key words in the puzzle. They might be up, down, across, or even diagonal!

- JESUS
- TALK
- ALERT
- GUIDANCE
- OBEY
- PLAN
- REACH
- DIFFER
- INTEREST
- BIBLE
- TELL
- GOSPEL
- SIMPLY
- TRUST
- CARE
- BELIEVER

P G Q M B T N J E S U S S L
D U C E V A W A R Z N H E G
E I F O Y L P M I S Q P L N
L D F R S C E T R U S T Z Q
M A L F H P V S N O G M K D
Y N E W E Y E F G C T Z L E
T C K B L R S O T D R A A P
R E N O A I N T E R E S T X
E X B C Q F P T Z N V O M G
L D I T H X R L S Q E A H B
A G B U V O B E Y P I C P T
V S L Y S T N R H G L O L N
W E E X L L E T U W E T A S
H C A E R B Z Q A G B P N X

Art by Corbin Hillam

 © 2003 Standard Publishing. Permission is granted to reproduce this page for ministry purposes only—not for resale.

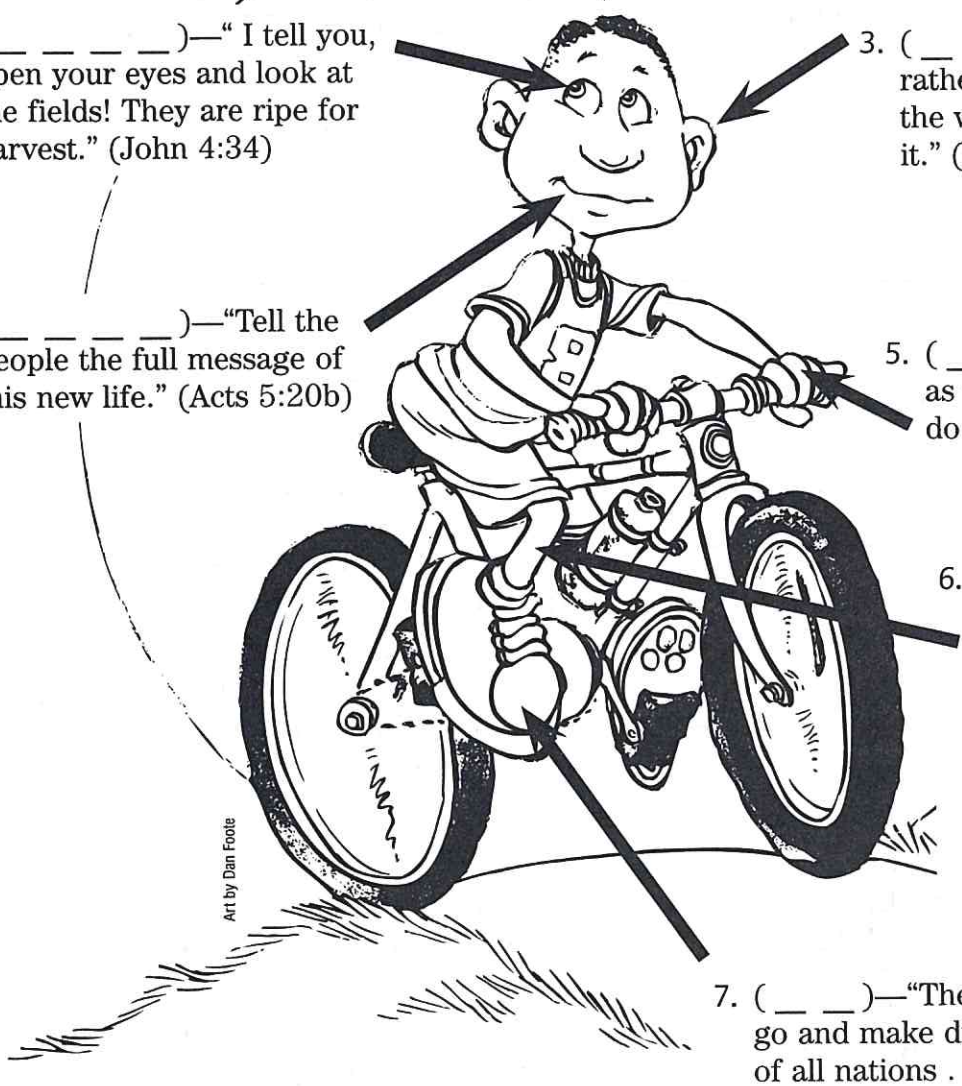
Live to Tell

You can use your entire body to tell people about Jesus. Read the verses below to find out seven things that Jesus told us to do with our bodies. Use the verses to fill in the blanks. Then list a way you will use each part of your body to obey Jesus.

1. (__ __ __ __)—"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." (Mark 12:30)

2. (__ __ __ __)—" I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest." (John 4:34)

3. (__ __ __ __)—"Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it." (Luke 11:28)



4. (__ __ __ __)—"Tell the people the full message of this new life." (Acts 5:20b)

5. (__ __)—"Do to others as you would have them do to you." (Luke 6:31)

6. (__ __ __ __ __)—"And when you stand praying, if you hold anything against anyone, forgive him, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your sins." (Mark 11:25)

7. (__ __)—"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations . . . " (Matthew-28:19-20)

Art by Dan Foote

© 2003 Standard Publishing. Permission is granted to reproduce this page for ministry purposes only—not for resale.