

Adventures with GOD!

THE ARREST AND DEATH OF STEPHEN (B.2.SPRING.11)

Biblical Reference	Acts 6:8-15, 7:51-60
Key Verse	2 Timothy 1:7
Key Concept	God asks me to forgive even those who persecute me.
Educational Objectives	At the end of the class today, the children will be able to: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Name the main characters in the story of Stephen's arrest and death. 2. Explain why Stephen was not scared of those who persecuted him. 3. Identify a situation where they need to forgive someone that has wronged them.

Life application

Stephen was one of the very brave helpers chosen by the apostles. He helped the family of God and announced the good news of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection. Stephen was the first Christian martyr (person killed for their faith in Christ). In human terms this is a tragic story. But, when we look at it with God's eyes we see that Stephen was a true hero who was not afraid to take a stand and tell the truth and forgive those who would do him harm. Forgiveness is a part of being a follower of Christ. It is a necessary action that is not always easy. Still, we can learn from Stephen's example.

Possible Activities and Class Plan

Activity	Materials	Time
My GROW adventure	GROW Adventure w/God materials	5 minutes
Opening prayer	Candle	1 minute
Bible reading	Bible	5 minutes
Review	Bible verses	10 minutes
Bible exploration	Rocks, Bible, sweaters/jackets	10 minutes
Craft	Rocks, water color paints, paint brushes, paper and glue	15 minutes
My GROW adventure	Review	5 minutes
Closing prayer	Candle	1 minute



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INSTRUCTIONS

My GROW Adventure with God Weekly Review: As children enter take time to have them reflect on their adventure with God booklets and either discuss or use art materials to express their journey during the past week. You may wish to add any art work, written poems, prayers or songs to a GROW wall in the room. You can find my GROW Adventure with God materials on the Covchurch.org website in the same place as the Adventures with God sessions.

Opening Prayer: Gather children around a candle. Light the candle and explain that we are entering into a special time with God. Encourage the children to hold their hands out in front of them palms up as a sign they are ready to receive what God has for them today.

Prayer Example: Lord God, thank you for making us, for loving us, for forgiving us, and guiding us. We know you are here with us right now. As we enter into your word, the Bible, help us draw close to you, to understand and to listen to what you have to say to us. Amen
(For safety sake, you may wish to extinguish the candle after the prayer.)

Bible Reading: Explain that as we read the Bible we do so first to spend time with God. Children can remain with hands out-stretched, palms up to receive the word as it's being read. Alternatively they can be invited to draw what they hear. Read the biblical reference for the day (Acts 6:8-15) two times and ask children to respond.

Question examples: What did you notice in this passage? How does it make you feel? Was there anything you would ask God about that you didn't understand or was confusing? Is God saying anything to you through the story?

Review: Take some time to work on the mural. It might be that there are several scenes that need to be added from the previous weeks. Have the children work in teams to create these scenes/drawing/pictures.

Bible exploration: This week's story is not an easy one to tell, but is an important one for us to learn from. It is found in Acts 6:8-15 and all of chapter 7. Focus on Acts 6:8-15 and 7:51-60. As much as you are able tell the story in your own words. Have some visual aids. Maybe choose one of the people in your class to be "Stephen." Talk about his love for Jesus and his boldness for sharing the good news of Jesus with others. Talk about how this angered people and why and what was Stephen's response. In the end, what happened to Stephen? Have some stones and give one small stone out to each child to hold in his or her hands. Imagine what Stephen must have felt. Imagine what the other disciples would have felt when they heard the sad, sad news of Stephen's death.

Yet, even in the midst of people who hurt him, Stephen was an example of Jesus' love. What was Stephen's response to his enemies? What was his prayer in 7:60? What is our response when people say hurtful things or do hurtful things to us? Does God want us to get even or ask God for the ability to forgive them?

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Craft: Give each child a small rock. Have them paint it with water colors. On a small card or piece of card stock help them write the Bible verse for today. Then have them glue the rock on the card/paper. AS they work, talk about how the Holy Spirit not only makes us brave, but helps us love even our enemies and forgive them. Ask them to think about situations where someone has done something wrong to them. Have they been able to forgive that person? What would the first step be to take to forgive someone? Remind them that Stephen prayed to God. Pray together.

Today's GROW Adventure with God Review:

G: God's Word: What is the story? (Give children an opportunity to express their understanding of the story).

R: Relationships: Is there anything in today's Bible story that shows us how we should or shouldn't share God's love with others? (Remind children that sometimes God uses the stories of the Bible to show us how we shouldn't act toward God or others and give them a chance to consider how we might show God's love instead).

O: Outward Action: Is there anything in the Bible story that shows us how we should help or serve God or others? (Explore concrete ways the children could live this out in the coming week).

W: Worship: Is there anything in the Bible story that shows us how we should accept God's love for us and others? Ask: How do you feel about God? How would you like to respond to God? What would you like to say to God?

Closing Prayer: Gather children around the candle again. As you light the candle explain that the flame is something that is present in the light and the darkness. In the same way, it reminds us that God is always with us. Is there anything anyone wishes to say to God? After children have responded, close the prayer time.

Prayer Example: Lord God, we thank you that you are always with us, and always love us. It's good to be with you. Thank you for what we have learned today. Thank you for being with us and for teaching us through the Bible. Help us to remember what you have taught us today and to live it out when we leave. Amen.

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ILLUSTRATION

