



# ACTS

Of All the Apostles

## You Will Be My Witnesses:

Running the Race

## Lesson 16



# Stephen

Acts 6:8-7:53

## Supplemental Scripture

Hebrews 12:1-3  
1 Thessalonians 4:1-8  
1 Thessalonians 5:12-24  
Hebrews 3:7-19  
Jude 1:17-21  
Isaiah 63:7-14  
Mark 1:1-13  
John 14:16-21  
Romans 8:1-18

## Memory Verse

Do not quench, suppress,  
or subdue the Holy Spirit.  
1 Thessalonians 5:19  
(AMP)

## Lesson Goals

Understand that Stephen  
was filled with the Holy  
Spirit

Understand that the  
religious leaders opposed  
the Holy Spirit

Understand the need to  
follow the Holy Spirit's  
guidance in our own lives

**NOTE:** Familiarize yourself with this story. Study the supplemental Scripture and make notes on, but do NOT read from, these pages. To reinforce that these ideas are not your own, hold your Bible as you tell the story.

Do you remember the last time we spoke about running the race? We talked about needing a coach who can show you how to run. Good coaches do more than that, though. They give you tips on diet and breathing. They give you plans for training. In the race of faith that we are on, who is our coach? Jesus is. Our manual is the Bible. The Bible is not just a book of tips on how to run better; it's full of valuable information from the One who formed us and knows what's best for us. In this race of faith, how important is obedience? It is essential. It is important to "Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we're in. Study how He did it. Because He never lost sight of where he was headed." (Hebrews 12:2 MSG) Let's see how Stephen ran the race. Remember, he was one of the new leaders the believers chose to help the widows.

When we first met Stephen, as he was being chosen to lead by serving tables for the widows, we were told that he was full of the Holy Spirit. We continue reading that he was also full of God's grace and power. He was doing a lot of wonderful things. Stephen allowed God's Holy Spirit to have control of his life. He followed the guidance and teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Not everyone was pleased with the life that Stephen was living. A group of men decided to speak out against him. They also began arguments with Stephen. "But he was too wise for them. They couldn't stand up against the Holy Spirit who spoke through him." (Acts 6:10 NIV) So they decided to lie. They accused Stephen of saying evil things against Moses and against God. The people and the leaders, believing everything that was said, were getting angry at Stephen. They arrested him and brought him before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court. More people who were willing to lie about Stephen came before the Sanhedrin and told their lies.

As they looked at Stephen for a response, they didn't see anger or hate. Instead, they saw that his face looked like the face of an angel. The high priest asked Stephen if these charges were true. And rather than answering the high priest's question, Stephen reviewed the Old Testament to make a point.

## Application

Scripture says that Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit. How did he get the Holy Spirit? How do you get the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is given by God to those who believe in Jesus and follow Him in obedience.

If that's not you, is it because you have never heard the good news about God's love for you? But if you have, and you have been thinking about God, it is because God's Holy Spirit is drawing you to Him. Don't reject Him. Won't you come to Jesus right now?

What about those of you who know that the Holy Spirit lives in you? When you feel convicted to do something or when you know the right thing to do, are you listening to the Holy Spirit's direction and obeying? Commit today not to oppose the Holy Spirit's work in your life.

He began with Abraham and explained that through Abraham, God had provided the land where they now lived. God promised this to Abraham through his descendants before he even had a son, and while he lived in a land far away. God even told Abraham that his descendants would one day be slaves in Egypt. After many years Abraham had the son God had promised, Isaac. Isaac himself had a son, Jacob, who in turn had twelve sons. These twelve sons were the "founders of the 12 tribes of Israel." (Acts 7:8 NlrV)

Stephen talked about their brother, Joseph, whom they sold as a slave. He was taken to Egypt, but God was with him. God planned for Joseph to save his family from a famine. They eventually moved to Egypt where they grew and multiplied. Then a pharaoh came to power who didn't know Joseph. He was afraid the Hebrews would rise up and help Egypt's enemies, so he ordered the Hebrew babies to be killed. It was during this time that Moses was born.

Moses was saved from the pharaoh's evil plan and even grew up in Pharaoh's palace. He left Egypt when he was forty and became a shepherd. It was from herding sheep that God spoke to Moses from a burning bush. God wanted Moses to rescue the Hebrew people from Egypt. Moses led the people out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and through the desert. "But our people refused to obey Moses." (Acts 7:39 NlrV) They worshipped gods they made with their own hands.

Then Stephen addressed the Sanhedrin personally, "You people! You won't obey! You are stubborn! You won't listen! You are just like your people of long ago! You always oppose the Holy Spirit!" (Acts 7:51 NlrV) You tried to hurt God's prophets along the way. And you have murdered His Son. You even had the law, but you didn't obey it!

Stephen, who was full of the Holy Spirit, could see clearly that these leaders of the temple, and those who went before them, made a habit of rejecting the Holy Spirit. They knew what God's word said but they failed to see Jesus as God's Son. They kept many rules and regulations but they refused to let God have control of their lives like Stephen had.

How about you? Who is in control of your life? Are you following the direction of the Holy Spirit or are you opposing and rejecting His direction in your life?

Next Week  
Stephen's Death  
Acts 7:54-8:3

# Preschool Lesson

When we first met Stephen last week, he was serving tables for the widows. The Bible says that Stephen was full of the Holy Spirit. That means Stephen let God lead and guide him. Stephen allowed God's Holy Spirit to have control of his life.

Not everyone was happy with Stephen. A group of men began arguments with Stephen. "But he was too wise for them. They couldn't stand up against the Holy Spirit who spoke through him." (Acts 6:10 NIV) So they decided to tell lies about him. The leaders arrested Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish supreme court.

Stephen wasn't angry at the men and he didn't hate them. Instead, his face looked like the face of an angel. The high priest asked Stephen if the lies were true. Stephen didn't answer his question. Instead, Stephen reviewed their history.

He started with Abraham. Stephen talked about God's promise to Abraham that provided the land they lived on. God promised this to Abraham's son, before he even had a son. God even told Abraham that his descendants would one day be slaves in Egypt. Abraham finally had the son God promised, Isaac. Isaac had a son, Jacob, and Jacob had twelve sons. These twelve sons were the "founders of the 12 tribes of Israel." (Acts 7:8 NIV)

Stephen talked about their brother, Joseph. They sold him as a slave. He was taken to Egypt, but God was with him. God planned for Joseph to save his family from a famine, so they moved to Egypt where they grew and multiplied. Then a leader, pharaoh, came to power who didn't know Joseph. He was afraid the Hebrews would rise up and help Egypt's enemies, so he ordered the Hebrew babies to be killed. It was during this time that Moses was born.

Moses was saved from the pharaoh's evil plan and even grew up in Pharaoh's palace. He left Egypt when he was forty and became a shepherd. Then God spoke to Moses from a burning bush. God wanted Moses to rescue the Hebrew people from Egypt. Moses led the people out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and through the desert, but they wouldn't obey Moses. They worshipped gods they made with their own hands.

Then Stephen told the Sanhedrin, "You people! You won't obey! You are stubborn! You won't listen! You are just like your people of long ago! You always oppose the Holy Spirit!" (Acts 7:51 NIV) You tried to hurt God's messengers along the way. And you have murdered His Son.

Stephen, who followed the Holy Spirit's lead, could see clearly that these leaders of the temple made a habit of not following the Holy Spirit. They kept many rules and regulations but they refused to let God have control of their lives like Stephen had.

How about you? Who are you following? Are you obedient to God or do you do whatever you want to? Will you tell God that you want to obey Him more than anything?

# Activities

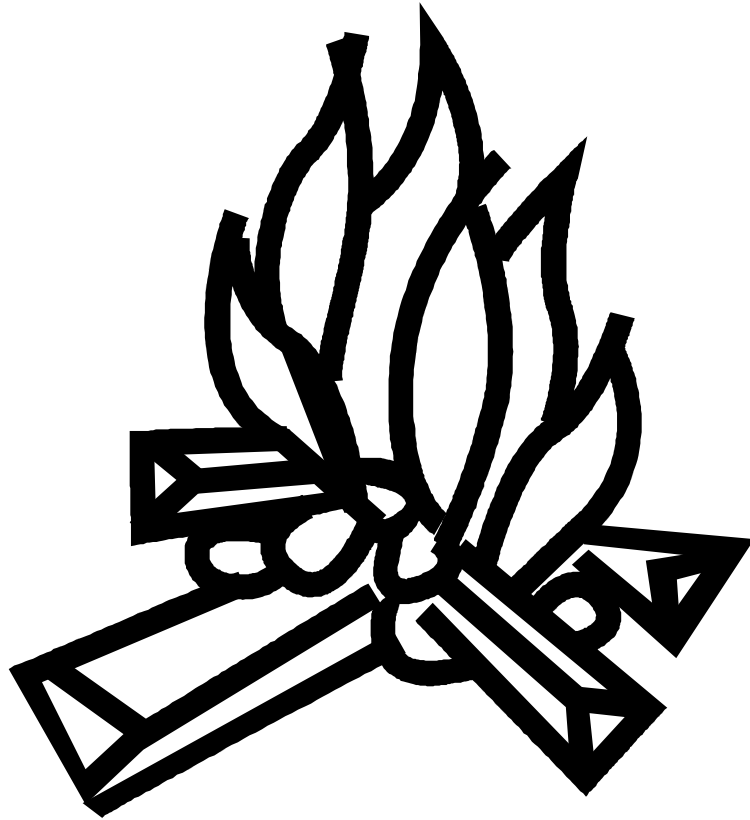
**Memory Verse Activity** - Talk about campfires. What happens when water is poured onto a campfire? The flame is extinguished. Explain the similarities between a campfire and the Holy Spirit. Our opposition or rejection of the Holy Spirit is like water on flames. Print the verse on flame-shaped pieces of red, yellow, and orange construction paper. Review the verse.

Sing “Father Abraham,” and “Faith, Faith, Faith.”

Provide activity pages of the Old Testament stories covered in the lesson today. Also provide activity pages of the Old Testament books of the Bible.

Read John 14 and Galatians 5:22-23. Discuss the work of the Holy Spirit and its result in our lives. Allow time for introspection.

As you continue to practice Hebrews 12:1-2, take a fresh look at these verses, along with verse 3, from the Message. *“Do you see what this means—all these pioneers who blazed the way, all these veterans cheering us on? It means we’d better get on with it. Strip down, start running—and never quit! No extra spiritual fat, no parasitic sins. Keep your eyes on Jesus, who both began and finished this race we’re in. Study how he did it. Because he never lost sight of where he was headed—that exhilarating finish in and with God—he could put up with anything along the way: Cross, shame, whatever. And now he’s there, in the place of honor, right alongside God. When you find yourselves flagging in your faith, go over that story again, item by item, that long litany of hostility he plowed through. That will shoot adrenaline into your souls!”* Review the lesson, “going over the story again, item by item,” discussing how the lives of these great people of faith can help us in our race.



Do not quench,  
suppress, or subdue  
the Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 5:19

# Racing Riddles

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Fill in the Acrostic below with words that describe Stephen.

**S-**

**T-**

**E-**

**P-**

**H-**

**E-**

**N-**

# Word Search

s a n h e a n e m e o p p o  
e d o g y e g o t s j r e w  
s r a i s b e s o p p o e l  
o t l o o u m i y h s p r o  
m h m c a a s i s t s h u a  
s e a o c n l p e n n e d b  
t j h o l y s p i r i t d r  
o p a t e b h r l t s s a a  
p o r l a e d r d l o u s h  
p s b e n e r e e j e p t u  
o t a s h e s i r j h p i d  
s l e n n s t d e t e n u d  
n e a l i f e r e d e c a a  
a s e b i r t e v l e w t c

Stephen

Sanhedrin

lies

Holy Spirit

Abraham

Isaac

Jacob

twelve tribes

Moses

prophets

reject

oppose



# Word Search

s a n h e a n e m e o p p o  
e d o g y e g o t s j r e w  
s r a i s b e s o p p o e l  
o t l o o u m i y h s p r o  
m h m c a a s i s t s h u a  
s e a o c n l p e n n e d b  
t j h o l y s p i r i t d r  
o p a t e b h r l t s s a a  
p o r l a e d r d l o u s h  
p s b e n e r e e j e p t u  
o t a s h e s i r j h p i d  
s l e n n s t d e t e n u d  
n e a l i f e r e d e c a a  
a s e b i r t e v l e w t c

Stephen

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