

May 31 Lesson



Bible Passage: Acts 6:8—7:60

(Stephen Is Martyred)

God Is the One True God

Remember Verse

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8

Items to gather:

- Marbles or rocks
- Jar
- Marker
- Paper (17 sheets per team)
- Basket or trash can (2)
- Masking or painter's tape

- bible

- Leaf shapes cutout of paper
- 3 foot piece of paper (a paper bag cut open would work)
- Scissors
- Markers or colored pencils

LEADER PREP

Each week you'll find a list of resources along with encouraging articles that help you prepare your heart to present the lesson.

Inspire *Shares personal stories from fellow ministry leaders about how God has worked in their lives*

I am quite pregnant right now. I have a giant belly, aching hips, and a bit of a waddle, and I experience frequent bathroom visits. I also have an ever-growing terror of the labor coming in a few short weeks.

Each day I feel my baby boy move within me. It has been an amazing process to go through pregnancy—to see and feel my baby grow, to read about all of the things that have come together in my womb and happened in my body without me doing a thing. It is a reminder of the one true God—the God who is knitting my baby together within me.

Soon my baby will be introduced to this world—a world where God isn't recognized as true, where people are invited to discover truth for themselves. So I ponder what it looks like to teach him, from an early age, about our one true God. How do I best convey God's big story to him? How do I show him that no matter what anyone says, our God is true and right and the only way?

This is where I must trust the Holy Spirit. He is and always has been working to bring us back to God. As we look throughout The Big God Story, we see that God's redemptive work began long before us and will continue long after. He is the one true God, and He will make that known forever and ever. Amen.

Denise Snyder

Crossroads Church

Equip *Offers perspective and context to the lesson's Bible passage*

In Acts 6, the young church of Jewish people who believe in Jesus as Messiah is growing and causing trouble for the Jewish establishment. One of these "troublemakers" is Stephen, a man filled with God's grace. He's brought before the Sanhedrin, the Jewish court, and accused of blaspheming God and Moses. To the Jewish leadership, Stephen's claims are blasphemous—they're afraid that he's rejecting God's teaching on the land of Israel, the Law He gave them, and the temple where His presence rests. These are serious concerns for the Jewish leadership because they want to protect what they believe to be true.

Stephen, however, is quite eloquent and prepared to defend himself against these claims. He gives legitimate reasons for the fulfillment Christ brings to these three areas. He also points out Israel's historic pattern of disobeying and ignoring God. Stephen resists with a clear defense and paves the way for a deeper understanding of just how far the implications of Jesus' message reach.

However, the leaders aren't interested, and they begin to stone him. According to Roman law, the Sanhedrin have no right to apply a death sentence in this situation, but they do anyway. After Stephen is stoned, we see the first mention of Saul (later Paul), who approved Stephen's murder (Acts 8:1).

Stephen's martyrdom—the first in Christian history—actually serves to do just what Jesus asked of His followers: to spread His message to the ends of the earth. Persecution breaks out, and disciples scatter to Judea and Samaria, outside of Jerusalem. The message of the one true God spreads far and wide.

Support *Provides reflection and assessment through encouragement, prayer, and time in God's Word*

It's common to see current news headlines about people suffering for their faith. This isn't new. People have been martyred for their faith throughout time, and, unfortunately, history often repeats itself. Consider: What was the last story you heard about people suffering for their faith?

Many of us have no clue about what it means to suffer for our faith—to be under the threat of death for claiming that God is the one true God. The children you lead probably haven't faced this threat either, but they're not immune to the news of the world, and they may feel the pressure of proclaiming their faith to their friends at school. As you prepare to lead your children this week, ask God to show you how to help them be bold witnesses for Him. What does this look like for their age group, for their young minds? Pray that the Holy Spirit would speak to them and give them confidence in the one true God. Pray also that your heart and the hearts of your kids would be filled with compassion for those around the world taking a stand for their faith.

CONNECT//10 minutes



Adding to the Jar

In this CONNECT time, kids will get to add marbles to a jar as they get to know one another better.

SUPPLIES

- Marbles (at least 1 per child)
- Jar (big enough to hold marbles)

RELATE

CONNECT QUESTION: Open your time by asking this question: **When was a time you saw something get bigger and bigger?**

The book of Acts tells about the beginning of the early church and how its numbers continued to grow through the power of the Holy Spirit. Today lead your first and second graders in a getting-to-know-you activity during which they get to add to a jar of marbles.

To play, ask your children to sit in a circle, and give a marble to each child. Then encourage the kids to take turns sharing something about the coming week that they're excited about. Once they've shared, have them add a marble to the jar and pass the jar to the next person in the circle. Continue until all the kids and family members have shared. If you have time, give each person another marble or two and go around the circle one or two more times.

GATHER//30 minutes



Remember Verse

Each week children will spend time memorizing a portion of Scripture together. The Remember Verse focuses on a character trait of God that's highlighted in today's portion of The Big God Story.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8

Game: Remember Verse Basketball

SUPPLIES

- Marker
- Paper (17 sheets per team)
- Basket or trash can (2)
- Masking or painter's tape

SET UP

Write the Remember Verse across 17 sheets of paper, with just two words on each sheet (count the Scripture reference as one word). Then crumple the papers into small balls. Make a set of 17 balls for each team. Place the baskets or trash cans on one side of the room. Using the tape, make a line on the floor about 10 feet from the baskets.

RELATE

To help the children learn the Remember Verse, let them play a game of basketball. To play, divide the children into teams, and assign each team to a basket or trash can. Then give each team a set of paper balls. Have the members of each team take turns standing at the line and shooting the balls into the basket. When the team makes a basket, the team members get to open the paper forming that ball to learn two of the words of the Remember Verse. The first team to open all of the papers with the words of the verse and put the verse in order wins the game.

Storytelling

Bible Passage: Acts 6:8—7:60

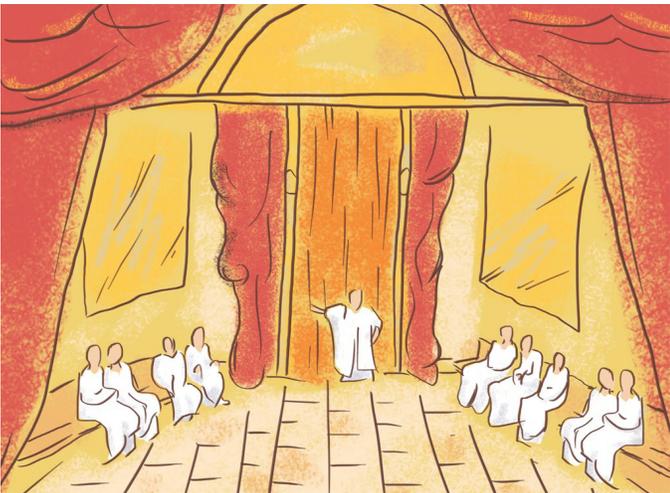
Storytelling Technique: Images

God Is the One True God

SUPPLIES

- Images: Sanhedrin, Abraham, Moses, Prophets
- Bibles





RELATE

Before we get started, I have a question for you: What are some of your favorite parts of The Big God Story? Invite children to share their favorite moments from the Bible. Share your favorite parts too. **Let's pray and ask God to speak to our hearts through today's part of The Big God Story.** Lead children in a Prayer of Release to pause, be still, and ask the Holy Spirit to quiet their hearts and minds.

Invite children to turn to Acts 6. **After the Holy Spirit filled the disciples at Pentecost, they began speaking about God with boldness. The disciples had seen God show Himself as the one true God and that's why they gave everything—even their lives—for Him. One of the people who came to believe in Jesus was a man named Stephen. Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit, and he began to work with the disciples to care for people and share Jesus' love. Stephen loved God and His story. Stephen knew The Big God Story, and because of this, he knew Jesus was the Messiah whom God had promised long ago.**

Read vv. 8–10 as kids follow along. **Stephen began preaching about Jesus and doing miracles by the power of the Holy Spirit. Stephen was filled with God's grace and power. But some of the religious leaders didn't like what Stephen was doing. They didn't believe in Jesus. Read vv. 11–14. The religious leaders started talking badly about Stephen. These men had Stephen arrested and brought before a court of religious leaders. This court was called the Sanhedrin. Show the Sanhedrin image. The people came before the court and spoke lies about Stephen. They said Stephen was saying bad things about God and Moses. The main high priest looked at Stephen and asked him if he really had been saying these things.**

Stephen knew The Big God Story very well, and he knew that Jesus was the Messiah whom God had promised long ago. Stephen knew he had to share the truth about the one true God with the Sanhedrin, even if it meant he might go to jail or even face death. The Holy Spirit filled Stephen with boldness, and Stephen began to talk about The Big God Story to everyone listening. Stephen wasn't afraid to give up his life—he trusted God and knew that no matter what happened, God would be faithful.

As Stephen spoke to the Sanhedrin, he told everyone that God had called a man named Abraham and told him he would have many family members who would become the nation of Israel. Show the Abraham image. God kept His promise, and Abraham's family became the nation of Israel. Eventually the Israelites ended up as slaves in Egypt. There God called a man named Moses to lead His people out of Egypt and into their own land. Show the Moses image.

Then Stephen told the Sanhedrin about God's prophets who had been called to speak truth to Israel. But Israel didn't always listen to these prophets. Show the Prophets image. Stephen told the members of the Sanhedrin that they were just like the Israelites who hadn't listened. They'd ignored God's prophets, and now they'd killed Jesus, God's own Son! Jesus had come to save everyone, but the religious leaders weren't willing to listen.

When the religious leaders heard everything Stephen said about The Big God Story and Jesus, they became very angry. Why do you think the leaders got so angry? Encourage responses. Good thoughts. They thought Stephen was saying bad things about God, and they didn't like hearing what he had to say about Jesus. They didn't know he was telling the truth about the one true God! The men rushed at Stephen and dragged him out of the court and outside of the city, where they began to throw stones at him.

Invite children to turn to Acts 7:55–56 and follow along as you read the verses aloud. **Stephen might have felt scared, but he looked up and saw God's glory! Stephen saw Jesus, and he knew he would soon get to be with Jesus forever. Then, as Stephen was dying, he asked God to forgive the people who killed him—just like Jesus did when He died on the cross (Luke 23:34). Stephen loved Jesus so much, and because he knew Jesus was the one true God, Stephen was willing to give up his life to follow Jesus.**

What does *truth* mean? Invite responses. **If something is true, it is right and real. God is Truth, and He is the one true God. The disciples knew this, and they knew He was the only One worth following. They were willing to stand up for God no matter the cost.**

Jesus changed Stephen's life, and the Holy Spirit enabled Stephen to care for the people around him. Stephen saw that the religious leaders didn't believe in Jesus, so he told them the good news about Jesus'

salvation, even though they didn't believe him and ended up hurting him for what he said. Once God shows us that He is the one true God, He entrusts us with sharing the truth with others. Share a personal story of when God showed you or someone you know that He is the one true God. Next week we'll hear about how God showed He is the one true God by healing someone in an amazing way. There is no one like Him!

Discussion Questions

- Why did the religious leaders get so angry with Stephen? Acts 7:51–54
- Why was Stephen willing to give up his life? Acts 7:55–56
- What does it mean that God is the one true God?
- How has God shown you that He is the one true God?

RESPOND//15 minutes



Craft: Tree of Praise

Kids will write words of praise or draw pictures to express how amazing our one true God is.

SUPPLIES

- Leaf shaped cutout of paper
- 3 foot piece of paper (a paper bag cut open would work)
- Scissors
- Masking or painter's tape
- Markers or colored pencils

SET UP

Cut a tree trunk out of the 3 foot paper/paper bag. Tape the trunk to a wall in your room, low enough that the children can reach the top. Use the marker to draw details on the tree (such as bark). Cut a Leaf cutout for each child.

RELATE

Stephen loved God so much, and his whole life belonged to God. There truly is no one like God! He holds the words of truth and life. Nothing and no one else can help us like God can. Take a few minutes to think about what God has done for you in your life. How do you want to praise the one true God today? Invite your children to sit before the Lord and spend time thanking God for sacrificing His Son. Optional: Play worship music and encourage the kids to listen closely to the words. Ask kids to share a word of praise that stood out to them today, either from the worship song or another part of today's lesson. Have a leader share a word first to model this for the rest of the class.

Developmentally Speaking

Young children think within the concrete terms of physical things, people, and places. You may want to spark the conversation of praise by sharing tangible things God has done (such as create the world and send Jesus) or is better than (such as "God is more wonderful than even a day at the beach!").

Once the children have spent some time talking to God and worshipping Him, give each child a Leaf cutout, and invite kids to write or draw some words or pictures of praise on the leaves. They may want to finish the phrase "God is better than ..." (examples: ice cream, toys, a day at the water park, etc.). When they finish, have the children cut out their leaves and tape them to the top of the tree trunk as a way of declaring their praise for the one true God.

Game: May I?

In this game of May I? one child decides how everyone else in the room should move.

SUPPLIES

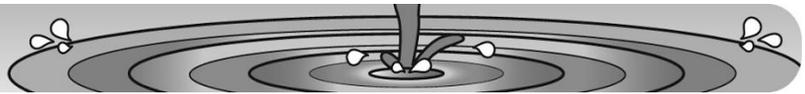
- None

RELATE

After Stephen preached to crowds about Jesus, he was brought before the religious leaders. The religious leaders in that day could decide what would happen to a person. If the religious leaders made a rule or command, people had to follow it! Today lead your kids in a game of May I? during which one person decides how everyone else in the room should move.

To play, designate one child to be the leader, and have her stand on one side of the room, about 20 feet from the rest of the class. Then have the other kids take turns asking if they can move forward a specific number of spaces. For example, a child might ask, “Leader, may I move three steps forward?” Then the leader will respond, “Yes, you may” or “No, you may not.” Children can ask to move by taking different types of steps such as giant steps, baby steps, skipping, hopping, etc. The leader can also respond to the child’s request by offering an alternative—for example, “No, you can’t take *five* steps, but you can take *three* steps.” The first child to reach the leader wins the game.

BLESS//5 minutes



SUPPLIES

- Bible

RELATE

Gather the children and invite them to kneel in a circle with you. Encourage them to lift their hands high in praise to the one true God as you read the blessing from Psalm 97:9, 12:

For you, LORD, are the Most High over all the earth; you are exalted far above all gods ... Rejoice in the LORD, you who are righteous, and praise his holy name.

Then speak this blessing over the children:

May you worship the one true God with your whole life. May you serve and follow Him with great joy.