



# The Jews Resist the Holy Spirit

Acts 6:1–7:60



## LESSON GOAL

Students will not resist the Holy Spirit when the Gospel is preached.

## LESSON OBJECTIVE

Students will be able to:

- Explain how Stephen ministered to believers and non-believers.
- Summarize the major characters, events, and themes of Stephen's message.
- Describe the Jews' rejection of Stephen's message.

## KEY VERSE

"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you." —Acts 7:51

## APPLICATION

- Follow Stephen's example of being a servant of the saints and of the Gospel.
- Rejoice that the Son of Man will rule over all things for all eternity.
- Pray that God will save those who persecute His children.

## NEXT WEEK

The Church Is Persecuted and the Gospel Spreads  
Acts 8:1–25

### Symbol Key



Craft



Memory Verse



Object Lesson



Game



Visual Aid



Activity



Q & A



Work Sheet



2 Grade Level

# Teacher Planning Sheet

## PREPARE

Objectives/Truths to cover this week

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Personal Application

*As a result of my study in this passage, God wants me to...*

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

*Three ways students need to apply this passage are...*

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## POINT

*Choose from various ideas to point them to the coming Bible lesson.*

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## PROCLAIM

*Choose from various ideas to proclaim the Bible lesson.*

### Presentation Ideas

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

### Praise/Music Ideas

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## PRACTICE

*Choose ideas to help review and apply today's lesson.*

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Materials Needed:**

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## PREPARE WITH THE TRUTH

*“Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul... you shall teach them to your children.” —Deuteronomy 11:18–19*

Please take time to prepare your mind and heart to accurately handle the truths of God’s Word (2 Tim. 2:15). Read through the Bible background and study the truths contained in this lesson. Crucial background information is included here that will aid you in understanding the Scripture.

### Bible Background

#### Introduction

In Acts 6:7, Luke gives the last of four summaries of the growth of the church in Jerusalem. Similar to the previous three (2:40–47; 4:32–35; 5:12–16), Luke describes how the “word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem” (6:7). One exciting manifestation of the Gospel’s success was that a “great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.” Even though the Sanhedrin had commanded the apostles to stop preaching the name of Jesus, the apostles faithfully obeyed God and many who heard the Gospel were saved.

Even though many Jews had been saved (perhaps as many as 20,000), most Jews in Jerusalem continued in their unrepentant rejection of Jesus. For approximately two years, the Jews of Jerusalem viewed the believers with favor (2:47; 4:33; 5:13) but refused to accept their message. They respected the believers’ lives but not their Lord. Finally, the Jews of Jerusalem could stand hearing about Jesus no longer. They hideously manifested their intense hatred of the Gospel when they killed Stephen. The Jews of Jerusalem wanted to continue to think themselves righteous rather than admit their need for a Savior.

#### The Ministry of Stephen (Acts 6:1–15)

Although the apostles had been flogged for preaching the name of Jesus, the first person murdered for doing so was not an apostle but a man named Stephen. Before his death, Stephen had a successful ministry among both the believers and unbelievers.

Stephen is first introduced in Acts after a complaint arose among the believers between the Hellenists (Jews who came to Jerusalem from the dispersion and whose first language was Greek) and the Hebrews (Aramaic-speaking Jews who grew up in Palestine) (Acts 6:1). The problem was that Hellenist widows were not being provided for as well as the Hebrew widows. The apostles appointed seven men to address the issue so they could continue their focus on prayer and preaching (Acts 6:2–4). The apostles required that the men be “of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). One of the seven men chosen was Stephen. Not only did Stephen obviously satisfy the apostles’ requirements, but Luke emphasizes that Stephen was “a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit” (6:5). Stephen’s life was characterized by his submission to the Spirit, by wisdom, and by faith. Following the apostles’ praying over and laying hands on the seven (a demonstration of the apostle’s affirming of their ministry), Stephen faithfully ministered to the church, ensuring that both groups of widows were well-provided for. Stephen’s ministry extended beyond the believers to the unbelieving Jewish community. Luke again described Stephen in Acts 6:8: “Stephen, full of faith and

power, did great wonders and signs among the people.” In addition to his previous characteristics, Stephen also had been given power to do miracles. Instead of taking the Gospel to the temple (where the apostles ministered), Stephen went to a few of the many Greek-speaking synagogues in Jerusalem. (Synagogues developed during the Babylonian for Jews to meet together to worship and read Scripture.) Although the Greek of Acts 6:9 is difficult, it appears that Stephen went to three synagogues in Jerusalem: the Synagogue of the Freedmen (composed of the descendants of Jews who had been taken as slaves to Rome), a synagogue of those from Cyrene and Alexandria (two North African cities), and a synagogue of those from Cilicia and Asia (two Roman provinces in Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey) (Acts 6:9). Although it is impossible to be dogmatic, Stephen’s Greek name and his being picked to deal with the problem between the Hellenists and Hebrew suggests that he was a Hellenist himself. If Stephen were a Hellenist, it was only natural for him to go to the Greek-speaking synagogues since his primary language would have been Greek.

The synagogue Jews became angry with Stephen’s ministry and plotted against him. When Stephen debated with them in the synagogues about the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and their need for repentance, the Jews “were not able to resist the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spoke” (Acts 6:10). Unable to prove him wrong, the Jews sought to discredit Stephen by persuading men to lie about him and say that he spoke “blasphemous words against Moses and God” (Acts 6:11). After their lies had spread, the jealous Jews “stirred up the people, the elders, and the scribes; and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the council” (Acts 6:12). For the first time since the crucifixion of Jesus, the general population (“the people”), the Sadducees (“the elders”) and the Pharisees (“the scribes”) were united in their opposition of God’s servants. Similar to Jesus’ trial, false witnesses came forward to testify against Stephen (6:13). They repeated the earlier lies that Stephen had spoken blasphemy and included new lies that Stephen was preaching that Jesus would destroy the temple (“this place”) and “change the customs which Moses delivered to us” (Acts 6:14). The false witnesses lied not only about Stephen but also the Lord Jesus.

Before recording Stephen’s defense, Luke describes Stephen’s appearance before the Sanhedrin: “All who sat in the council...saw his face as the face of an angel” (6:15). Stephen’s face glowed. God testified his approval of Stephen by transforming Stephen’s face. Stephen’s reflection of God’s glory was both commendation of the message he was about to give and testimony that he was not guilty of blasphemy.

### **The Message of Stephen (Acts 7:1–53)**

In his message before the Sanhedrin, Stephen responded to the charges brought against him by the false witnesses. Instead of giving a point by point refutation, Stephen demonstrated that he was not guilty of blasphemy by summarizing Scripture’s record of how God worked with Israel. Not only did Stephen’s message show that he was orthodox in his beliefs, but the message was also designed to convict those present of their rebellion and idolatry.

Stephen began his message by focusing on God’s promises to Abraham (Acts 7:2–8). Stephen summarized how God called Abraham out of Mesopotamia and promised to give him the land “for a possession” to both him “and to his descendants after Him” (7:5). In addition, God told Abraham that his descendants would be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years. He also promised Abraham that his descendants “shall come out and serve Me in this place” (7:7). After presenting God’s promises that Abraham’s descendants would worship him in the Promised Land, Stephen began to show how God fulfilled those promises, first by

giving Abraham a son named Isaac, by giving Isaac a son named Jacob, and by giving Jacob twelve sons, the “Twelve Patriarchs” (7:8). Stephen rejoiced in God’s plan for Abraham and in Israel’s privileged position before God.

God’s plan for Israel to worship Him in the Promised Land would only be fulfilled if God preserved Israel until they entered the land (Acts 7:7). Stephen next told how God protected Jacob’s family from starvation through Joseph’s being sold into slavery (7:9–16). God did not abandon the enslaved Joseph but exalted Him so that Joseph could save his family. Stephen’s summary of God’s deliverance through Joseph demonstrated Stephen’s faith in God’s prophecies. The summary may have also been included to start the Jews thinking about their sin. Like their ancestors who plotted against Joseph, the Jews had plotted against the One whom God had appointed for their deliverance.

In His retelling of God’s plan for the people of Israel, Stephen next focused on Moses (7:17–34). After referring again to God’s promise to bring Abraham’s descendants out of bondage, Stephen told how Israel had been oppressed in Egypt and how God prepared a deliverer to rescue them (vv.17–22). Compared to all the other events of Moses’ life, Stephen spent a surprising amount of time on Moses’ being rejected as deliverer while still in Egypt (vv.23–28). Because the Israelites did not “understand that God would deliver them by his hand,” Moses was forced to flee Egypt. Stephen affirmed how God revealed himself to Moses and sent him to deliver Israel. Although Stephen had been accused of blaspheming Moses (6:11) and the Law (6:13), Stephen revealed that he had the highest respect for Moses.

Stephen used his description of Moses as an occasion to rebuke the Jews for their sinfulness. Stephen affirmed that Moses was the “one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer” but he also emphasized that Moses was “whom they rejected” (7:35). Stephen had already discussed Israel’s rejection of Moses as a deliverer (vv.23–29) and now brings it up again. While not specifically stated, Stephen’s point is clear: like the Israelites in Egypt, the Jews were guilty of rejecting God’s chosen deliverer. Although Stephen had been accused of rejecting Moses, Stephen affirmed Moses’ prophecy to send a “Prophet like me from your brethren” (v.37). Jews understood this prophecy to be about the Messiah. While Stephen had obeyed Moses’ command to listen to the Prophet, the majority of Jews had not. Stephen not only declared that Moses had received the “living oracles to give to us” but also reminded that Jews that their fathers “would not obey, but rejected” (vv.38–39). Israel’s fathers rejected God’s Law and made a “calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands” (v.41). Although not explicit, Stephen implied that he had accepted Moses as the lawgiver but that the Israelites had not.

Following a description of Israel’s idolatry, Stephen turned to a discussion of the temple. Stephen had been accused of speaking “blasphemous words against this holy place” (6:13). Stephen again revealed his orthodox belief that God had given the pattern of the tabernacle, that Moses had obeyed God’s directions, that Joshua brought the tabernacle into the Promised Land, that David wanted to build a permanent temple, but that Solomon had been chosen by God to build a temple (7:44–47). Stephen had no blasphemous view of the temple...but the Jews did! Stephen corrected the Jews: “However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with human hands” (v.48). The phrase “made with hands” was commonly used to refer to idols (as in Acts 7:41). Because the temple had become more important to the Jews than God Himself, they had turned the temple into an idol, the object of worship. Rather, than seeing the temple as a place to worship God, they had made the temple, and the religion it represented, an object of worship.

Up to this point, Stephen had been hinting that the Jews were like their ancestors, but in verse 51, Stephen makes his indictment clear: “as your fathers did, so do

you.” Stephen rebuked the Jews for being “stiff-necked” (obstinate and unwilling to repent) and “uncircumcised in heart and ears” (7:51). (Although their bodies bore the physical marks of being in the Abrahamic covenant, their hearts and ears were like those of a pagan. Being blessed by God had not change the Jews’ hearts.) Stephen characterized their unwillingness to submit to God’s messengers: “You always resist the Holy Spirit” (7:51). Just like their fathers, they would not listen when the Holy Spirit through the prophets “foretold the coming of the Just One” (7:52). Their fathers had killed the messengers but they had killed the Messiah. He was not guilty of blasphemy, but the Jews were guilty of not keeping the Law (7:53).

### **The Murder of Stephen (Acts 7:54–60)**

The Jews were furious when they heard Stephen’s rebuttal turn into rebuke. They gnashed their teeth in anger. The truth was like a knife which painfully cut away at their façade and exposed their interior sin (v.54). They were even more angry when Stephen was granted a vision of “Jesus standing at the right hand of God” (v.55). He boldly testified to what he saw: “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (v.56). Hearing that Jesus who they had crucified was in God’s presence was too much for the Jews. The “Son of Man” was used in the book of Daniel to refer to the Messiah. In a vision, Daniel had seen the “Son of Man” given “dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him” (Daniel 7:13–14). If the Jews had killed the Son of Man, they would certainly be judged, unless they repented. But instead of repenting, they “cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears” (Acts 7:57) so that they could no longer hear Stephen’s blasphemy. The crowd rushed upon him, dragged him outside the city and stoned him (v.58). Those who had testified against Stephen “laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul” (v.59). Saul was obviously involved in what happened to Steven, perhaps even being one of those who had induced others to lie about Steven and had set up false witnesses (6:11–13). (Saul was from Tarsus, located in Cilicia. He may have worshiped in the synagogue of “those from Cilicia and Asia” which Stephen had preached in (Acts 6:8–9)).

Although the Jews thought Stephen deserved death, Stephen entered into His Lord’s presence with a clear conscience. He looked forward to being in Jesus’ presence and confidently prayed to Jesus, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (7:59). Jesus’ prayer on the cross was similar: “Father, into your hands I commit My spirit” (Luke 23:47). The Son of Man standing before the Father was ready to receive and reward His servant.

Instead of praying for judgment upon the mob, Stephen “knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not charge them with this sin’” (Acts 7:60). While he was being murdered, Stephen desired that God would forgive the people for this atrocity. Jesus prayed a similar prayer before he died: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do” (Luke 23:34). They both prayed for those who acted “ignorantly in unbelief,” like the crowd which was actually convinced Stephen had blasphemed (I Timothy 1:13). Saul was one of those who had acted in unbelief whom God chose to have mercy upon. The Lord heard both of Stephen’s prayers.

### **Conclusion**

Following the death of Stephen, persecution broke out against the church and the church was scattered across Judea and Samaria. Acts 8 records how God used the dispersion of the believers to save more of God’s elect. But Jerusalem had turned its back on the proclamation of the Lord Jesus and sought to kill those who testi-

fied to Him. The Jews in Jerusalem had chosen to resist the Holy Spirit and continue in their rebellion.

## POINT TO THE TRUTH

*“Give ear, O my people, to my law; incline your ears to the words of my mouth.”  
—Psalm 78:1*

This section includes questions to review last week’s lesson and ideas to prepare students for this week’s lesson. Choose from the following ideas to point to the truths of this lesson.



### Review Questions

Who didn’t like that the apostles were healing people in Jesus’ name?

*The religious leaders*

Why didn’t they like what the apostles were doing?

*They were jealous because the apostles were getting more attention than they were.*

What did the religious leaders do to Peter and John?

*They threw them in jail.*

What happened at night while they were in jail?

*The Lord sent an angel to open the doors of the prison and let the disciples out.*

What happened when they came to get the disciples?

*They found that the prison was still locked but that the apostles were not inside.*

What did they find that the religious leaders were doing?

*They were standing in the temple and teaching the people.*

What did the religious leaders command the apostles not to do?

*They told the disciples not to speak in Jesus’ name.*

What did the apostles do after they were let go?

*They praised God that He would use them and they kept on preaching.*



### Difficult Concepts

**Stiff-necked:** Stiff-necked means stubborn. Have the students imagine they are trying to lead a donkey who will not move. When they pull on the rope around his neck, the donkey would brace his legs and stiffen his neck because he was being stubborn.

**Resisting the Holy Spirit:** Resisting the Holy Spirit is the same as resisting God’s Word. Have the students put their hands over their ears while you try to talk to them, and then explain that if we can’t hear God’s Word the Holy Spirit can’t speak to us.

**Synagogue vs. Temple:** Synagogues were meeting places for the Jewish people. They would go to the synagogue every week on Saturday to hear teaching from

the Old Testament and to pray. There were many synagogues everywhere. The Temple was more special than a synagogue because there was only one temple. At the Temple, animals would be sacrificed. The priests worked at the Temple, but not at the synagogues.

**Cut to the heart, gnashing teeth:** The Jews were very upset by Stephen's preaching. It was like a doctor had operated on them and given them open-heart surgery. They felt like Stephen could see deep down inside of them, and that hurt like it would if someone stabbed you with a knife. They were so upset they ground their teeth. Have the students make angry faces, and point out one student who is grinding his teeth.

**Stoning:** In America, very bad criminals are executed either with the electric chair or by a shot. In Bible times, however, they killed criminals by stoning them with rocks. They didn't use little rocks, they used big heavy stones.



### Resisting

Illustrate the concept of what it means to resist by creating a puppet show. One puppet tells another what should be done and the first resists it by not obeying or listening. A variety of scenarios can be used such as a mother and child, teacher and student, two friends, etc.



### Cast the Stone Game

Create rocks with crumpled newspapers stuffed into stockings or with any material that will look like a rock. Create a masking tape bull's eye, designating points for each section. Instruct the students to cast the stones onto the target. The student with the highest points wins. Transition from this game by explaining to the students that in today's lesson we will hear about people who threw stones at a man named Stephen.



### Resisting the Holy Spirit

To teach the students what it means to resist, play a game of tug-of-war. Explain that the goal of the game is to be not pulled over the line in the middle of the room. They are to resist the other team. In today's lesson some people will resist the work of the Holy Spirit.



### Dying

Discuss with your students what they would say if they knew they were going to die before the end of class. Ask what they would say to their families, how they would feel about dying, and what they would wish they could do before they died.



### Would You Be Guilty?

Discuss with your students what they would say if someone accused them of being a Christian. Have them picture a court room. They are on the witness stand, and have to provide proof they are or are not.



# PROCLAIM THE TRUTH

*“Telling to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and His strength and His wonderful works that He has done.” —Psalm 78:4*

This section includes the Bible lesson, lesson questions, and praise and worship ideas. Song suggestions are included that you can use to proclaim your worship to God. Use the lesson questions to check the students’ understanding. This section also includes various presentation ideas to use alongside the teaching time. Read the Bible passage several times before you read these pages. All teaching should be done right from the Bible.

## Bible Lesson

### Passage Outline

The Ministry of Stephen (Acts 6:1–15)

The Message of Stephen (Acts 7:1–53)

The Murder of Stephen (Acts 7:54–60)

### Reading of the Text

Read Acts 6:1–7:60

### Introduction

Have you ever taken a slinky or spring and tried to stretch it out as far as it could go? What happens? The moment you let the spring go it recoils back to its original shape. Regardless of how hard you pull on the slinky or spring, they will always resist being stretched out. Such resistance can be easily seen in the life of Israel. The history of the Jewish people is filled with instances where they resisted God. Over and over again God dealt patiently with His people, only to have them always return to their original condition—rebellion. In their rebellion they killed God’s prophets, God’s Son, and as we will see in today’s lesson, even those who followed His Son Jesus Christ. Yes today’s lesson is yet another example of Israel’s rebellion against God. When God’s servant, Stephen preached the gospel to Israel, the Jewish people resisted the working of the Holy Spirit. Let us now look at the Jews’ resistance to the Spirit, and see what they chose to do with His servant Stephen.



### Lead-off Questions (LOQs)

**LOQ:** In today’s lesson, what complaint arose among the believers?

**Answer:** A complaint arose between two different groups of believers, the Hellenists and the Hebrews, regarding the care of their widows. A widow is a woman whose husband had died before she did, leaving her with the sole responsibility of taking care of the family. One of the responsibilities of the church was to provide and care for all widows. In today’s lesson, the Hellenists are upset because they feel that their widows are not being taken care of as well as the Hebrew widows.

**LOQ:** What was the apostle’s solution for the problem?

**Answer:** Due to their responsibility to pray and preach the word, the apostles did not have the time or manpower to deal with the problem between the Hellenists

and the Hebrews. So the apostles gathered together and appointed seven men to deal with the problem. These seven men would make sure that the church was being faithful to care for every widow the same. The apostles chose those men who they knew to be of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.

**LOQ:** Which of the seven men chosen by the apostles is seen in today's lesson?

**Answer:** One of the chosen men was Stephen. The book of Acts emphasizes that Stephen was a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit. Stephen's life was characterized by his submission to the Spirit, by wisdom, and by faith. Once the apostles had approved of the seven, Stephen faithfully ministered to the church, ensuring that both groups of widows were well provided for.

**LOQ:** How did Stephen minister to both believers and non-believers?

**Answer:** In addition to being full of faith and the Holy Spirit, Stephen was also given the power to do miracles. Luke writes that Stephen did great wonders and signs among the unbelievers there in Jerusalem. Having been given this power, Stephen went from synagogue to synagogue there in Jerusalem preaching the gospel.

**LOQ:** What did the Jews falsely accuse Stephen of doing?

**Answer:** The synagogue became angry with Stephen's ministry so they plotted against him. Luke writes that when Stephen debated with them about the death and resurrection of Christ and their need for repentance, the Jews were no match for the wisdom that Stephen had been given through the Holy Spirit. Unable to prove him wrong, the Jews persuaded men to lie about Stephen, saying that he spoke harsh words against both Moses and God. To have spoken harshly against both of these individuals would have been a serious offense to the Jews.

**LOQ:** What do the Jews then do with Stephen?

**Answer:** After they had spread their lies about Stephen, the Jews came together, had him arrested, and brought him before the Sanhedrin to be questioned. Similar to Jesus' trial, false witnesses came forward to testify against Stephen. They repeated their earlier lies that Stephen had blasphemed both God and Moses and included new lies that Stephen was preaching that Jesus would destroy the temple. The false witnesses lied not only about Stephen but also the Lord Jesus.

**LOQ:** What did the council see when they looked upon Stephen's face?

**Answer:** Luke writes that when Stephen had approached the council his face was like that of an angel. Stephen's face glowed. God showed his approval of Stephen by transforming his face. Stephen's reflection of God's glory was evidence that he was not guilty of blasphemy as the Jews had said. Stephen was innocent.

**LOQ:** How does Stephen respond to the charges brought against him?

**Answer:** Most would have expected Stephen to argue with the Sanhedrin, trying to prove himself not guilty. But instead of giving a harsh refutation, Stephen demonstrated that he was not guilty of blasphemy by summarizing Scripture's record of how God worked with Israel. While Stephen's message proved that he was innocent, it was also designed to convict those present of their rebellion and idolatry.

**LOQ:** What does Stephen mention about Abraham?

**Answer:** Stephen began his message by focusing on God's promises to Abraham. After presenting God's promises that Abraham's descendants would worship Him in the Promised Land, Stephen began to show how God fulfilled those promises, first by giving Abraham a son named Isaac, by giving Isaac a son named Jacob, and then by giving Jacob twelve sons (which would eventually become the twelve tribes of Israel). Stephen rejoiced in God's plan for Abraham and in Israel's special position before God.

**LOQ:** What does Stephen mention about Joseph?

**Answer:** Stephen next told how God had protected Jacob's family from starvation through Joseph's being sold into slavery. God did not abandon the enslaved Joseph but exalted Him so that Joseph could save his family. Stephen's summary of God's deliverance through Joseph demonstrated Stephen's faith in God's promises. The summary may have also been included to start the Jews thinking about their own sin. Like their ancestors who had plotted against Joseph, the Jews had plotted against the One whom God had appointed for their deliverance—Jesus Christ.

**LOQ:** Why does Stephen spend a significant amount of time talking about Moses?

**Answer:** After referring to God's promises to Abraham, Stephen then goes on to tell how Israel had been oppressed in Egypt and how God had prepared a deliverer to rescue them. It is at this point that Stephen spends a surprising amount of time on Moses being rejected as deliverer of Israel. Although Stephen had been accused of speaking wrongly towards Moses and the Law, Stephen revealed that he had the highest respect for Moses. Stephen reminded the Jews that it was their fathers who would not obey the law given to Moses. They ultimately rejected God's servant Moses. He uses this description of Moses as an occasion to now rebuke the Jews for their sinfulness. Like the Israelites in Egypt, the Jews were now guilty of rejecting God's chosen deliverer—Jesus Christ. Instead of receiving both He and His message, the Jews had rejected God's Son by nailing Him to a cross.

**LOQ:** What does Stephen rebuke the Jews of doing?

**Answer:** Stephen accuses the Jews of doing the very same thing that their fathers had done. To Stephen they were a "stiff-necked" people who were "uncircumcised in heart and ears" (v. 51). Even though they bore the physical marks of being part of God's chosen people; their hearts were still far from Him. In describing them as being "stiff-necked," Stephen was commenting on their unwillingness to submit to Christ and repent of their sin. Stephen characterizes their unwillingness to submit to God by saying that they always resist the Holy Spirit. Because they had resisted the Holy Spirit, it was the Jews who were guilty before God, not His servant Stephen.

**LOQ:** What did Peter then see?

**Answer:** About that time, God granted Stephen a vision. In the vision, Stephen saw Jesus standing beside God. Stephen pronounces to the Jews that the very one that they had killed was now exalted in the presence of God.

**LOQ:** What was the Jews' response to Stephen's vision and rebuke?

**Answer:** Luke writes that the Jews with furious with Stephen, and that they gnashed their teeth in anger. They could stand Stephen exposing their sin. If the Jews had killed the Son of God, they would certainly be judged, unless they repented. But instead of repenting, they "cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears" (7:57) so that they could no longer hear what Stephen was saying.

**LOQ:** What did the angry Jews then do with Stephen?

**Answer:** Hearing that Jesus who they had crucified was now in God's presence was too much for the Jews. They rushed upon Stephen, dragged him outside the city and stoned him. (Stoning was a death penalty that differed from one being crucified. It entailed having one stand in front of a large crowd, as all the people threw rocks at the individual in question. The person would then die after having received many blows from the rocks thrown at him.)

**LOQ:** What does Stephen do near the end of his life?

**Answer:** Stephen looked forward to being in Jesus' presence and before he died confidently prayed unto the Lord. Luke records that Stephen prayed two things: 1) "Lord receive my spirit" (7:59), and "Lord, do not charge them with this sin" (7:60). Even while he was being murdered, Stephen desired that God would forgive the people of their sin.

### Summary

After having been chosen by the apostles to minister to the church, Stephen begins faithfully fulfilling his calling. While performing great signs and wonders among the people there in Jerusalem, Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit traveled from synagogue to synagogue preaching the good news of Jesus Christ. The Jews however would not receive the news that they need to submit to Christ and repent of their sin. Furious with both Stephen and his message, the Jews brought him before the Sanhedrin to be questioned. There before the Sanhedrin Stephen was given both a vision and wisdom to be able to refute the lies that had been brought against him. The Holy Spirit desired to convict the Jews of their sin and see them submit to the lordship of the one they had crucified. However, like those before them, the Jews resisted the Holy Spirit. They wanted neither to submit nor repent of their sin. In order to escape the guilt that the Holy Spirit was bringing upon them, the Jews had His servant Stephen stoned to death. Just before his death, the innocent Stephen prayed unto the Lord. Eager to be in His presence, Stephen asked that God would forgive those who were putting him to death.

### Application

Stephen gives us an excellent example of what it is to serve both the church and the gospel. Unfortunately there will be those who choose not to receive the gospel's message that they need to submit themselves to Christ and repent of their sin. Those that do resist the Spirit, Christ will one-day judge. While time is still available though, each one of us should examine our own hearts to see if we are like those Jews who resisted the Spirit. Those that have not resisted the Holy Spirit can now rejoice that the Son of Man will rule over all things for all eternity.



## Presentation Ideas

### A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards®

Use appropriate A Beka Book® Flash-A-Cards® with the lesson.



### Betty Lukens Flannel Graph

Use appropriate flannel graph pieces with the lesson.



### Visual Aids

While teaching the lesson, use visuals such as Joseph's coat, Moses' staff and the golden calf to illustrate some of the main points of Stephen's message. Old coloring pictures may also be a helpful resource.



### Act It Out

Skit 1. Have one of the teachers dress up as Stephen and act out chapter 7.

Skit 2. Have one of the teachers dress up as a widow (all in black) and explain what happened from her perspective.



### Resisting Illustrations

Using two magnets (the horseshoe kind or any double-sided magnet is preferable) bring the magnets close together, and show how they repulse each other. Put one magnet on the table and push it off the edge using the other magnet. Then, show how the magnets stick to each other when they are correctly lined up.

Fill a small pan with water. Sprinkle pepper on one side of it. As you talk about resisting, dip one finger in some soapy water and then place your finger in the pan with the pepper. The pepper should spread out away from your soapy finger.



### Spread of the Gospel

Get a jar or plastic container. Begin filling it with marbles, illustrating believers getting saved and the church getting bigger. Then, shake up the jar to demonstrate the church being persecuted. Dump the marbles out on the floor to illustrate the spread of the Gospel.



### Venn Diagram: Dying Words

Directions: Copy the student version of the chart on an overhead transparency, and hand out copies to each student. Read Luke 23:34, 47 and Acts 7:59–60. Lead the students to compare and contrast the dying words of both Jesus and Stephen. Write similarities inside the area where the two circles intersect. Write differences in the distinct sections of the circle labeled Jesus or Stephen. Use the teacher's edition as a guide.

## Praise and Worship

*Father, I Adore You*

*Lord, I Lift Your Name On High*

*Change My Heart O God*

*I See The Lord*

## PRACTICE THE TRUTH

*"That they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." —Psalm 78:7*

Choose ideas from this section that review and apply the truths of the Bible lesson.



### **Craft: Stephen Stone**

Materials: Average size stone for each student, paint, paint brushes

Directions: Pass out a stone to each student. Direct students to paint Stephen's name on the stone as a reminder of his martyrdom. Instruct students to place the stone somewhere at home that will serve as an encouragement to follow Stephen's example of being a servant despite persecution.



### **"The Jews Resist the Holy Spirit"**

Use this worksheet to reinforce the key truths of today's lesson. It is located at the back of this lesson.



### **Small Group Activity: "Responding to the Gospel"**

Give each student a copy of the journal page at the back of this lesson. He or she can complete the page individually, in a small group, or at home.

### **Coloring Pages**

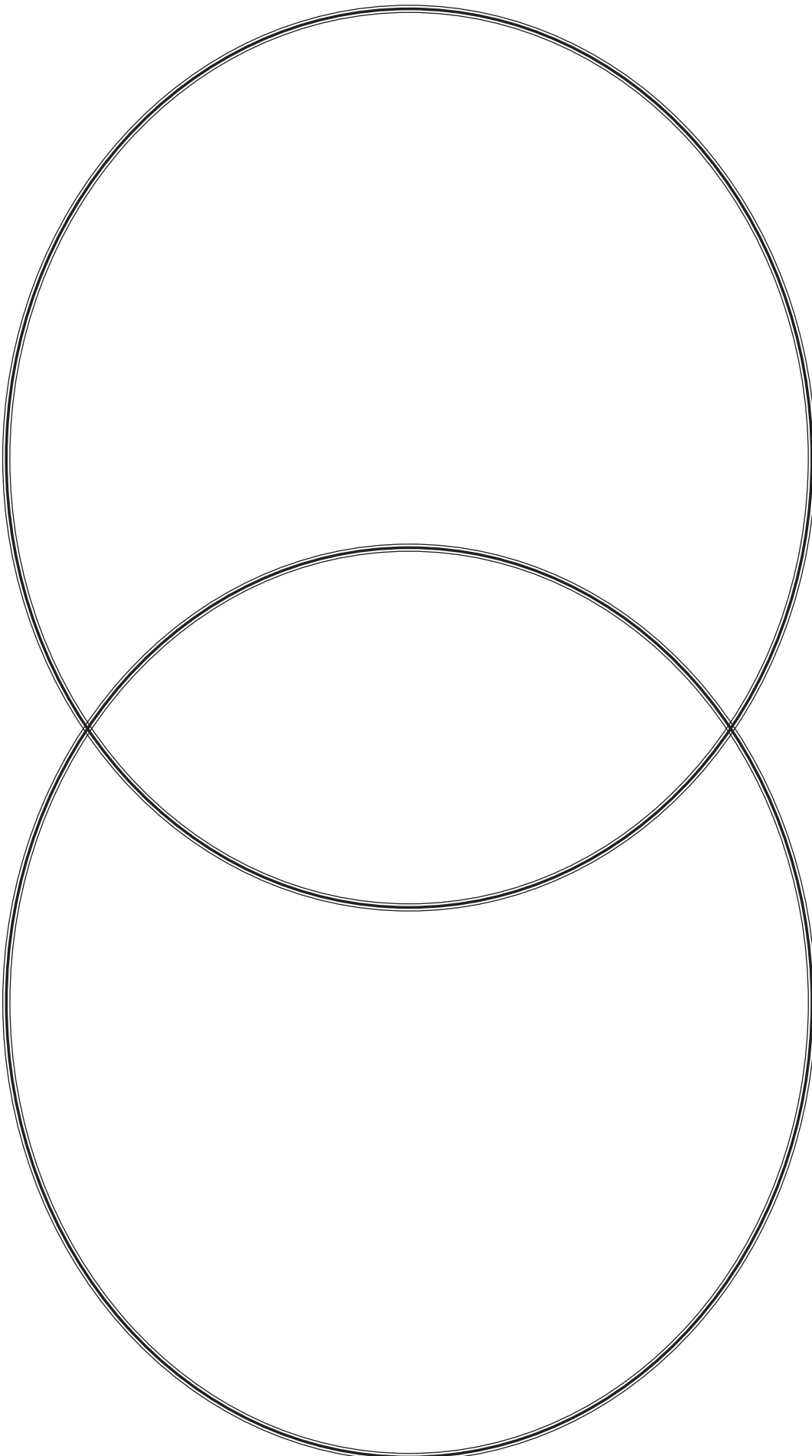
Give each student a copy of the coloring pages from the back of the lesson. He or she can color the pages in class or take them home to color.



### **MEMORY VERSE**

*"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you." —Acts 7:51*

# Dying Words



**Jesus**

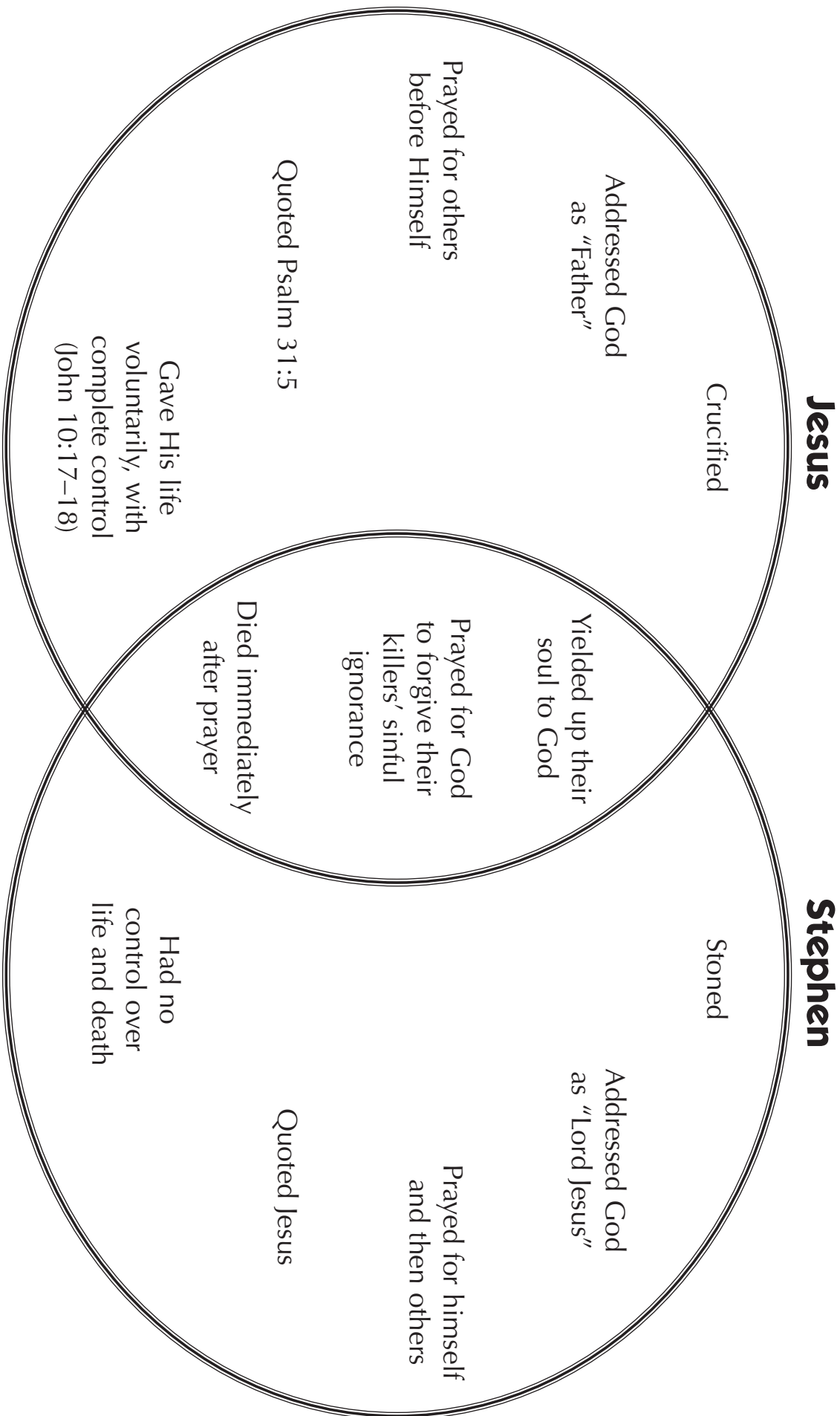
**Stephen**





# Dying Words

Teacher's Edition





# The Jews resist the Holy Spirit



Acts 6:1–7:60

Name \_\_\_\_\_

1. What was Stephen accused of in Acts 6:11? \_\_\_\_\_
2. What Old Testament examples did Stephen use during his message? \_\_\_\_\_  
a. Moses                      b. Joseph                      c. Abraham                      d. all three
3. True or False: Stephen showed that Israel had rejected Moses as their deliverer. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Stephen also showed that Israel had rebelled against \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Stephen told them they had betrayed and murdered \_\_\_\_\_ (7:52).
6. How did the people respond after hearing Stephen's message? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
7. When the people were stoning him, Stephen cried out to God and said, " \_\_\_\_\_  
do not \_\_\_\_\_ them with this \_\_\_\_\_" (Acts 7:60).



# Responding to the Gospel

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“You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you.”

—Acts 7:51

When you were a very small child and your mother took you to the doctor’s office for a shot, did you resist the doctor’s needle? Although the needle may have hurt at first, it was good that you were given the shot because it kept you from getting a serious illness.

In a similar way, it hurts to hear that we are sinners, but receiving God’s Word and His forgiveness will save us from eternal punishment. The Jewish leaders did not want to hear Stephen when he told them they were sinners. He told them that they were like their fathers who resisted God’s message of salvation and killed the prophets. When they heard this they did not repent.

To find out how they responded, unscramble the following words:

They **OENTSD** \_\_\_\_\_ Stephen.

He also told them that their fathers resisted the message of

**SOESM** \_\_\_\_\_, but they had killed the

**AIMSESH** \_\_\_\_\_.

# Responding to the Gospel

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In Hebrews 4:6 we are warned not to harden our hearts. Did you know that even children can harden their hearts? When the gospel is preached and they continue to resist the Holy Spirit, they are hardening their hearts.

How does Christ want listeners to respond to the gospel of salvation?

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How does Christ want you to respond to His message of salvation?

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If you have hardened your heart to the gospel and resisted the Holy Spirit, what should you do?

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**PRAYER**

Ask the Lord to give you a willing heart that responds to His salvation with joy. Thank Him for dying on the cross for your sins and ask Him to forgive you—He will do it!

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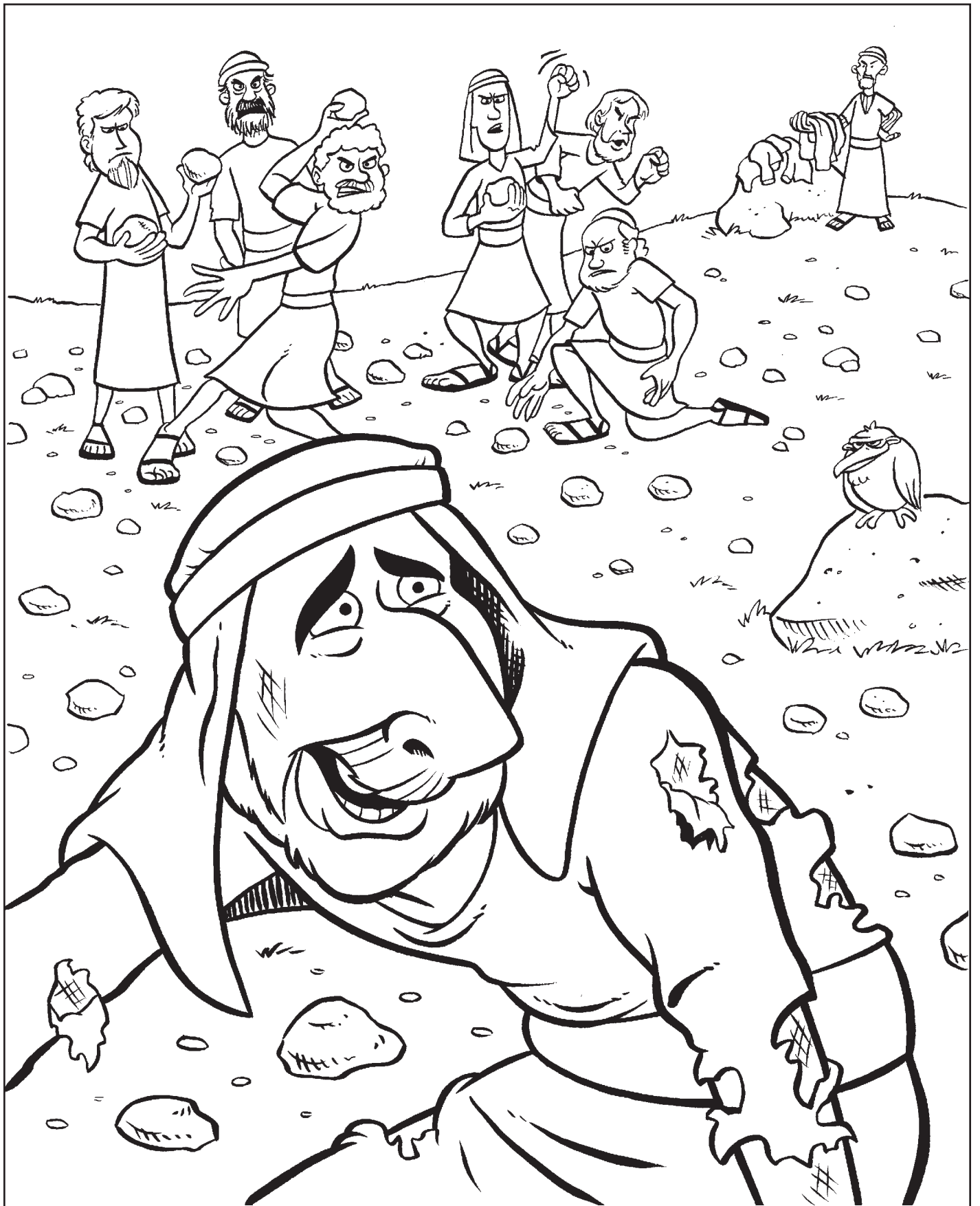


**“But [Stephen], being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and said, ‘Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!’”**

**—Acts 7:55–56**







**“Then [Stephen] knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not charge them with this sin.’ And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”**

**—Acts 8:60**

