

Bible Story 7: STEPHEN AND PHILIP SERVE THE LORD

SCRIPTURE: Stephen: Acts 6:1-15; 7:51-60; 8:1
Philip: Acts 6:1-7; 8:1-5, 12, 26-40

MEMORY VERSE(S): Matthew 28:18-20

BIBLE STORY:

Many more people became followers of Jesus. Greek-speaking Jewish believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers not giving food to the Greek-speaking widows in the church.

The twelve disciples suggested that all the followers choose **seven leaders** to help in this matter. These men should be wise and full of the Holy Spirit. With their help, the twelve disciples could devote themselves to prayer and preaching.

Everyone agreed. Among the seven men chosen were Stephen and Philip.

Stephen

Stephen was filled with God's power and did amazing miracles. Stephen spoke with wisdom. Some unbelievers lied about what Stephen was saying. They took Stephen by force and took him to the Jewish council. When the council members looked at Stephen, his face looked like the face of an angel.

The chief priest asked, "Is it true what they are saying?"

Stephen preached, saying "God worked in the lives of Abraham and his descendants. However, people rejected serving God. Finally God sent us His Son Jesus, but you rejected and murdered Him." Then Stephen said, "Look, I see heaven open and Jesus, the Son of Man, standing at the right side of God!"

Upon this, they dragged Stephen out of the city and began stoning him. Witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul, who approved of the stoning. Stephen fell on his knees and prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive me. Lord, do not hold this sin against them." **Then Stephen died.**

Philip

A great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem. The Lord's followers scattered, but the apostles stayed.

Philip went to **Samaria** and preached about Jesus. Many believed and were baptized.

The angel of the Lord told Philip, "Go south to the road that leads from Jerusalem to Gaza." Philip obeyed.

On the road Philip met an Ethiopian official, treasurer for the Queen of **Ethiopia**. The official was riding in a chariot and reading Scripture from the book of Isaiah. The official asked Philip to sit in the chariot with him.

Philip asked him if he understood what he was reading. He said, "No. How can I understand unless someone helps me?"

Starting with the passage of Scripture the official was reading, Philip shared the good news of Jesus. The official believed in Jesus and was baptized in nearby water.

The Holy Spirit took Philip away. He continued sharing the good news of Jesus to people living in other towns.

The official was very happy as he continued his journey.

The Seven leaders

are sometimes referred to as the seven deacons.

They were:

- Stephen
- Philip
- Procorus
- Nicanor
- Timon
- Parmenas
- Nicolas

With young children do not say "Stephen died."

Samaria

is a region north of Jerusalem.

Many years ago it was in the Northern Kingdom of Israel and conquered by Syria. People from other countries

were sent to live with the Jews left in the region. This resulted in intermarriage between the Jews and the foreigners.

During the time of Jesus, the full-blooded Jews despised the mixed-race Samaritans.

Ethiopia

is a country in Africa. During the time of Jesus, it was a country south of Egypt in Africa.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

(Ask questions appropriate for your group of listeners.)

PERSONAL QUESTIONS:

1. What did you learn from this story?
2. How can you apply this story to your life?

GENERIC QUESTIONS:

1. What do you like about the story?
2. Who are the main people in the story?
3. What problems did the people face? What happened?
4. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC QUESTIONS:

1. Why were seven men chosen as leaders in the church?
2. Leaders in the churches today:
 - What are some of the qualifications for serving as a leader in churches today?
 - Who are some leaders in the church you are attending?
 - What are these leaders' responsibilities?
 - How can you help in your church?
3. Stephen:
 - Who was Stephen?
 - What did Stephen's face look like to the Council members?
 - What happened to Stephen after sharing the good news of Jesus?
 - What did Stephen pray when he was being stoned?
 - Today how do people react to us when sharing the good news of Jesus?
 - How do people worldwide react to believers as they share the good news of Jesus?
4. Philip:
 - Who was Philip?
 - What happened when Philip obeyed the angel, going to the road from Jerusalem to Gaza?
 - Could the official understand the Scripture he was reading? How did Philip help him?
 - What happened after Philip explained the good news of Jesus to the Ethiopian official?

LIFE LESSONS: (Choose Life Lessons appropriate for your group of listeners.)

1. **Believers should share the good news of Jesus to others, even to people they do not like.**
*Stephen helped share the good news to people living in Jerusalem.
 As Philip traveled to different cities, he shared the good news of Jesus. He shared about Jesus to the Samaritans - people he did not like. He shared the good news to an official who was from Ethiopia (Africa).
 Share the good news with people wherever you go, even to people you may not like.*

2. **Believers may be persecuted for sharing the good news of Jesus.**
*When Stephen shared the good news of Jesus, he was rejected and stoned to death.
 Sharing Jesus with others may result in being ridiculed or criticized, and losing friends, a job or your life.*

3. **Believers should seek to help people who do not understand the Scripture.**
*The Ethiopian official did not understand the Scripture in Isaiah and Philip explained it to him.
 Help answer the questions people have about the Scripture. If unable to answer the questions, invite them to visit your pastor or a church leader who would be able to help them.*

PARTICIPATION ACTIVITIES: (Choose an activity or activities appropriate for your group of listeners.)

TV / RADIO INTERVIEW:

Do an impromptu TV/Radio interview.

- The leader takes the part of a TV/Radio commentator who interviews people who are in the story. This can be the leader or someone else in the group.
- Ask volunteers to act the part of a person in the story, responding in their own words to the questions asked.

Examples of persons in the story being interviewed:	Examples of questions commentator may ask:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ One of the Greek-speaking followers of Jesus who is concerned about the widows in his church not being given any food. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Why are you complaining to the twelve disciples about them not doing their job? ■ What did the twelve disciples suggest to do? ■ What happened?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Council members talking to Stephen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ When you saw Stephen, what did his face look like? ■ Why were you angry when Stephen talked to you? ■ Where did you take Stephen and what did you do?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Stephen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Who did you talk about to the council members? ■ What did you see when you looked up to heaven? ■ What did you do when they stoned you?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Philip 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ What did the angel tell you to do? ■ Who did you see on the road?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ethiopian official 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Tell me what happened when you were riding your chariot down the road.

PRAY TOGETHER:

Pray for each other, church leaders, missionaries, etc.

- If willing, allow listeners to participate in the prayer time, saying: "I pray for ____ who is"
 - Example: "I pray for my Bible study teacher who tells the Bible stories and shares how these Bible stories apply to my life today."