



SESSION 2 of 4

Stephen and friends

MEETING AIM

To explore how leadership and responsibility are not just about being upfront, but are also about servanthood.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 6

BACKGROUND

When we think about Stephen's story we often focus on martyrdom and his speech to the religious leaders, but the start of Acts 6 shows us what brought him to the attention of the authorities in the first place. Along with six others he was placed in charge of the distribution of food. He was full of the Holy Spirit, and performed many 'great wonders and signs' in this role. Stephen and the other six are perfect examples of how all roles in the kingdom are valued and can provide opportunities to bring the presence of Jesus wherever we go.

5 GATHERING TOGETHER

Welcome the young people to your group, but don't share out your refreshments yet. Chat with them about how their week has been. Share their triumphs, disasters and everything in between. If appropriate, share a story or two from your own week. Ask the group if they have ever been asked to do a task they didn't want to do. Or if they have ever felt unappreciated for something they did.

15 INTRO ACTIVITY

You will need: food and drink; tables; chairs; crockery and cutlery; trays; serviettes

Before the session, choose some food and drink that is easy to prepare, such as breakfast pastries or cold meats and salads (depending on when you meet). Be aware of any allergies people in your group might have.

Split the group into pairs and ask them to prepare a meal to share. Give each pair a task: putting the food onto plates, laying out the tables and chairs, making table decorations or serving the food. Set the pairs

to work and give them any help they might need, making sure they wash their hands and follow basic food hygiene guidelines. Then enjoy eating this 'meal' together!

15 BIBLE EXPLORATION

You will need: pens and paper; printouts of Acts 6; highlighter pens

Give the young people a pen and a piece of paper each. Ask each person to write their name in the middle and then spread the papers around the room. Ask the group to go around the different pieces of paper and write down things the person whose name is in the middle is good at. This could be sport skills, musical talent, their way of being with people, their kindness.

When everyone is done (and you'll need to make sure all the papers have a good mix of comments), encourage the group to find their own piece of paper and read what others have said about them. Chat for a moment about how we sometimes feel we're not good at anything, but others can see how amazing we are!

Distribute the printouts of Acts 6 and make sure everyone has access to a range of highlighter pens. Ask a volunteer to read Acts 6 (or ask one to read Acts 6:1-7 and another to read 6:8-15). As members of the group listen to the passage they can highlight all the leaders (good and bad) they come across using a different colour for each leader.

After they have heard the passage, encourage the young people to write words that describe each of these leaders in the relevant colours. For example, they might describe the twelve disciples as decisive or wise. Stephen might be humble, those from the Synagogue of the Freedmen might be jealous or misguided. They might come up with some surprising choices, but use these as discussion points. They may have thought the disciples were too vain to do the menial tasks, or that Stephen should have kept his mouth shut. Explore why they felt this, and let others in the group give their opinions.

Focus on what the group thought of Stephen. How did he conduct himself? How did he perform his duties? What can the group learn from his example? What kind of a leader was he? How did he tell others about Jesus?

5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Discuss the story further using these questions, ensuring that everyone who wants to has the chance to answer:

- What does this passage tell us about different jobs / roles, and how God sees them?
- Which of the people in this passage are you most like?
- Can you see any similarities in our own church?
- If you're asked to do a menial job, what's your attitude like as you do it?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: large sheets of paper; marker pens; information about a local food bank

Tell the group about your local food bank or invite someone who works there to come and give a talk. Challenge the young people to come up with ways of helping the food bank. Give out the large paper and pens, and get everyone to brainstorm ideas, for example how to raise money, collect food or publicise the food bank.

Go through all the ideas and get the group to choose one to do. Help them come up with an action plan and put it into action! (You may need to carry this on after the session in the coming weeks. Make sure you involve parents and carers in the planning stages so that they're happy with what you're asking their young people to do.)

5 PRAYER

You will need: Bible; reflective music and the means to play it

Play the reflective music and read out 1 Corinthians 12:12-20. Say that we all have different talents and roles, and none is holier or more important than the others. Have a time of commissioning for your work with the food bank (or just generally).

In the same way the twelve laid hands on the seven they had chosen, pray for the young people, asking that they would show the love of Jesus as they serve others. You could invite your church leader to do this.

ALEX TAYLOR

is resources editor for *Premier Youth and Children's Work*.

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