



SESSION 2 of 4

# Stephen and friends

## MEETING AIM

To discover how the disciples shared Jesus in both word and deed, and how we can do the same.

## BIBLE PASSAGE

Acts 6

## BACKGROUND

As the early Church grew, the new believers needed to evolve to find new ways of organising themselves. The twelve disciples had to concern themselves with spreading the word of Jesus, but as the group grew its members found that practical matters were often overlooked. This session explores what it means to share Jesus – not only in word, but also in deed – and how that came at a cost for the early Church, hinting at the persecution surrounding them. It can seem very daunting for our children to tell their friends about Jesus. This session provides an opportunity to pray for them as they explore the responsibility they have to share Jesus like the disciples.

## 5 CIRCLE TIME

As you begin the session, invite the children to sit together in a circle. Ask them when they think it is easy to follow Jesus. When is it hard to follow Jesus? Encourage the children to share their experiences, sharing some of your own if appropriate.

## 5 INTRO ACTIVITY

**You will need:** assorted refreshments; plates and bowls for each child

Provide a selection of refreshments for your group to share. Appoint one or two of the children to act as leaders who will ensure that the refreshments are shared fairly. As you share them out, talk about how we make sure they are shared fairly. When is it hard to share what we have? Encourage the children to share their own experiences as you enjoy the refreshments together.

## 10 BIBLE STORY

**You will need:** a pass the parcel with a large packet of sweets in the centre and one part of the story hidden in each layer of the parcel; music and the means to play it

Gather the children together in a circle and introduce the story by saying that this is a story about sharing, and about passing on the message of Jesus. We are going to tell the story by passing the parcel to each other.

Begin the game in the traditional way, playing music as you pass the parcel around the circle. Whenever the music stops the child who is holding the parcel should unwrap a layer. Invite the child to read the sentence as they unwrap it, but be ready to help as needed. Don't rush the retelling; pause to explain any elements as needed. The story should read as follows:

1. More and more people joined the disciples as they also wanted to follow Jesus.
2. The twelve disciples were so busy telling people about Jesus they found it hard to do all their other jobs.
3. They chose new helpers who could make sure the food they had was shared out fairly. They were called Stephen, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicholas.
4. More and more disciples were added to the group as they shared their belongings, and Jesus, with other people.
5. Not everyone was happy to hear about Jesus. Some people were cross that the group of Jesus-followers was growing.
6. Stephen was arrested and people told lies about him to get him into trouble.
7. Stephen followed Jesus. His face shone like the face of an angel.
8. Nothing could stop Jesus' followers sharing his message.

When you reach the centre and open the sweets, ask the group how we can share these too, either to enjoy during the session, or to take away with them.

## 5 CHATTING TOGETHER

Ask the children these questions, encouraging everyone to take turns to contribute:

- What did you like best about this story?
- How did the disciples share Jesus in it?
- Do you think it was easy or hard to follow him?
- How can we share Jesus now?

## 10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

**You will need:** biscuits; icing sugar and water; assorted sprinkles; sweets; raisins; paper plates

Invite the children to ice and decorate some biscuits with the icing and toppings provided, ready to share with people who are not in the group (family members at home or their friends, for instance). As you decorate the biscuits, talk about children's experiences of sharing with others. Talk about what it means to share Jesus with others.

Follow the lead of the children in discussing the ideas that matter to them, but you could also include questions such as: how can we talk about Jesus with our family, or with our friends who don't know anything about him? Why does the way we share our 'things' matter? When might it be hard for us to talk about Jesus, as it was for Stephen? What helps us with this?

At the end of the session encourage the children to take their biscuits away with them to share as you discussed.

## 5 PRAYER

Sit the children down and explain that when the new helpers were chosen to help the disciples share out the food they 'laid hands' on and prayed for them. We too have been chosen to share Jesus with other people in the places we go to. Depending upon the experiences and confidence levels of your children, you could either invite them to lay hands on and to pray for each other that they will be filled with courage as they go out into the week ahead and find ways to share Jesus, or, if they are not so confident, you could pray over them yourself that they would have the opportunity to share Jesus with their friends this week, and that they would be brave enough to do so.

## BECKY MAY

is a writer who has worked with children and young people for many years in a variety of different settings. She is co-founder of The Treasure Box People.

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