

Background Scripture: Acts 6**Print Passage: Acts 6:7-15**

L4 Stephen, the Spirit-full Hero!

REFLECT 

It was the final football practice for the year. LeJuan and his friends were looking forward to finishing on a high note. They planned to get together and go to the nearby fast-food restaurant to order some chicken wings and milkshakes. On the way to the restaurant, they encountered a serious accident as they drove along and rounded a curve. It seemed as if it was a one-car accident that had just happened. A car had flipped over. The wheels were still spinning, and smoke was coming from under the hood. LeJuan and his friends immediately pulled over and jumped out of their car. As they looked, the people in the vehicle appeared to be

unconscious. It seemed to be a white family. The guys (four of them) immediately jumped into action and attempted to try to flip the car over because they did not know how much time they had before a serious fire started. Being football players, they were in good physical shape, so they were able to turn over the car. LeJuan, Josh, and C. J. worked on getting the doors open as Amari called 911. After several tries, they were able to get the car doors open. They then worked on getting the driver and passengers out of the car. As soon as they got them out, the engine caught fire. The guys knew that they had to get the people away from the vehicle. The passengers were a woman and three children. As soon as LeJuan and his friends got them a good distance from the damaged car, it went up in flames. A fire engine, ambulance, and police vehicle arrived on the scene. The fire engine personnel worked on getting the fire under control. The paramedics with the ambulance tended to the injured woman and children, placing them on stretchers. The police interviewed LeJuan and his friends to find out what had happened. Due to the fast work of the guys, four lives were saved. LeJuan told his friends, "Thank God we came around the curve when we did to save those people" LeJuan, C. J., Josh, and Amari were Spirit-full heroes!



They could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke. (Acts 6:10)



Acts 6:7-15

7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. **8** Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. **9** Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen. **10** But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke. **11** Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God." **12** So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. **13** They produced false witnesses, who testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. **14** For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us." **15** All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.



INTERSECT

ONE OF THE FANTASTIC LESSONS THAT MOST PEOPLE LEARN AS THEY GO THROUGH LIFE IS THAT GOD HAS PLACED US ON THIS EARTH FOR A PURPOSE. It is His will that we would live purpose-filled lives. What does it mean to live purpose-filled lives? It means that we are available to be used by Him to fulfill His purposes. What are His purposes, you may ask? Speaking word of inspiration, encouragement, or admonishment to others is a part of His purpose. To be available to lend a helping hand to someone who may be in distress is a part of His purpose.

Today's lesson centers on one of God's servants named Stephen. He was one of the very first deacons of the early church. Stephen was a gifted speaker, wise, and "full of grace and power" through the Holy Spirit. Despite his giftedness, or perhaps because of it, he was targeted by the Pharisees, who conspired to smear his name and eventually get him executed.

What does this tell us? We must recognize that no matter how gifted we are, how kind we are, how smart we are, or how committed we are to doing what is right, there may be people who will not like us. Those characteristics may be the cause of some people's hating us. God has put value in us and wants us to live out His purposes.

Inside Out



Refer to the Scripture and respond to the following questions or statements:

1. What was Stephen's position in the early church?
2. What accusations were brought against Stephen?
3. Stephen was filled with the Spirit of God and could use his abilities to serve his community and challenge the Pharisees meaningfully. How did the Pharisees respond to this?
4. Stephen was able to spread the Word of God and do great things but, in doing so, brought oppositional attention to his ministry; why was this the case?
5. Despite the opposition, Stephen went on to live out God's purpose for his life. How did he do that? By being faithful to his calling.

As we attempt to be who God has called us to be, we need to be prepared to step in and assist those in need.



THERE'S AN APP FOR THAT!

Why is it important to stay true to yourself even if other people do not like it? Stephen chose to be himself and remain faithful to his principles, even though the Pharisees lied on him, frequently got into intense arguments with him, and even went so far as to get him arrested. However, like Stephen, God has placed value in all of us. How can you affirm God's love for you and your love for yourself? Write down what you can do to make that affirmation.



STEPPING OUT!

This lesson shows much of what Stephen had to go through just because of his faith. As a class, compare Stephen's experience to what it is like to be bullied in school. Go around the room and compare how the experiences are similar and/or different.



CONNECT

The people who hated Stephen seem to have "modern-day relatives." There will be people who will dislike you for no other reason than your skin color or ethnicity. While it is easy to see what the Pharisees did wrong in this story, it is also essential for us to be forewarned! We must ensure that we do not turn into haters like the Pharisees.



MEDIA MISSION

Search the Internet to find a picture of your favorite superhero; tell why he or she is your favorite. After sharing, let us know what you can do to be more like your superhero! Identify the positive traits or characteristics that your superhero possesses.