

The Face of an Angel

Acts 6:1-8:4; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 87-106

One Sabbath the pastor told the church that Brother Hunt's wife was in the hospital. Mika and Anya wanted to encourage Brother and Sister Hunt. So they made a pretty card. Mother helped them write a note in the card. They helped make some food to take to the Hunts' home.

The Hunts were so happy! Mika and Anya were happy too. They had encouraged their friends.

A long time ago another church had people who needed help. Today's Bible story tells how they were encouraged.

The apostles were very, very busy. Many believers were joining the new church. Some of the believers were widows. Others were elderly. All needed food and care.

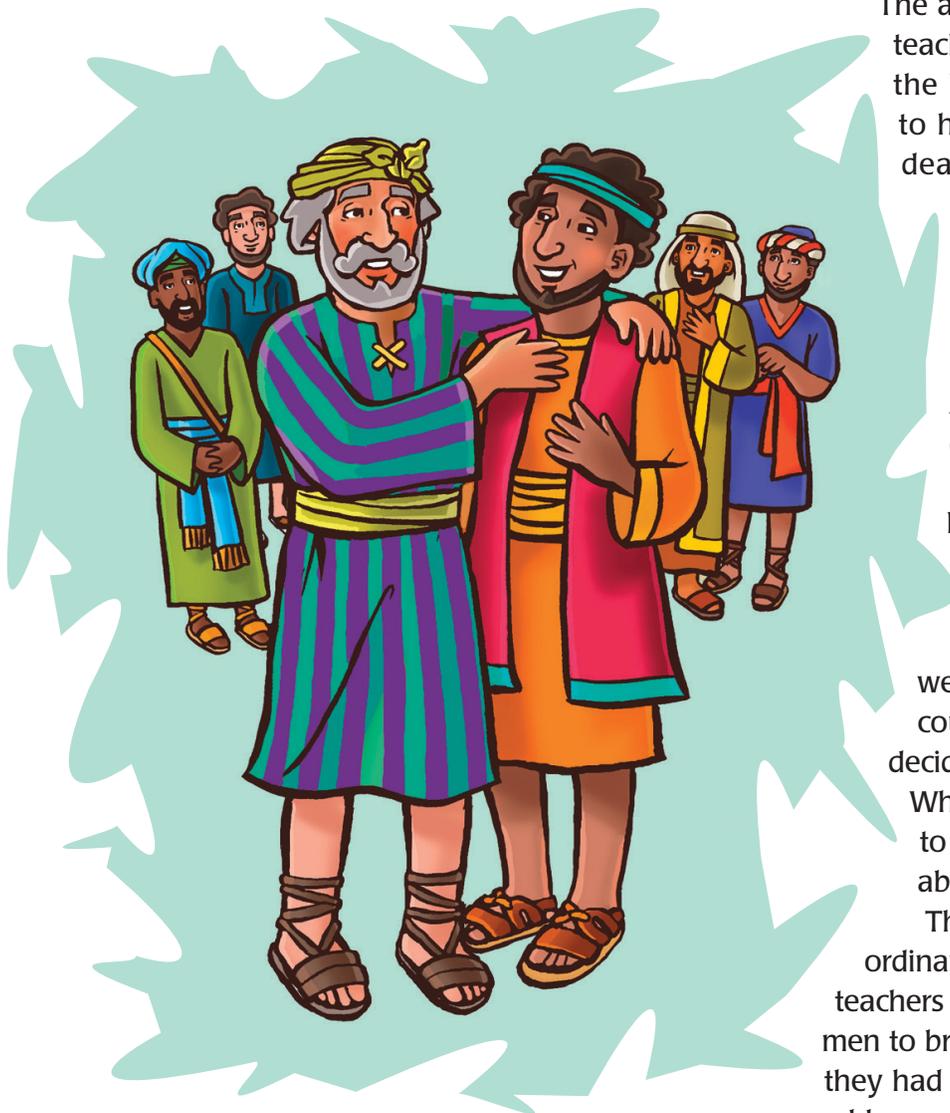
The apostles couldn't preach and teach and give out food too. So the believers chose seven men to help. They called these men deacons.

Stephen was one of these deacons. Richly blessed by God, he comforted and encouraged the people. He made them think of Jesus. And God gave him power to do miracles.

Everyone in the church loved Stephen. However, Jews in the city didn't love him.

They hated his teaching about Jesus. Stephen's words were so powerful that these Jews couldn't argue with him. They decided that they had to stop him! What could they do? They decided to pay some men to tell lies about Stephen.

The lies upset everybody—the ordinary people, the leaders, and the teachers of the law. The leaders sent men to bring Stephen to a meeting. And they had the liars come too, so they could accuse him. The leaders watched



The Message

Believers encourage one another to grow in faith.

Memory Verse

“Not giving up meeting together, . . . but encouraging one another”

(Hebrews 10:25).

Stephen carefully. They expected him to be nervous or worried. Instead, Stephen’s face glowed. The Bible says his face looked like the face of an angel.

The high priest glared at Stephen. “Are these things true?” he growled. He was speaking of the lies that had been told about Stephen.

Stephen didn’t answer yes or no. Instead, he began to tell the story of the Jewish people. He told about God’s plan for sending a Savior to the world.

First, Stephen reminded them of God’s promise to Abraham. Then he talked about Abraham’s son, Isaac. And Isaac’s son, Jacob. And Jacob’s son, Joseph, who, through God’s power, became a ruler in Egypt. Stephen reminded the leaders how God had used Joseph to protect Jacob’s family during the terrible famine.

Then Stephen reminded them of Moses. “Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt. But our ancestors turned against Moses. You stubborn Jewish leaders!” he said. “You have not given your hearts to God! You won’t listen to Him! You do not hear what the Holy Spirit is trying to tell you. Your ancestors were like this! And you are just like them! Your fathers tried to hurt every prophet who ever lived. Those prophets said long ago that the Righteous One would come. But your fathers killed them. And now you have turned against the Righteous One and killed *Him*.”



That did it. Everyone started shouting at once. But Stephen stayed calm. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he was looking up. He saw something no one else could see. “Look! I see heaven open. And I see the Son of Man standing at God’s right side!” (Acts 7:56, ICB).

The leaders covered their ears with their hands and ran for Stephen. They dragged him through the streets, all the way outside the city. There they tore off their coats.

And they threw stones at Stephen.

Stephen died calmly, just as Jesus did. He didn’t fight against the Jewish leaders. He fell on his knees and cried in a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” After this prayer of mercy, he died.

Stephen encouraged the believers as he cared for their needs. The Holy Spirit filled him with love for others. The Holy Spirit wants us to help and encourage others as Stephen did.

S A B B A T H

READ Take a walk with your family. Find a quiet place and read your lesson story together.

DO Look for examples in nature of something encouraging. (For example, a river provides water for the trees along its banks.)

PRAY Thank God for things that encourage us.

READ Read Hebrews 10:25 in your Bible.

M O N D A Y

READ Together with your family, read more from Acts 6:11-7:7, 54-60.

DO Write the letters of Stephen's name one under the other. Beside each letter write a word or sentence that tells something about this Bible hero. For instance: S—servant of God.

DO Arrange your memory verse cutouts in order. Why is it good for believers to meet together?

T U E S D A Y

SHARE At family worship, talk about the following: If Stephen was your age, would you choose him for a friend? Why? What would Stephen probably say if you did not do your homework? Or study your Bible and pray?

THINK Your friends want to do something you know is wrong. And you want to be an encourager, like Stephen. What might you say to your friends?

READ Read Proverbs 3:5-8. Pray that God will help you encourage others.

DO Put your memory verse cutouts in order.

S U N D A Y

SHARE During family worship, talk about the work of deacons and deaconesses in your church. Write below four things deacons and deaconesses do.

DO Make a thank-you card for a deacon or deaconess. Pray for each one.

READ Read part of your Bible story in Acts 6:1-10.

DO Make 10 church-shaped cutouts—one for each memory verse word, and one for the Bible text. Write a word on each.

After Stephen's death, Christians left Jerusalem in fear. They told about Jesus everywhere they went.



W E D N E S D A Y

READ Read Proverbs 12:25 from the *International Children's Bible*, if possible.

SHARE During worship, pass a bag filled with heavy rocks or other heavy objects. When someone gets the bag or sack, the others say encouraging words to him or her. The person holding the bag takes out a rock or other object each time something encouraging is said. Continue in this way until the bag is empty. The bag is then refilled and passed to the next person.

DO Say your memory verse to an adult.

THURSDAY

SHARE Encouragement helps us grow in faith. Read Galatians 6:2. With your family, talk about how you could encourage the following people:

- an adult who is feeling tired
- a child who is lonely
- a friend who feels left out

DO Make a plan to encourage a lonely person today. Read Acts 7:55. Draw a picture of what Stephen saw.

FRIDAY

SHARE Tell your Bible story to your family. Tell what you learned about encouraging others.

DO Act out one good deed you did this week. The person who guesses it will act out a good deed. Continue until everyone has a turn. Read together 2 Thessalonians 3:13. Thank God for encouraging Bible verses.

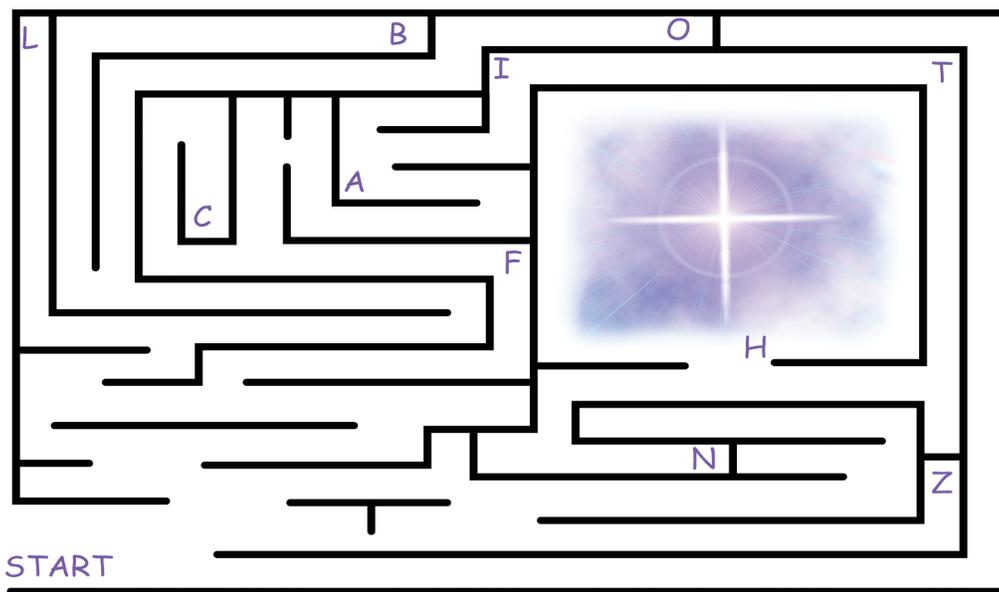
DO Write short notes to encourage your family. Decorate your messages. Seal them and trade envelopes. Open a note when you need encouragement.

DO Say the memory verse with your family.

Stephen's Secret

PUZZLE

Directions: Stephen helped many people understand Jesus. To discover the secret of his leadership in the early church, trace a line through the maze without crossing any lines. Circle the letters on the correct path and write them below the maze.



START
