**FIRST STEPS TOGETHER:** FOR YOUNGER CHILDREN

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 6:1-15

### BACKGROUND

This session plan is intended for use either in person or online, depending on how you’re meeting. Adapt the activities to fit your particular situation.

As the early Church grew, they 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, they 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 that was surrounding them. For our children too, it can seem very daunting 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.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

### STARTING OUT – 5 mins

Start your time together with some simple refreshments. Ask the children when they think it is easy to follow Jesus. When is it harder to follow Jesus? Encourage the children to share their experiences, perhaps sharing some of your own, as appropriate.

### PLAY – 10 mins

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

Provide a selection of refreshments for your group to share and appoint one or two of the children to act as leader, to ensure that the refreshments are shared fairly. As you share the refreshments, 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.

### BIBLE STORY – 10 mins

**You will need:** a ‘pass the parcel’ parcel with a 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 this is a story about sharing, and about passing on the message of Jesus, so 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, and whenever the music stops, the child who is holding the parcel should unwrap a layer. Invite the child to read the sentence of the story, as they unwrap it, but be ready to help as needed. Don’t rush the retelling, but pause as needed, to explain any elements. The story should read as follows:

1. More and more people joined the disciples as they too wanted to follow Jesus.

2. The twelve disciples were so busy telling people about Jesus that 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 fairly. They were called Stephen, Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas.

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 were 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’ (v15).

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.

### CHATTING TOGETHER – 5 mins

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 this story?
* Do you think it was easy or hard to follow Jesus?
* How can we share Jesus now?

### CREATIVE TIME – 10 mins

**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 other people who are not in the group (family members at home, or their friends, for instance). As you decorate the biscuits, talk about the children’s experiences of sharing with others. Talk, too, about what it means to share Jesus with other people. Follow the lead of the children to discuss the ideas that matter to them, but you could include such questions as: how can we talk about Jesus with our family? 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, like 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 them as you discussed.

### PRAYER – 5 mins

Sit the children down together and explain to them that when the new helpers were chosen to help the disciples share the food, they ‘laid their hands on them’ (v6) 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 of your children, you could either invite them to lay hands on each other 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 assemble the children together and as a leader, pray over all of them yourself, that they would have the opportunity to share Jesus with their friends this week, and that they would be confident to do so.

**BECKY MAY**

is founder of [The Resources Cupboard](https://theresourcescupboard.co.uk/).