The Face of an Angel

Monthly Theme

We learn about God together.

The Bible Lesson at a Glance

The number of believers continues to grow so fast that the apostles can’t take good care of all of them. So seven deacons are chosen to care for the poor widows and the elderly. Stephen, one of the deacons, does great wonders by God’s grace and power. The Jewish leaders try to stop his work. Lies are spread about him, and he is brought to trial before the Sanhedrin. He presents a defense speech, outlining the history of God’s people. When he brings Christ into the story, and reminds them that they killed Him, the Sanhedrin members are furious and have Stephen stoned to death.

This is a lesson about community.

Christ’s church is constantly assaulted by the enemy. Its members are caught in the crossfire. Trials and discouragement plague believers everywhere. We are told to “carry each other’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2). Believers encouraging one another in the church will strengthen the church to do great things for God. Children can learn to encourage others too.

Teacher Enrichment

“As trouble, difficulty, and persecution should increase, mutual exhortation and encouragement would prove to be of even greater benefit. The danger to personal safety that might be incurred by attending public worship would be far outweighed by the courage and strength that result from Christian fellowship” (The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 464).

Interesting point: Saul was chosen by Christ to take the martyred Stephen’s place. (See The Acts of the Apostles, p. 102.)

Room Decorations

See Lesson 1.
## Program Overview

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*Prayer and Praise may be used at any time during the program.*
Welcome
Welcome students at the door. Ask how their week has been—what they are pleased/troubled about. Give directions for the Readiness Activity of your choice.

1 Readiness Activities
Select the activity that is most appropriate for your situation.

A. Crossing the Poison River
Create a “river” (wide enough that no one can jump over it) on the floor by marking banks with masking tape. (Large church option: divide the class into smaller groups or take them outside.) Give each student an 8½” x 11” (or A4) piece of paper and read the following instructions: You have to cross the river, but it flows with poison and immediately kills anything that it touches. The piece of paper you’re holding is a safe stepping-stone across the river. You and your “stone” both have to cross the river.

Allow time to develop a strategy. If the children haven’t figured it out after several minutes, show the group how to cross the river by giving all the papers to one person who lays them down ahead of herself as she crosses, and by having the last person across pick up the papers behind him as he crosses.

Debriefing
Ask: What happened? (We found a way to cross the river.) How did crossing the river make you feel? (I needed help; worried that I couldn’t do it alone.) What did you learn from this activity? (That we can work together to accomplish difficult things.) Read aloud Hebrews 10:25. How might crossing the poison river help us understand this verse? (Encouraging people is a way to work together; working together encourages people.) How can we encourage one another? And that brings us to our message for today:

BELIEVERS ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER TO GROW IN FAITH.

Say that with me.

B. Puzzled
Give each person in class one or more pieces of a simple puzzle. (Be sure to distribute all pieces.) Tell the group to put the puzzle together. (To make this more difficult, do not show the finished picture until the children have tried for some time.)

Debriefing
Ask: What was hardest about putting the puzzle together? (nothing; no picture; placing first pieces) What was easiest? (placing the last piece, etc.) Were anyone’s pieces unimportant? (no) Could you have done this puzzle without each person’s piece? (no) Why not? (Because we needed every piece, or the picture
Fellowship
Report the students’ joys and sorrows (pleased and troubled) as reported to you at the door (as appropriate). Review the memory verse and allow time for sharing experiences from last week’s lesson study. Acknowledge any birthdays, special events, or achievements. Give a special warm greeting to all visitors.

Suggested Songs
- “The Family of God” (Sing for Joy, no. 139)
- “Jesus Bids Us Shine” (Sing for Joy, no. 133)
- “We Are the Church, Everyone” (Sing for Joy, no. 143)
- “Anywhere With Jesus” (Sing for Joy, no. 45)

Mission
Share a story from Children’s Mission. Help the children identify people who helped each other grow in faith.

Offering
As you collect the offering, say: Our gifts of money go to help others become part of the family of God and to grow in faith.

Prayer
Give the children a chance to share their needs and to pray for and encourage one another. Write their concerns in the class prayer request book, or on the chalkboard. Put a star by answered prayers. Thank God for your church family and pray for help to find ways to help each other grow in faith. Suggest prayer partners and invite the children to pray specifically for their partner during the coming week.

BELIEVERS ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER TO GROW IN FAITH.

Say that with me.
Bible Lesson

Experiencing the Story

Involve the children in an interactive story. (To dramatize this story would be a negative experience.) The children will respond to the following words in the ways described below.

When you say . . . The students will . . .
Stephen [thumbs up]
calm [fold hands]

Read or tell the story.

As the number of believers grew, the apostles became too busy with all the preaching and teaching. So the believers chose seven deacons. Stephen [thumbs up] was one of them.

The deacons took care of the poor widows and elderly people. As Stephen [thumbs up] worked, he comforted and encouraged the people by telling them Jesus’ story. And God blessed his work with power from the Holy Spirit. God also worked miracles through Stephen [thumbs up].

The believers loved Stephen [thumbs up], but the Jewish leaders did not. They hated his teaching about Jesus. As a way to stop Stephen [thumbs up], some of the Jewish leaders paid some men to tell lies about him.

The lies upset everybody—the people, the leaders, and the teachers of the law. So the men who hated Stephen [thumbs up] had a good excuse to hunt for him. They brought him before the Sanhedrin, a sort of Jewish government.

Liars came to the meeting, also. Their false reports must have hurt Stephen’s [thumbs up] feelings, but he trusted God and stayed calm [fold hands]. Everyone noticed the glow on Stephen’s [thumbs up] face. The Bible says his face looked like the face of an angel because he was so calm [fold hands].

The high priest glared at Stephen [thumbs up]. ‘Are these things true?’ he demanded.

Stephen [thumbs up] didn’t answer yes or no. Staying calm [fold hands], he began to tell God’s story—how God chose the Jewish people and made them part of His plan for saving the world.

Stephen [thumbs up] spoke about God’s promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Stephen [thumbs up] reminded the leaders that their ancestors had turned against Moses.

“You stubborn leaders!” he said. “You have not given your hearts to God! You won’t listen to God! Now you have killed the Sinless One!”

That did it. Everyone started shouting at once. Some of the leaders were so angry that they ground their teeth. But Stephen [thumbs up] stayed calm [fold hands]. Their anger could not touch Stephen [thumbs up] because he was looking to Jesus. 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 [thumbs up]. They hurried him from the building. They dragged him through the streets, all the way outside the city. There they tore off their coats, rolled up their sleeves, and tried to bury him in a hail of stones.

Stephen [thumbs up] fell on his knees and cried, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them!” Even with his last breath Stephen [thumbs up] stayed calm [fold hands].
to meet together for worshipping God because that is an important way that we encourage each other to grow in faith.

Sing the memory verse to the tune of “Give Us Your Peace” (Sing for Joy, no. 103). (See page 46.)

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

Bible Study

Say: Stephen told the Sanhedrin many Bible stories that you know too. Let’s read parts of Stephen’s speech to find some of them.

Adults assist as needed. Choose the verses you want the children to read. After each, ask the children what they remember about the Bible character.

Abraham—Acts 7:2-5 (The story goes to verse 8.)
Joseph—Acts 7:9-15
Moses—Acts 7:17-22, 30-33, etc. (Story is in verses 17-44. Select verses.)
David and Solomon—Acts 7:45-47

Debriefing

Ask: Where do you think Stephen learned about these people? (church, synagogue, reading Scripture) How did remembering these men help Stephen? (It gave him confidence to know God was with him.) How can these stories help us? (They encourage us; help us know that God cares about us.) Let’s say our message together:

BELIEVERS ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER TO GROW IN FAITH.

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Applying the Lesson

Liftoff
Blow up and tie a balloon. Ask the children to stand in a circle and lock arms. Toss the balloon into the circle of children and tell them to keep the balloon afloat with their feet. At first this will be fun, but after a little while this activity will become a chore.

Debriefing
Ask: How does it feel to have to keep the balloon up? Did you feel responsible for it? Did you get tired? What were you thinking?
Read aloud Galatians 6:9, 10. How is this text like the balloon game? (Sometimes we can become weary while doing good.)

How can you and your friends help each other to grow in faith? (We can help each other study and pray; do all the study activities the best we can; be respectful when others are worshipping; etc.)
Read aloud Hebrews 10:25. How can you encourage someone this week? Let the children give suggestions. So what is the point of getting together at church? Why don’t we worship by ourselves in our homes? (We come to lift the spirits of, or share joy with, those in our church family.) Let’s say today’s message together.

BELIEVERS ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER TO GROW IN FAITH.

Hebrews 10:25

Let us not give up Meet-ing to-gether.
But let us en-cour-age one an-oth-er.

You Need:
• a balloon
• Bible
Sharing the Lesson

Lifting Spirits

Option A. Have the students form a circle. They can be sitting or standing, but this activity is probably easier if they are standing. Toss a balloon (that you have blown up) to any child. As you toss the balloon, say a compliment or a word of encouragement to the child receiving the balloon. That child then tosses the balloon to another child while saying a compliment or a word of encouragement. Continue until all the children have had a chance to participate.

Option B. Give each child an index card. Have them write a message of encouragement on it. Give each child a balloon to blow up. Tie it, leaving about six inches (15 centimeters) of string. Punch a hole in the index card and tie it to the balloon. Have them share the balloon with someone this week while telling them how the early believers helped each other.

Debriefing

Have everyone say the memory verse together. (“Not giving up meeting together, . . . but encouraging one another” [Hebrews 10:25]). Ask: How do you feel when you encourage someone? (happy, good, etc) How do you think someone you encourage feels? (better than before) That’s what our message for today is about:

Believers encourage one another to grow in faith.

Say that with me.

Closing

Ask a child to pray and thank Jesus for encouraging us every day. Then pray that the children will remember to encourage one another.

You Need:

- balloon for each child,
- hole punch,
- index cards,
- pencil for each child
The Face of an Angel

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 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

References

Memory Verse
“Not giving up meeting together, . . . but encouraging one another” (Hebrews 10:25).

The Message
Believers encourage one another to grow in faith.

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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.

**Daily Activities**

**Sabbath**

- Take a walk with your family. Find a quiet place and read your lesson story together.
- Look for examples in nature of something encouraging. (For example, a river provides water for the trees along its banks.)
- Thank God for things that encourage us.
- Read Hebrews 10:25 in your Bible.

**Sunday**

- During family worship, talk about the work of deacons and deaconesses in your church. Write below four things deacons and deaconesses do.
  - _____________________
  - _____________________
  - _____________________
  - _____________________
- Make a thank-you card for a deacon or deaconess. Pray for each one.
- Read part of your Bible story in Acts 6:1-10.
- Make 10 church-shaped cutouts—one for each memory verse word, and one for the Bible text. Write a word on each.

**Monday**

- Together with your family, read more from Acts 6:11–7:7, 54-60.
- 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.
- Arrange your memory verse cutouts in order. Why is it good for believers to meet together?

**Tuesday**

- 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?
- 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 Proverbs 3:5-8. Pray that God will help you encourage others.
- Put your memory verse cutouts in order.

**Wednesday**

- Read Proverbs 12:25 from the *International Children’s Bible*, if possible.
- During worship, pass around 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.
- Say your memory verse to an adult.

**Thursday**

- 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
- Make a plan to encourage a lonely person today.

**Friday**

- Tell your Bible story to your family. Tell what you learned about encouraging others.
- 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.
- Write short notes to encourage your family. Decorate your messages. Seal them and trade envelopes. Open a note when you need encouragement.
- Say the memory verse with your family.