I am the light of the world.  
Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness,  
but will have the light of life.

John 8:12  
(NIV 1984)
Why did Satan fail to destroy God’s church?

Satan could not destroy God’s church because the Holy Spirit gave the believers courage to keep telling people about Jesus.

Application: The Holy Spirit gives us the courage to boldly tell others about Jesus.

Response: We tell others about Jesus even when our efforts are threatened.

Lesson Summary: Stephen was one of the men chosen to care for the poor Christians in Jerusalem. God blessed Stephen as he told people about their Savior and gave him the ability to do miracles. The Jewish leaders became very angry with Stephen, but he boldly spoke to the Jews about the Savior. The furious Jewish leaders stoned Stephen to death. The Holy Spirit continued to bless the Christians with courage to tell others about Jesus.

* Matthew 28:20b
1 Peter 5:8b
Hymn 200:1

church—a group of believers

Christians—people who believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior and follow his teachings


Dear Holy Spirit, thank you for recording the story of Stephen in your Holy Word. May I always be reminded of the courage you gave to him. Fill me with that same courage to boldly tell everyone I meet about the Savior. In his name I pray. Amen.
Sing: Ask the children to imagine how they would feel if they were soldiers going into battle without any weapons. [Afraid.] Then ask why they might have more courage if they had weapons and shields to use. [They would be able to fight and to protect themselves.] Ask the children to name the one who wants to turn people away from Jesus. [Satan.] Ask to whom we can pray for strength to stay faithful to Jesus. [God, Holy Spirit, Jesus himself.] Remind the children that Satan may use people we know to try to get us to turn away from Jesus. Explain that even though Satan’s power is frightening, we have a power that is far greater. Tell the children that you will sing part of a psalm that reminds them not to be afraid. Sing the refrain to Psalm 27 (hymnal, page 75) for the children. Then sing half at a time and have the children echo you.

Pray: Dear Lord Jesus, you are our salvation. We know that Satan is trying very hard to get us to turn away from you. Please keep us faithful to you throughout our lives. Help us show love to all people, even those who do not love you. Amen.

Draw a 1-foot diameter circle on the board.

Explain that after Jesus died and rose, the Holy Spirit brought many people to faith through the Word of God that the disciples taught. Draw 12 stick men inside the circle, and explain that they represent the 12 disciples. Then draw a larger circle around it, explaining that they represent the group of believers was growing as more and more people heard about Jesus and believed in him. Continue drawing concentric circles to demonstrate the spread of the gospel and the growth of the early Christian church.

Jesus’ enemies were becoming very angry because the disciples would not stop teaching about Jesus. Satan used this anger to try to destroy the church, but he failed. Listen carefully to our lesson to find out why Satan failed to destroy God’s church.
God’s church in Jerusalem grew larger as more and more people came to faith in the Savior. Soon the church became so large that the disciples could not keep up with all the work that needed to be done.

The believers then chose seven men to help the disciples. These men were to take care of the many poor people in the church. One of the seven was a man named Stephen.

Stephen did more than take care of the poor. With the help of God, he did many miracles. He also taught people that Jesus is the Son of God, the Savior.

Some people who hated Jesus did not like what Stephen said and did. They tried to stop Stephen from preaching. They got some men to tell lies about Stephen. When the Jewish leaders heard these lies, they believed them. The leaders arrested Stephen and brought him into the temple to go on trial before the high priest.

There Stephen’s enemies told more lies about him. They said, “This man keeps saying terrible things about the temple and God’s law. We have even heard him say that Jesus will tear down this holy temple and will change the laws that Moses gave to us!”

The high priest asked Stephen, “Are the things these men say about you true?”

Stephen answered, “All of you, listen to me. In the past God sent many prophets to the people of Israel to tell them about the Savior who would come. These prophets kept telling the people to believe in this Savior.
a time when someone preached the Word of God or talked to others about Jesus. When they hear you do this, they are to raise their Bibles.

**Give each child a duplicate of Copy Master 1.**

**Do** Explain that as you discuss the story, the children will point to pictures that tell about certain parts.

**Say** The disciples were very busy telling others about the risen Savior. They needed help. Point to the picture that shows how many men they chose to help the poor. [Seven.]

**Ask** What important work did Stephen do, other than helping the poor and doing miracles? [He taught people that Jesus is the Son of God.] What are some things that pastors do, other than preach sermons? [They visit the sick and the shut-ins, teach Bible and catechism classes, help people with problems, attend church meetings, etc.] What is the most important thing they do? [Tell others about Jesus.]  

**Say** Jesus’ enemies did not want Stephen to tell people about Jesus. Point to a picture that shows how they felt. [Angry face.]

“But the people of Israel did not listen to God’s prophets and did not believe their message of the Savior. You are just like them. In fact, you are doing the very same thing right now! Just as the people of Israel killed many of God’s prophets, you killed God’s Son, Jesus, the promised Savior, when God sent him to you.”

When the **Jewish leaders heard** these words, they were very angry with Stephen. Just then, God let Stephen look up into heaven. “Look!” Stephen said. “I can see into heaven. There is Jesus, standing right next to God!”

Stephen’s enemies became so angry that they shouted and covered their ears with their hands. Then they grabbed him and dragged him out of the city.

There they picked up large stones and began to throw them at Stephen as hard as they could. As stone after stone hit Stephen, he prayed, “Lord Jesus, take my soul to heaven with you.” Then, as the stones knocked him to the ground, Stephen cried out, “Lord, forgive these men for this sin.” After he said this prayer for his enemies, Stephen died.

Some friends of Stephen took his body and buried it. They were very sad that he was dead.

But a man named Saul had watched the enemies kill Stephen and was glad he was dead. Saul did not believe in Jesus and began to arrest those who did. Because of this, many of the believers left Jerusalem and went to other towns to tell people about Jesus. God blessed their work, and the church continued to grow.

**Discuss** Draw the following diagram on the board. Leave out the words that have asterisks.

God the Holy Spirit gives us ____________ to ______________________________ .

![Diagram](image)
Ask Why did the early church choose seven men to help the disciples? [The disciples could not keep up with all the work there was to do.]

What work would the seven men do? [They would take care of the poor in the church.]

Say Let’s look at the diagrams on the board. They will help us fill in the missing words in the sentence, “God the Holy Spirit gives us __________ to __________________________.”

Do Point to and read “Help the poor.”

Say Helping the poor was one of Stephen’s jobs.

Ask What are two other things Stephen did as he worked for the Lord? [Did miracles and told others about Jesus.]

Do Write “Do miracles” and “Tell about Jesus” in the Stephen diagram.

Say Now look at the words under “Us.” As I read them, raise your hand if the word or words tell something Christians do for other people.

Do Point to and read each word, and wait for the children’s responses. [Children raise hands for help, pray for, comfort, share Jesus, play with, and visit.] Circle each correct response.

Say Stephen gladly did many things to help other people and teach them about the Savior.

Ask What did Jesus’ enemies do to stop Stephen from preaching about Jesus? [They told lies about him, had him arrested, and put him on trial.]

How might you feel if you were dragged away and put on trial for talking about Jesus? [Afraid.]

Say When Stephen was arrested, he kept telling about Jesus.

Ask What did Stephen say that the Jewish leaders had done? [Killed God’s Son, the promised Savior.]

Say Stephen said those things even though he knew that the Jewish leaders might get angry with him.

Ask Who gave Stephen courage to speak about Jesus? [The Holy Spirit.]

Do Point to and read “God the Holy Spirit gives us” written on the board. Write “courage” on the first blank. Write “tell about Jesus” on the second blank. Read the sentence for and then with the children.

Ask What did Stephen say that the Jewish leaders had done? [Killed God’s Son, the promised Savior.]

Do Have the students point to the picture that shows what the enemies had done. [Cross.]

Say Stephen knew his words could make the enemies angry, but he kept sharing the news of Jesus. His courage did not come from inside of himself. Stephen’s courage was a gift from God the Holy Spirit.

Do Have the students point to the gift.

Ask What would you say to a friend who said, “I could never be as brave as Stephen! The enemies of Jesus had already warned the disciples to stop talking about Jesus”? [Possible responses: Trust God to give you courage. He will help you speak about the Savior.]

Say Point to the place where the enemies took Stephen. [Temple.] God strengthened Stephen for what would soon happen. God gave him a look into [heaven]. Stephen saw Jesus!

Do Have the students point to the picture of Jesus.

Say Instead of listening to God’s Word and asking for forgiveness, the enemies killed Stephen.
Do Have the students point to what the enemies used to kill Stephen. [*Stones.*]

Say The Holy Spirit gave Stephen courage to tell others about Jesus, even when he was facing death. We trust that the Holy Spirit will also bless us with courage to tell others about Jesus, even when people threaten us or make fun of us.

Do Have the students point to the face speaking bravely about Jesus.

Say The Jewish leaders wanted to stop people from hearing about Jesus.

Ask Who was behind their plan? [*Satan.*]

Say Satan failed because God has more power and wants people to be [saved].

Ask Who gives believers courage to tell others about Jesus? [*The Holy Spirit.*]

Do Pray: Holy Spirit, make us brave to tell others that Jesus died and rose to save all people. Thank you for being with us as we do this work. Amen.

Parent Idea: Rhyming prayers have been printed in some student lessons. Use them and other favorite family prayers to create a prayer book for you and your child to share and treasure for years to come.

Ask What did Stephen’s enemies do to him?

Say They threw large stones at him and killed him.

Ask Stephen died trying to help others learn about the Savior. It is not always easy to do things for others. (Refer to the things you have circled on the board.) Sometimes it may be scary to speak about Jesus to others.

Ask But why can we have courage to speak to others about the Savior? [*The Holy Spirit will help us do this work.*]

Ask What powerful enemy of God could not stop the believers from telling others about Jesus? [*Satan.*]

Say God gave courage to Stephen and to the other believers who preached God’s Word even after their dear friend was killed.

Ask Why can you bravely tell others about the Savior?

Say God the Holy Spirit will give me courage to do so.

Do Pray: Dear Spirit, fill my heart with love For Jesus, my dear Lord above. When I’m afraid, please make me brave To tell the world that Jesus saves. Amen.

Student Idea: Do you like to talk on the phone? Check out the phone activity (the first activity) on your student lesson.
• Begin by singing “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” (hymn 200:1). This hymn stanza reminds us that God is our protection from Satan and his evil wishes. If necessary, sing one phrase at a time and have the children echo you.

• Use Activity 1 under Lesson Activities to review the story.

• Review that Stephen was chosen to help others and work for Jesus. Then ask the children to think of ways they can be helpers for Jesus. Write their ideas on the board. Lead the children to see that even at a young age, they can help spread the gospel. They can tell family, friends, and neighbors about Jesus. They can give mission offerings to spread God’s Word all over the world. They can let their lights shine in all activities, even at ball practices, birthday parties, sleepovers, and while working at home, at school, and in the neighborhood. They can pray for pastors, teachers, and missionaries.

Give each child a hand made from Copy Master 2 to color. Decide if you want to have the children use skin tones or any color of the rainbow. Then have each child write on a paper hand a way to be a helper for Jesus. Collect the paper hands, and glue them to a paper ring to form a wreath to hang on your classroom door. Add a bow, if you wish. If you have a small number of students, each child can make more than one paper hand in order to make a nice, full wreath.

• Pray:

  Dear Spirit, fill my heart with love
  For Jesus, my dear Lord above.
  When I’m afraid, please make me brave
  To tell the world that Jesus saves. Amen.

• Choose and use the Lesson Activities that best meet the needs of your students.

  * Matthew 28:20b
  Hymn 200:1
  A mighty fortress is our God,
  A trusty shield and weapon;
  He helps us free from ev’ry need
  That has us now o’ertaken.
  The old evil foe
  Now means deadly woe;
  Deep guile and great might
  Are his dread arms in fight;
  On earth is not his equal.

Satan tries to stop the spread of the good news about Jesus. However, Martin Luther uses the words of this hymn to remind us that God is our protection from Satan and his evil wishes.
Lesson Activities

1. Review

From Another Point of View

*Purpose:* To tell the story from the point of view of an enemy of Stephen, and to allow the children to respond to the enemy’s questions.

*Procedure:* Tell the story from the point of view of one of Stephen’s enemies. Mention your frustration that Stephen was courageous and did not quit teaching about someone named Jesus. Express your concern about the growth of the Christian church. Close by asking the students why they think he and other enemies of Jesus cannot seem to stop this church from growing. [The enemies were fighting against God, and God wanted his church to grow; the Holy Spirit gave the Christians courage; the Holy Spirit used the words the Christians shared to bring many to faith.] Then ask the students to tell you more about “this Jesus.” Give the children plenty of time to witness to you.

2. Application

The Word of the Lord Spreads!

*Purpose:* To show how fast the good news about Jesus could spread if each of us told even only one person each day.

*Procedure:* Have the entire class pretend that they don’t know Jesus is the Savior. Tell the children that you are a Christian and that Jesus wants you to tell them about him. Explain that you will tell only one of them about Jesus. First say to one child, “Did you know that Jesus died to take away your sins? He is your Savior!” Tell that child to stand next to you, and then ask the class, “Now how many people know about Jesus?” [Two.] Repeat the witnessing role play, but this time the “new Christian” does it too. Repeat again with all four of you witnessing, and so on. You may wish to turn this activity into a game to see how fast the good news can spread in the classroom.

Remind the children of the importance of sharing Jesus for real. Also remind them of what happens when some who have heard the news do not believe it or will not share it with anyone else. *Suggestion:* After doing the previous activity twice, have one or more of the “hearers” not share the message to show what can happen when people refuse to believe or when believers keep the good news to themselves.

3. Music

Songs to Sing

*Purpose:* To sing songs that reinforce the lesson application.

*Procedure:* Teach and sing one or more of the following songs:

- “Go and Tell” ⚪️ (Copy Master 2, Lesson 5) is a song in which the children encourage one another to tell about Jesus.
- “Let Us Sing for Joy!” ([Little Ones Sing Praise, Concordia Publishing House]) is a witnessing song in which the children tell about Jesus and rejoice in what he has done for us.
- “Lift High the Cross” (hymn 579) reminds us to proclaim the good news about Jesus throughout the world. You may wish to sing the stanzas and let the children sing the refrain.

4. Art

Paper Cutouts

*Purpose:* To make a visual reminder that Jesus is always with us.

*Procedure:* For each child, fold a sheet of 9” x 12” brown construction paper accordion fashion so that you have three folds and four 3-inch wide sections. Carefully draw a cross on only the first section so that the horizontal beam touches either side of the paper. Show the children how to cut along the lines of the cross (through all sections of paper) except
where the two sides meet the folds. When the paper is unfolded, all the crosses will be attached like a row of paper dolls. Have the children write the following along the chain of crosses: “Jesus said that he is always with us.”

5. Review and Apply

Nonreader

*Purpose:* To choose pictures that review the lesson, and to do activities about sharing Jesus with others.

*Procedure:* Duplicate Copy Master 3 for the children to complete.

God’s Word in the Lesson: 1. seven; 2. cross; 3. angry face; 4. temple; 5. stones

God’s Word in My Life: 1. line from A to GOD; line from B to cross. 2. pictures will vary

Reader

*Purpose:* To complete story sentences and answer an application question.

*Procedure:* Duplicate Copy Master 4 for the children to complete.

God’s Word in the Lesson: 1. poor, 2. Savior, 3. hated, 4. speak, 5. stoned, 6. heaven, 7. church

God’s Word in My Life: Holy Spirit, God, or Jesus himself

Challenge

*Purpose:* To review the lesson by writing sentences, and to apply the lesson by telling how one can share Jesus in various situations.

*Procedure:* Duplicate Copy Master 5 for the children to complete.

God’s Word in the Lesson: Sentences will vary but should reflect the lesson facts and truth.

God’s Word in My Life: Possible responses: 1. Get to know the boy; invite him to your house; invite him to Sunday school and church; tell him about the Savior. 2. Explain that Jesus is more important than anything else, so you will go to church; you’ll gladly come to practice after church.

6. Other Ideas

Marching Memory

*Purpose:* To review and memorize the words of the “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” memory treasure while marching.

*Procedure:* Tell the children to pretend that they are soldiers who are fighting against Satan. Remind them that Satan is our real-life enemy—an enemy that God helps us fight daily. Have the children line up and march around the room, reciting the words of the hymn stanza to the beat of the march. Have them start with a whisper and get gradually louder each time the stanza is repeated.

Stones for a Good Purpose

*Purpose:* To use stones for witnessing about Jesus.

*Procedure:* Try either or both of the following projects:

- **Prayer Rock Pile**
  Each child needs a smooth rock about the size of a small potato. Have each child paint on his or her rock the name of someone (group of people or an individual) who does not seem to have faith in the Savior. After the paint has dried, make a pile of rocks in the classroom. Once during each of the next few sessions, have the children compose a prayer for the people named on the rocks, asking the Holy Spirit to bring them to faith in the Savior.

- **Glazed Rocks**
  You’ll need the same kind of rock used in the previous project. Do the following:
  
  - Clean the rocks. Before they are to be used, bake them in a 200-degree oven for 20–30 minutes. The rocks must be hot enough to melt crayons. You will be the one handling
the hot rocks, not the students, but do caution them not to touch the rocks at all. This project will be lots of fun for the students and has been done safely by many first graders.

- Set up rock coloring stations. Place newspaper on the floor with a handful of unwrapped crayons of different colors, including white. Three or four students can work at one station.

- Caution the children not to touch their hot rocks. Provide oven mitts or thick mittens for each child to wear as a precautionary measure.

- Demonstrate to the children how to rub one crayon at a time on a portion of the rock, coloring only the top and sides. Watch the wax melt! Then use another color. You can overlap colors and add a little white here and there if you wish. Then have the children color their rocks.

- Let the rocks cool. Then buff them a little with rags.

- Have each child glue a piece of felt to the bottom of his or her rock so it will not scratch the surface it is placed on.

- Allow the children to use glittery puffy paint to make a small cross on the top of the rock to remind them of Jesus, their Rock and Savior, or write the words “Jesus Saves.”

- Encourage the children to use the rocks as paperweights or decorations in their homes and to share the written messages with people who visit.

**Memory Treasure Maze**

*Purpose:* To reinforce understanding of the memory treasure passages.

*Procedure:* Duplicate Copy Master 6 for the children to complete.

**Good News Writing**

*Purpose:* To write a letter to the Christians of Jerusalem after Stephen was killed.

*Procedure:* Ask the children to imagine what they would say to the Christians of Jerusalem who had just lost their friend Stephen. [“I’m sorry your friend died; Stephen is in heaven; the Holy Spirit will give you courage to tell others about Jesus; etc.”] Have them write a letter to these Christians.