

THE THREAD | The Gospel At Work

Lesson 4: The Murder Of Stephen And Persecution

Dear Parents,

Hello! We are already on the fourth of 13 lessons studying *The Thread: The Gospel At Work*, which looks at the spread of the Gospel and Christianity in a post-crucifixion/resurrection world. The lesson was entitled “The Murder of Stephen and Persecution.” We looked at the stoning of Stephen and how it sparked the widespread persecution of Christians. While that sounds like a bleak topic, we got to see how the Lord used the scattering of Christians during that time to spread the Gospel to different regions. We also looked a little deeper at Jesus’ promises that His followers would experience mistreatment on His behalf. That, too, sounds bleak, but Jesus assured us that while we have trouble in this world, He has overcome the world.

Lesson Overview: As the early church began to grow, the apostles appointed some men as deacons to help with the people's daily needs. One of the men chosen was Stephen, who went on to perform many miracles in the name of Jesus Christ. He was falsely accused of blaspheming God and brought before the high Jewish council. His speech is a beautiful recap of the history of God’s work among His people. But when Stephen closed with a ringing indictment of the council’s total disobedience to God, they had him stoned to death. Jesus said that when we follow Him, we will experience trials and sorrows in this world. But the good news is that the end of the story has already been written, and Jesus wins. Students will focus on this fact in this lesson.

What We Want Your Teenager To Learn: Understand that Stephen’s murder sparked large-scale persecution against the Jerusalem church and that Jesus predicted that His followers would be mistreated because of their identity with Him.

What We Want Your Teenager To Do With What They’ve Learned: Define how Jesus’ statement that He has overcome the world changes how they live out their faith.

Scripture Passages We Studied: Acts 6:8-8:3; John 15:18-21; John 16:33

Please Take A Few Minutes This Week To Read These Passages.

Next Steps. . .

During the next week, as you engage in conversations with your teenager, remember that one way that will help them to understand and apply what they have learned is to explain it to someone else. Use the following questions to guide your conversation:

- What are some things we learned from Stephen and the attitude and perspective he had as he was being killed?
- Have you ever been mistreated because of your faith? Tell me about it.
- Does Jesus’ promise that He has overcome the world resonate with you? How does it give you confidence as you go about your day-to-day life?

Thank you for all you do. As a parent, you are the primary spiritual influence in the life of your teenager, and they desperately need you. I’m praying for you! If you have any questions or if I can help with anything, please don't hesitate to let me know.