

**Lesson Plans that Work**  
**Year A – Fifth Sunday in Easter**  
**Lesson Plans for Younger Children**  
*Revised Common Lectionary Old Testament Readings – Track One*

**Scripture: Acts 7: 55-60**

In the early church Easter was the day for Baptisms. The festival season of Easter marks the fifty days between Easter and Pentecost. It is a time for reflecting on the meaning of our Baptism and the other sacraments. The church calls this process of studying the mysteries of the church mystagogia. We explore what it means to be the Body of Christ and members of His church and how we are to live this out in the world today. During the Easter season the Old Testament readings are replaced with selections from the *Book of Acts*. We hear about the sacrifice and resurrection of our Lord so that we too may know how to proclaim the good news of Jesus with similar joy and conviction.

**A Notation about this week's Scripture**

Stephen was a perfect example of what it means to follow in Christ's footsteps. Stephen was wise and had a good reputation. He was chosen to be the first deacon. His job was to make sure that food and help were distributed equally among the people because there had been complaining and jealousy among some groups. Followers of Jesus were at risk of persecution more from members of the Temple than the Romans. They felt calling Jesus the Son of God or Messiah was blasphemous. Stephen's Spirit filled eloquence in the synagogue stirred up envy and resentment. False charges were made against him and he was brought to trial. Stephen held fast to his beliefs and spoke out against the non believers. Full of rage they dragged him outside the city to be stoned. Stephen was the first Christian martyr, his death following the pattern of Jesus'.

**Theme: Spirit and Courage**

Knowing we are following Jesus can give us great courage in the face of pain and suffering, even enough grace and courage to forgive our enemies.

**Before Class**

You will need one rock for each child and a basin of water. For the crosses you will need two craft sticks or twigs for each child plus yarn or twine to tie them together. For a small altar use a box or a tray and a candle.

Set up a small altar. Fill a basin with water. Have rocks ready. Make sure there are enough sticks or twigs for two for each. Precut lengths of yarn or twine for tying twigs.

**Beginning**

Review the Easter greeting.

Teacher: *Alleluia! The Lord is risen.*

Children: *The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia!*

**Opening Prayer:** Dear Lord, Give us courage to follow your ways and always do what is right. Amen

**The Story:**

[Hold a stone in your hand as you speak. Pass it to the children at the appropriate moments.] This is a story about stones. Stones that hurt and stones that helped. Stephen was a wise and fair man, full of the power of the Holy Spirit. Among the followers of Jesus he had a good reputation and was well respected. The apostles needed help taking care of the people. They needed their time to preach and teach. So they made Stephen a deacon. He would be the person to make sure that the food and help were shared fairly among all the people.

Some people in the synagogue were jealous of Stephen's power. The ones that were not followers of Jesus were furious when Stephen said Jesus was God's son and a part of God. They decided to kill him by throwing stones at him. Stephen was not afraid because he knew Jesus was with him, in fact he was able to see Jesus in heaven. The last words Stephen said before he died were asking God to forgive his enemies. [Pass the stone around telling the children to feel how solid and strong it is.]

Years later the apostle Peter wrote a letter, an epistle to the followers of Jesus. He called Jesus the stone that was rejected, that God used as the corner stone. When you build a building all the other stones rest on the corner stone. Peter invited the followers to come to Jesus, like living stones that God could use to build his church. Remember we said the church is not the building, but the people? Peter told them not to worry if people rejected them. God would use them to build his church. God chose them in those Bible days. Today God chooses us to be the living stones of his church, the ones who proclaim the good news of Jesus by our words and actions.

**A Reflection With Rocks**

Give each child a rock to hold. Ask them to experience the feel of it, its hardness, and its texture, its weight. Say when we sin or do bad things our hearts can feel like rocks, hard and heavy. We don't feel light and free. Happily we know we can ask God to forgive us. Think about something you have done that you are very sorry about. Now put all the sorry and sadness into the rock.

Take your rock and wash the sins off of it in this bowl of water. When we are baptized our sins are washed away by the Holy Water. Take out a new rock because in baptism we become new.

Now if God is always willing to forgive us, do you think we should be willing to forgive those who hurt us? Think of someone you are mad at, or don't like, or have a problem with. Put all the hurt and problems into the rock.

Now when you put your rock in the water say "I forgive you \_\_\_\_\_."

Take a new rock from the water. Would you like to be a living stone? Would you like to help build God's church? Place you stone on our altar and say. Use me God to proclaim your mighty acts. Use me to build you church. When all have gone say together," God chose us. We are God's people."

**Optional Art Activity: Forgiveness Crosses**

Have the children tie two craft sticks together with yarn or twine to make a cross. Have them write the name of someone they are angry or having a problem with on the cross. Help younger ones as needed. Have the children one at a time bring their cross up to the altar saying, "Just like Jesus forgave His enemies I forgive \_\_\_\_\_." End with the Lord's Prayer.

**Closing**

Have the children return any supplies they used and clean up their work space. Return to the story circle. Say this closing poem:

Our time together is almost done  
I hope you had a bit of fun.  
May God's blessings go with you.  
Show His love in all you do.  
So now on this special day  
Let us bow our heads and pray.

**Closing Prayer:** Dear Risen Lord, Thank you for giving us courage and making us living stones in your church. Help us to show your forgiveness to others. Amen

*Easter Lesson Plans for Young Children written by Trudy Ardizzone, 2011*

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