

## Teen Devotion

Year B – Easter 7

Resurrection Reality



**One truth shared:** The Holy Spirit empowers us to be bold witnesses for Jesus.

*“You stiff-necked people! Your hearts and ears are still uncircumcised. You are just like your ancestors: You always resist the Holy Spirit! Was there ever a prophet your ancestors did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him— you who have received the law that was given through angels but have not obeyed it.”*

*When the members of the Sanhedrin heard this, they were furious and gnashed their teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. “Look,” he said, “I see heaven open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.”*

*At this they covered their ears and, yelling at the top of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. Meanwhile, the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul.*

*While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” Then he fell on his knees and cried out, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” When he had said this, he fell asleep.*

**Acts 6:1-9, 7:2a, 51-60**

### Bold Witnessing

Paige did everything right. She was kind, gentle, and respectful at work. Her Jesus-light was definitely shining brightly for everyone to see. She built good relationships with her coworkers and listened to them as they talked about their personal problems and issues. Everyone seemed to like and trust Paige. Well, at least they used to.

One day Paige was on break with two other teens, talking and relaxing as they often did during those short breaks. The other two girls started talking about the drama in their lives with boys and how hurt they were by their last boyfriends who slept with them and then dumped them. Paige saw this as an opportunity. Using her kindest and most respectful tone she said, “You know I’m a little concerned about what you’re telling me. God intended sex to be for marriage, and I think some of your hurt and pain is coming from relationships based on the wrong thing. Maybe after work sometime, we could talk more. I really think Jesus could make a big difference in your life. I know he does for me!”

Paige had been wanting to witness to these coworkers for weeks. She knew they needed Jesus. She felt so good that she finally had the opportunity to say something privately, respectfully, and lovingly just as she had been taught. But as soon as the words left her lips, things turned bad *real* fast. Both girls gave Paige the “Who do you think you are?” speech, including making fun of her for being such a judgmental “Jesus-freak.” After an awkward moment, they walked out of the room, ignored her the rest of the week, and blocked her on all social media. How could this be? Didn’t Paige do everything right? She most certainly did, but sadly, there will be times when hardened unbelievers will refuse to listen.

Stephen experienced that. He was a servant in the early days of the Christian church, and he boldly witnessed to Jewish leaders about how they killed Jesus, the promised Messiah. They needed to hear about their sin, and they needed to hear about Jesus as their Savior. It was just what they needed to hear . . . but not what they wanted to hear. So not only did they get angry and refuse to listen, but they dragged Stephen outside and stoned him to death.

There will be times when you share your faith and see incredible blessings spring forth—friends will listen, a coworker will ask lots of questions, a teammate will come to church with you. Praise God for those blessings! But prepare yourself! There will also be times when stubborn, hardened hearts of unbelief will lead unbelievers to reject you (and ultimately God)—and sometimes in very harsh and hurtful ways.

But fear not! Just as Jesus gave Stephen courage and wisdom, he will do the same for you. The Father will work the situation for your good, as promised. Jesus will be with you, as promised. And the Holy Spirit will give you wisdom and words, as promised. So witness boldly friends, and trust that our true God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—will be with you and bless your work and witnessing!

**Prayer:** God, sometimes the thought of being a witness today is very scary. I know others, like Stephen, have suffered worse than I likely ever will. But the words and actions of others are still mean and hurtful. I don't always know what to do or what to say. Give me words, give me wisdom, and give me courage to boldly share the message of salvation with everyone. Amen.

# Foundation Teen Facilitators Guide

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### Bold Witnessing

***Starting the Discussion:** This first section is intended to be light and easy, to engage and get the conversation going. Have a little fun with these questions.*

If there was anything in your life that you would gladly and easily talk to a stranger about for hours and hours (and possibly bore them endlessly), what would it be?

***Connecting:** This section serves as a bridge between the opening conversation and the body of the study/discussion. It should get the group thinking about the topic/text even before they've looked at it.*

If we are so passionate for talking about the favorite things in our lives, why don't we have the same passion for talking about Jesus? What makes that any different?

***Digging In:** Here we want to dig into some texts or the text for the day and see what Scripture says. The questions are meant to be open ended to give a beginning of a scriptural conversation. These are a guide for a spiritual and scriptural conversation.*

- Identify some of the key things Stephen said or did that make him a great example of being a witness.
- Compare and contrast the stories of the death of Stephen and the death of Jesus. What is similar? What is different?
- Challenge question! Before Jesus ascended into heaven, the disciples were weak and wavering witnesses, often timid or afraid. But in the book of Acts, we see something completely different. What made such a difference in their lives? (Hint: The answer is in the book of Acts.)
- Agree/Disagree: Because God does all the work of salvation, the pressure is off us when we are witnessing. Explain your answer.

***Conclusion:** Here we want to wrap up the discussion, perhaps circling back to the "connecting question" above.*

Discuss some opportunities that each person in the group might have right now for being a witness to someone else. Then work as a group to help each other think of some ways to witness to those people.