



# COURAGEOUS

## CHRISTIANS

### Courageous Christians: Stephen

#### **Stephen is arrested** *(taken from Acts chapters 6 & 7)*

Stephen was a man who loved God and was kind and courageous. God was able to use him powerfully so everyone knew Jesus was alive and at work through His Spirit.

'Let's choose Stephen to help us in our work,' agreed the Apostles one day. 'He has received God's Holy Spirit and this has made him brave and kind. He can help us!'

Stephen's job was to help distribute food and serve meals to the widows and those in the community that didn't have enough. He worked in a small team with others and everyone knew he was a good man. But some of the Temple leaders had noticed him too and didn't like him. They felt threatened by his courage and kindness as he never seemed afraid to pray for people and to tell them about the risen Jesus. But then God's Spirit gave Stephen such wisdom that when he spoke, the Temple leaders could not find he said anything wrong.

So they bribed some men to lie and say, "We heard him speaking against Moses and against God!" The crowds and the teachers of the Law started complaining. They had Stephen arrested and took him before the Council. Then they brought in some men to tell more lies about him. "This man," they said, "is always talking against our sacred Temple and the Law of Moses. We heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will tear down the Temple and change all the laws which have come down to us from Moses!" All those sitting in the Council stared at Stephen and saw that his face looked like the face of an angel. They asked him if these things he was being accused of were true.

"Don't be silly!" Stephen said. 'I believe in all the stories of how God moved amongst the people in the past and how he used Noah and Moses and Abraham and Jacob and David to show us what He is like! I'm saying God has now done something new, something powerful that will bring his Kingdom even closer! We need to sit up and take notice – and join in with



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what God is doing through his Spirit today! We must be courageous and act now! Don't harden your hearts against the Spirit of Jesus. Listen and obey!

As the members of the Council listened to Stephen, they became furious and angry because he was saying they were wrong to carry on with the old ways of worshipping God. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw God's glory and Jesus standing at the right side of God. "Look!" he said. "I can see Jesus in heaven!"

With a loud cry the Council members covered their ears with their hands. Then they all rushed at him at once, dragged him out of the city, and threw stones and rocks at him. Stephen called out to the Lord, "Lord Jesus, I want to come to you now!"

He knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord Jesus! Do not remember the horrible things these people are saying and doing!" He said this and died.