The Early Church Lesson 3

Lesson Objectives

- The students will hear the story of Stephen.
- The students will name one way that they will encourage someone.
- The students will state one thing they will do to spread the word.

Lesson Text

Acts 6:1-8:4

Scripture Memory Verse

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

Acts 8:4

Lesson Plan

Greeting and Registration

Preclass Activity: Still Growing

Welcome and Singing

Centers:

Bible Story: Words of Encouragement

Craft: Homeward Bound

Scripture Memory: Scatter Seeds

NOTE: Allow time for a snack.







Still Growing

The students will preview today's story by coloring pictures on a growth chart.

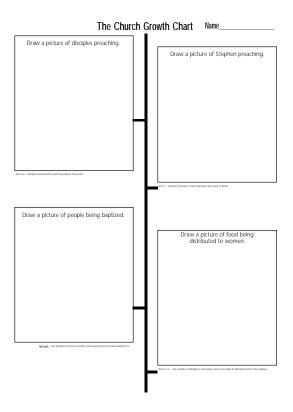
Materials

For each student:

- markers and crayons Reproducible Pages:
- Page A, 1 copy for each student

Preparation

Complete the activity on your copy of Reproducible Page A.



The Early Church

Instructions

- 1. Greet the students as they arrive. Explain that in today's lesson they will continue learning about the growth of the early church.
- 2. Distribute the copies of Reproducible Page A, crayons and markers. Read each of the squares to the students. Explain that they will draw and color pictures for their growth chart of the early church.
- 3. Have the students work in small groups.
- 4. Circulate among the students to offer encouragement or assistance.

Teacher Tips

• If available, play the musical tape Upside Down while the students are working.



Words of Encouragement

The students will hear the story of Stephen as they interact with the storyteller.

Materials

For the teacher:

- 5 pieces of heavy paper, approximately 8" x 12"
- marker

Preparation

- 1. Fold all five pieces of paper in half, across the width, to make greeting cards.
- 2. On the outside of each card write, neatly print: "We're here to encourage you!" Number the outside of the cards one through five. On the inside of the cards print:
 - #1 What's wrong?
 - #2 Please tell us what happened.
 - #3 Please tell us more.
 - #4 What happened then?
 - #5 What did you do after that?
- 3. Practice telling the story with emphasis and enthusiasm.

Introducing the Bible Story

Open your Bible to Acts 6. Tell the students that today's Bible Story comes from Acts 6-8. Explain to the students that they will hear today's story from the point of view of a first century disciple. This storyteller will explain what happened to Stephen—the first disciple killed for his faith in Jesus. Tell them that they will also learn about how the church grew in spite of persecution and how God comforted and helped the church at this time.

Divide the students into five pairs or small groups. To each pair give one of the numbered cards you prepared. Explain that each time the storyteller kneels down and hangs his head, they should give him a card, beginning with the card numbered #1.

NOTE: If possible, have an assistant introduce you as the storyteller.

Presenting the Bible Story

Enter the story area with a solemn look on your face. I am here to tell you about Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. Kneel down and lower your head until you receive card #1. Read the The Early Church Lesson 3

card aloud. Thank them for their thoughtfulness and respond: I am sad because I was thinking about what has happened in Jerusalem. You see, I am a follower of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ. Smile in memory of Jesus. Then stop and lower your head in sadness again until you receive card #2. Read it aloud. You want to know what happened to Stephen?

Well, God moved in such powerful ways that many people became disciples! It was incredible to see God change so many lives. The church became so large that we needed to assign seven men to make sure that everyone's needs were being met. One of those men was named Stephen. He was a great disciple with great wis dom from God. He was a friend to so many of us. He was always serving the church.

Stop and lower your head in sadness again until you receive card #3. Read it aloud. You want to know more?

The church was doing great, but there were people who did not like the church. They started to argue with Stephen but Stephen always spoke powerfully and with great wisdom. Finally, these same men—who were Jews from several different places—made a plot to trap and kill Stephen. They found people who would tell lies about him and accuse him of things he never did. Ultimately, they brought him before the Sanhedrin and everyone stared at him as he began to respond to their accusations.

Stop and lower your head in sadness again until you receive card #4. Read it aloud. You want to know what happened then?

Stephen spoke that day with such po wer and such conviction that we felt like it was Jesus preaching! He started by explaining God's plan from the very beginning with Abraham. He sho wed them how God worked through Moses and the prophets to bring Jesus as a perfect sacrifice for our sin. He preached with such inten sity and focus. And he challenged all who listened. He was not afraid to tell them that they were stiff-necked and stubborn. Listen to what the Bible says happened next in Acts 7:54-60.



When they 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 clothes 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.

Stop and lower your head in sadness again until you receive card #5. Read it aloud. You want to know what we did after this?

Open your Bibles to Acts 8:1-4 and follow along with me as I tell you what happened:

And Saul was there, giving appr oval to [Stephen's] death. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him. But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off men and women and put them in prison.

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

You see, because of Stephen's death, all of us except the apos tles left Jerusalem and went to other places to escape the persecu tion. God used a very difficult time in our lives to help take the good news of Jesus to places we had never even thought of going to! I am sure you will hear more about those stories next time!

The Early Church Lesson 3

God Comforts Us

God does not always remove us from difficult or troubling circumstances, but he does help us and comfort us. Ask the students to name one way that God helped and comforted Stephen.

Sharing with Others

Ask the students to think of a time when they felt sad and when they were hurt by someone. Explain to them that Stephen and the early disciples felt this when they were persecuted for doing right, but God gave them strength to endure the persecution and he encouraged them. Ask the students if they know someone who is sad or troubled now. Ask them to name a way they will encourage that person this week. Close with a prayer thanking God for helping the disciples turn a difficult situation into a victory.

Teacher Tips

 Present this story with emotions ranging from excitement and inspiration to sadness for losing your friend. Do not present dejection or depression. Simply help the students to recognize your feelings about Stephen's life, death and influence.





The students will be decorating pictures depicting Steven seeing

The Early Church

Materials

For each student:

Jesus in heaven.

- 1 piece of construction paper, 9" x 12"
- glue stick
- crayons or markers

Homeward Bound

8 cotton balls

For the teacher:

- scissors
- utility knife
- ruler
- 1 piece of poster board, 4" x 5"
- white paper, 81/2" x 11" (approximately 1 piece for every 6 students)

Reproducible Pages:

Page B, 1 copy for each student

Preparation

- 1. Cut out the Stephen pictures and the text boxes from the copies of Reproducible Page B.
- 2. Make a "cloud stencil" as follows:
 - A. Draw a 3" x 4" cloud on the poster board, and then cut it out.
 - B. Draw a 11/2" square in the center of the cloud, and then cut it out.
- 3. Prepare a cloud for each student as follows:
 - A. Using the cloud stencil, trace a cloud onto white paper. Be sure to trace the square in the center of the cloud.
 - B. Cut out the cloud from the white paper.
 - C. Using a utility knife, cut out only the top, bottom and right sides of the square making a door that can open and close. Fold back the door to make a crease. See Figure A.
- 4. Make a sample of the craft to show the students.

Instructions

- 1. Introduce today's craft: In today's class we are learning how the early church grew. Show the students your craft. Open the door in the clouds to show Jesus standing in heaven. Read the words written in the text box on the inside of the door. Today's craft will help us remember Stephen as a brave man who went to be with Jesus in heaven.
- 2. Distribute the Stephen pictures and crayons. Have the students color their pictures except for the clouds.
- 3. Distribute the construction paper and glue sticks. Have the students alue their pictures to the center of their construction paper.
- 4. Distribute the prepared clouds and the text boxes. Have the students glue their text boxes on the inside of their cloud doors. See Figure B.
- 5. Have each student glue the clouds to the picture so that when the cloud door is opened it is directly over where Jesus is standing. See Figure C. Be sure that the students do not glue the door shut.
- 6. Distribute the cotton balls, and have the students glue these to the clouds on their pictures. See Figure D.
- 7. Have the students write their names on their finished pictures.

Conclusion

Ask the students how it makes them feel to know that Stephen was willing to die for his faith in Jesus. Close with a prayer thanking God for Stephen's example of great faith.

Teacher Tips

• When the students are gluing their cotton balls to the clouds, be sure that they don't impede the cloud door from being opened and closed.

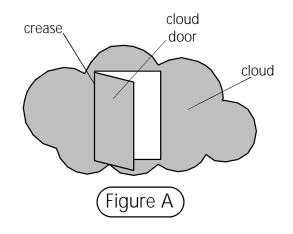


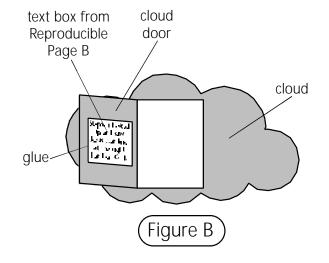


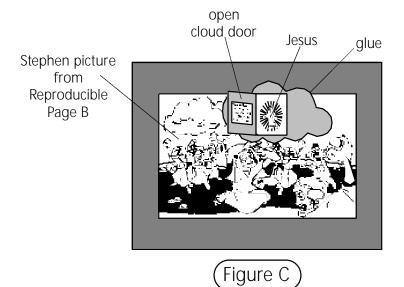


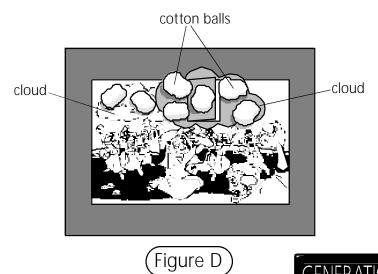


The Early Church Lesson 3











Scatter Seeds

The students will learn and memorize the Scripture Memory Verse as they participate in this activity.

Scripture Memory Verse

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

Acts 8:4

Materials

For each student:

- 1 piece of construction paper, 9" x 12"
- glue stick
- scissors
- envelope

For the teacher:

scissors

Reproducible Pages:

Page C, 1 copy for each student

Preparation

- 1. Cut out the words from the copies of Reproducible Page C for each student and place them in the envelopes.
- 2. Complete the activity using your copy of Reproducible Page C.

Instructions

- 1. Introduce today's activity: This week you will be learning how the early church grew. One thing that caused the church to spread into other areas was persecution. As the church was persecuted, they moved into different towns. As they moved, they continued to scatter the seeds of the word of God. That means that they continued to preach the word of God to people. Explain to the students that today they will be scattering "seeds" of the scripture and putting them together.
- 2. Show the students the Scripture Memory Verse on the back of this Lesson Card. Say it to them three times as they follow silently. Point to the words as you say them. Ask the students to say it with you three more times.

- The Early Church
- 3. Ask a small group of students to stand and say the verse with you. Repeat this until all the students have done it.
- 4. Pair the students. Distribute the envelopes and construction paper to the students. Tell them to scatter their words on their papers, and then put them in order. Have them do this several times. Each time, have them say the verse when it is in order.
- 5. When both students can say the verse from memory, distribute the glue sticks and tell them to glue their words in the order of the verse on their construction paper.

Conclusion

Ask the students why they think that the disciples continued to preach the word wherever they went. (Because they loved Jesus and wanted everyone everywhere to know about him.) Explain that God wants disciples today to tell people wherever they go about Jesus. Close with a prayer asking God to help his disciples be bold and preach wherever they go.

Teacher Tips

 For an additional illustration, bring in some different seeds to show the students and talk about the process of planting many seeds to grow a good crop.





Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

Acts 8:4



Lesson Objectives

- The students will hear the story of Stephen.
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Lesson Text

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Scripture Memory Verse

Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

Acts 8:4

The Church Scatters The Early Church Lesson 3

$\left(\right.$	Lesson Plan			
	Greeting and Registration			
	Preclass Activity: Glimpses of Growth			
	Welcome and Singing			
	Centers:			
	Life Application: You Can Encourage, Too!			
	Game: Spread the Word			
	Bible Skills: Cross WISE Words			
	NOTE: Allow time for a snack.			

Glimpses of Growth

The students will review this week's lesson as they complete this activity.

Materials

For each student:

pencil

Reproducible Pages:

• Page D, 1 copy for each student

Preparation

Complete the activity on your copy of Reproducible Page D.

Instructions

- Greet the students as they arrive.
 Remind them that they are learning about Stephen and how his death caused the church to scatter and grow.
 Tell them that they will do an activity to help them review this week's Bible Story.
- 2. Distribute the copies of Reproducible Page D and pencils. Explain that on the worksheet the students will read the scriptures and use their Bibles to fill in the missing words.
- 3. Encourage the students to work together and to use their Bibles to check their answers.
- 4. Circulate among the students to offer assistance.

Teacher Tips

- Arrange to have extra Bibles in the NIV translation for this activity.
- For students who finish early, have them draw one of these events on the back of their pages.



The Church Scatters The Early Church Lesson 3

You Can Encourage, Too!

The students will review this week's Bible Story as they think of ways that they can encourage others.

Materials

Reproducible Pages:

Page E, 1 copy for the teacher

Preparation

- 1. Read Acts 6:1-8:4 to review the events of this week's Bible Story.
- 2. Read through each scenario from your copy of Reproducible Page E and prepare your own responses.
- 3. Practice leading this activity with enthusiasm.

Reviewing the Bible Story

Open your Bibles to Acts 6:1-4. Read this scripture to the students. We have been learning about the growth of the early church. Stephen was one of the disciples chosen to help take care of the needs of the widows—women whose husbands had died. Stephen was a great preacher. He taught many people about Jesus. He also found time to help the other disciples and encourage them. The disciples loved him and were very sad when he was killed.

Ask the students to share what they remember from this week's Bible Story.

Life Application

Tell the students to think of their best friend—but to not say any names. Then ask them to say one reason why that person is their best friend. Explain that our best friends are the people we feel closest to and trust the most with our lives and our problems. Ask the following questions—but don't have the students respond out loud.

- When you do really well on a test, who is the first person you want to tell?
- When someone is mean to you, who is the first person you want to tell?
- When you are afraid, who is the first person you want to tell?

You may have answered these questions with a friend or a family member—but in either case, it was someone you feel very close to.

The early church was like a large family. They had very close relationships like best friends. They cared about one another. They encouraged each other and helped each other. In Acts 2, it says the church shared their possessions with one another. In Acts 4, it says the disciples sold their proper ty and their homes in order to have money to meet the needs of the people in the church. Here in Acts 6 we see that food was given to widows who had none. The church met together every day to encourage and help one another. Even after Stephen was killed, the disciples met together to remember him and encourage each other to stay strong in their faith.

Tell the students that you will read some situations and they will think of ways to encourage the people described in these stories. Read each situation from your copy of Reproducible Page F and discuss as a group how to encourage the person they way God encouraged the church.

Conclusion

How did the early disciples encourage each other? (Take a few responses.) When we become disciples and members of God's church, God wants us to help and encourage one another. Have the students name one thing they will do to encourage a friend from the class this week. Close with a prayer thanking God for the ways he encourages us.

Teacher Tips

• Be prepared to share specific ways that you encourage disciples.





The Church Scatters The Early Church Lesson 3

Spread the Word

The students will review this week's lesson as they participate in this game.

Materials

For each teacher:

- paper
- pencil

Preparation

Practice playing this game at home.

Instructions

- 1. Introduce today's activity: In this week's Bible Story you learned about Stephen, an amazing man who took a stand for God. When Stephen was killed, enemies of the church thought they could stop the church from spreading, but the church grew even more. A great persecution broke out against the church. Enemies of the church put Christians in prison, thinking they could end the church. But as disciples were scat tered to different towns, they preached the word as they went and many other people believed. In your game today, you are going to listen very carefully to some of the ways that God comforted his people and how the church continued to spread.
- 2. Explain to the students that this game is called, "Spread the Word" and is played like the game "Operator." Each student whispers a word or a phrase to the student next to him until it travels around the circle. In this game, each word or phrase will be worth points. At the end of the game, you will see which group did the best with their listening and "operating" abilities.
- 2. Play a practice round using the sample on the back of the Lesson Card. Whisper the word "Stephen" in the ear of the student to your right. Have the student repeat it to the next student and so on until it comes back to you. Have the student to your left say the word that he heard. If the student says, "Stephen," then the group earns one point.

- 4. Tell the students that each word or phrase is related to the Bible Story. If the students get all the words correct, they earn full points. If they only get some of the words correct, they earn a point for each correct word. Explain that the words and phrases get more difficult as the game goes on.
- 5. Tell the students that if they do not understand what has been said to them, they may say, "Spread the Word," and the giving student may repeat it. A student may ask for no more than three repeats. Then he must say what he heard to the best of his ability.
- 6. Play until all the words have gone around the circle. Keep score for each round. The group at the end of the class with the highest number of points wins.

Conclusion

Would you like to have been a member of the early church? Why? How can the church today be like the early church? We need to spread the word of God to others. Name one person you will invit e to church with this week. Close with a prayer thanking God for helping the church.

Teacher Tips

 Adapt the statements on the back of this Lesson Card to the needs of your group of students by making them longer or shorter.



The Church Scatters The Early Church Lesson 3

G.....

Spread the Word

Scores are based on the correct number of words repeated. For example: if the student repeats four words correctly out of seven, they earn four points.

Sample: Stephen

Round One: The church was growing. (4 Points)

Round Two: Stephen was a strong disciple. (5 points)

Round Three: Stephen preached with wisdom and power. (6 points)

Round Four: Enemies of God argued with Stephen. (6 points)

Round Five: They lied and stirred up trouble for Stephen. (8 points)

Round Six: Stephen preached the truth and was killed. (7 points)

Round Seven: God and Jesus encouraged Stephen before he died. (8 points)

Round Eight: A great persecution caused the church to scatter. (8 points)

Round Nine: The church spread the word and baptized everywhere they went. (10 points)



Cross WISF Words

The students will locate scripture references to fill in the crossword puzzle.

Materials

For each student:

pencil

Reproducible Pages:

Page F, 1 copy for each student

Preparation

Complete your copy of Reproducible Page F.

Instructions

- 1. Introduce today's activity: In this week's lesson we learned about the growth of the early church. We learned that as the early church grew, there were men who opposed and persecuted the disciples. Stephen was one of the first disciples to be persecuted to the point of death. There are many scriptures in the Bible that talk about persecution. God tells us that it will happen, and he tells us how we should respond to it. In today's activit y, you will read about God's purpose in persecution.
- 2. Distribute the copies of Reproducible Page F and pencils. Explain to the students that they will look up scripture references on persecution and fill in the crossword puzzle.
- 3. Have the students work in partners or small groups. Encourage them to look up the scriptures in the Bible.
- 4. Circulate among the students to offer help and encouragement. As they finish, check their answers with the Answer Key provided on the back of this Lesson Card.

NOTE: This activity should help raise the students' awareness of persecution in the Bible. It should not be a time to share morbid or scary stories. Make sure to supervise the discussion and keep the focus on the Bible.

The Church Scatters The Early Church Lesson 3

Conclusion

Ask the students if they have ever experienced persecution for their faith. Share (discreetly) from your own experience about a time when you were opposed for your faith. Help the students to understand that disciples around the world experience persecution and opposition for their faith and they are being blessed by seeing more people become Christians—which is what Jesus promised. Close with a prayer thanking God for the encouragement of the Bible.

Teacher Tips

• Be sensitive to new or visiting students who are unfamiliar with the idea of persecution. Work together with them.

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3rd and 4th Grades

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The Church Scatters The Early Church Lesson 3

Cross WISE Words—Answer Key

C R O S W I S E O R D S

Directions: use your Bible to look up the following scripture references and fill in the blanks. The words you find will also represent the answers in the crossword puzzle.

2B 6Y 7A L O L 1P E R S E C U T E W W S V A S E Y 8T R U S T 3D O N O T 5L O V E S N E

ACROSS

- 1. "If they persecuted me, they will <u>persecute</u> you also." (John 15:20)
- 3. "Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse." (2 words, Romans 12:14)
- 5. "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who _____[Oves____us." (Romans 8:37)
- 8. "When I am afraid, I will <u>trust</u> in you. (Psalm 56:3)

DOWN

- "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me." (Matthew 5:11)
- 4. In fact, <u>everyone</u> who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Timothy 3:12)
- 6. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with \underline{you} ." (Isaiah 43:2)
- 7. "And surely I am with you <u>always</u>, to the very end of the age."

 (Matthew 28:20)

3rd and 4th Grades

Core/Craft 1 copy for each student

The Early Church Lesson 3



Stephen looked up and saw Jesus standing at the right hand of God.

text box

Stephen picture





Core/Scripture Memory

1 copy for each student





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Supplement/Preclass 1 copy for each student

The Early Church Lesson 3

		Glimpses	of Growth
	e Bible Stories below. L le and fill in the missing below.		
Acts 6:8-12			Acts 7:54-58
Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did			When they heard this, they were furious and gnashed their
great wonders and signs among the people.			teeth at him. But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up
Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue			to heaven and saw the glory of God, and standing
of Freedmen (as it was called). These men began to			at the right hand of God. "Look," he said, "I see heaven
with Stephen, but they could not stand up against			open and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of
his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke.			God."
Then they persuaded some men to say,			At this they their ears and, yelling at the top
"We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against			of their voices, they all rushed at him, dragged him out of
Moses and against God."			the city and began to him.
So they the people and the elders, and			Acts 8:1-4
the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought			On that day a great broke out against the
him before the Sanhedrin.			church at Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were
stone	scattered	preached	throughout Judea and Samaria. Godly men
stirred up	word	'	buried Stephen and deeply for him. But Saul
· ·		argue .	began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he
miraculous	mourned	covered	dragged off men and women and put them in prison.
Jesus	secretly	persecution	Those who had been scattered the
			wherever they went.

1 copy for the teacher

Situation #1

Sue invited her friend to come to church. Sue's friend thinks she is crazy for going to church.

• How can you encourage Sue? Possible answers: pray with her; congratulate her for her boldness in inviting the friend; give her a hug; remind Sue how much God loves her; etc.

Situation #2

Joe and Howie are friends. They are in the same Bible class. Joe noticed that Howie never brings a snack to Bible class. Howie says it is because his mother does not have enough money for things like that. The students from the Bible class have decided to have a party and to invite their friends. Howie said he is not coming because he doesn't have two dollars for refreshments.

• How can you encourage Howie? Possible answers: offer to bring extra refreshments for Howie; talk to your parents about ways to help Howie and his family; talk to Howie about things he could bring to the party, such as: music, homemade snacks, etc.

Situation #3

Mary is a friend from church who goes to your school and lives down the street. Her mother is very sick. Mary stays at home after school to help watch her younger sisters and brothers. You don't see her playing in the neighborhood as much as she used to.

• How can you encourage Mary? Possible answers: offer to help her take care of her brothers and sisters; write her a note; bring her a special present; ask your family how they can help her family; pray for her, etc.

Situation #4

Mike decided to miss a big hockey game because he is going to church. His parents told him that it was his choice. Mike really wanted to be at church. His teammates are mad. They think he should come to the game instead.

• How can you encourage Mike? Possible answers: tell him that you respect what he did; tell him you think he had a lot of courage to go against what other people were saying; tell him that God knows that he chose church and God will take care of everything, etc.

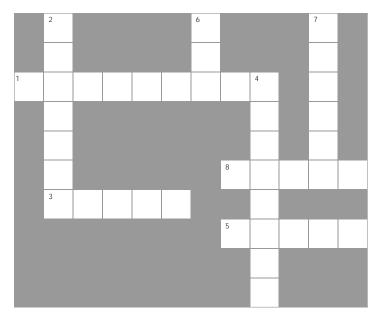


Directions: use your Bible to look up the following scripture references and fill in the blanks. The words you find will also represent the answers in the crossword puzzle.

ACROSS

- 1. "If they persecuted me, they will ______ you also." (John 15:20)
- 3. "Bless those who persecute you; bless and _____ curse." (2 words, Romans 12:14)
- 5. "No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who _____ us." (Romans 8:37)
- 8. "When I am afraid, I will ______ in you. (Psalm 56:3)

Cross WISF Words



DOWN

- 2. "_____ are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me." (Matthew 5:11)
- 4. In fact, _____ who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. (2 Timothy 3:12)
- 6. "When you pass through the waters, I will be with _____." (Isaiah 43:2)
- 7. "And surely I am with you _____, to the very end of the age." (Matthew 28:20)





Winter 2