

## God's Story: Stephen

**01** So, part of God's Story is about a man named Stephen. But before we get started, you should know, Stephen isn't some hero who defeated his enemies in an incredible battle or spectacularly escaped capture. What makes Stephen amazing was his determination to lay everything on the line for Jesus. Even his life.

So anyway, Stephen's story goes like this:

**02** After Jesus came back to life and rose into heaven, the Church began to spread like wildfire.

**03** Both the disciples and brand new people began to journey to the ends of the earth, telling others about God's love and how He rescued all of us through Jesus.

**04** Now, one of these new followers inspired by God's love was Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power. Stephen traveled all over and performed all kinds of fantastic miracles. The whole time, he was sharing the story of God's amazing rescue plan for all of us.

**05** The problem is, not everyone was happy about what Stephen was preaching. Believers were made fun of, beaten and thrown in jail.

**06** Sometimes, followers of Jesus were even put to death for refusing to stop telling others about God's rescue plan. We call these brave men and women martyrs.

**07** So, like a bunch of bullies, some of the Jewish leaders began to spread a rumor that Stephen was making fun of Moses and God with his speeches, causing a group called the Sanhedrin to become upset with Stephen.

**08** Now, you might be thinking: What's a Sanhedrin? It sounds like some kind of fire-breathing, sand-dragon... thing.

**09** Well, since the Sanhedrin was a group of powerful leaders in Jewish culture, Stephen might have been better off if it was a dragon.

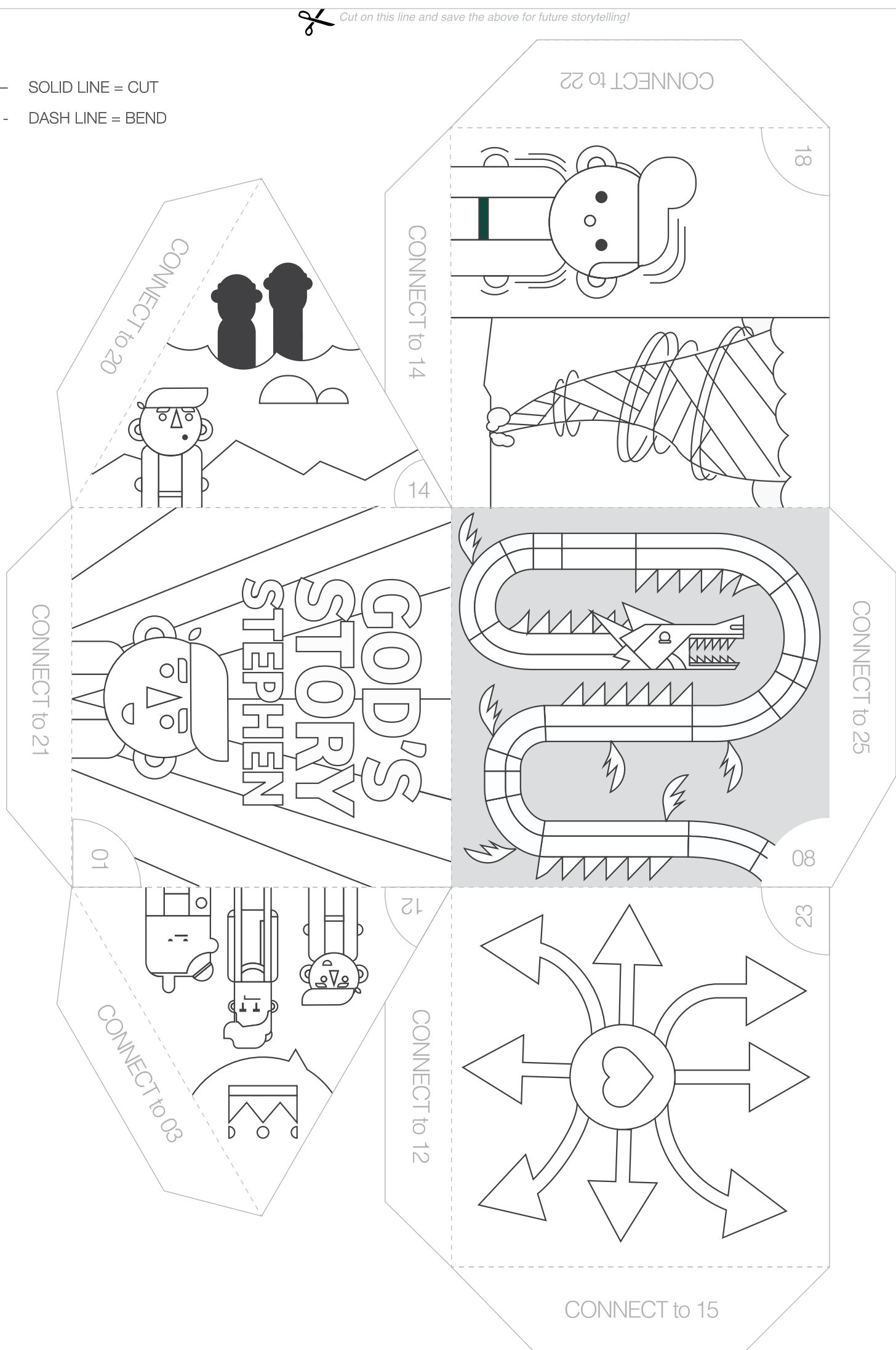
**10** Even though he had done nothing but perform miracles and tell others about God's awesome rescue plan, things didn't seem to be going so well for Stephen.

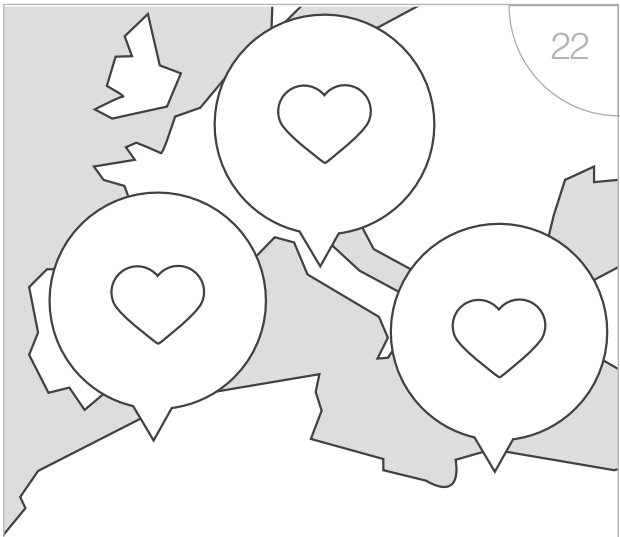
**11** In fact, the Sanhedrin even put him on trial and had people lie about him. But Stephen knew that following God didn't mean things would be easy. He knew that really loving God means standing by what you believe in, even when things get hard.

**12** Stephen could have backed down. He could have taken back his words, but he didn't. You see, many of the Israelites didn't believe that Jesus was really God's son, the rescuer that God had promised.

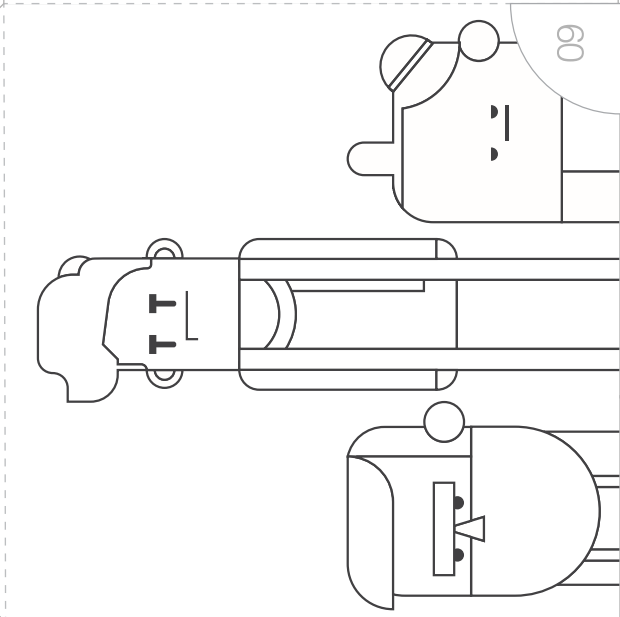
**13** So Stephen told stories to remind the Sanhedrin that God built His family through people like Abraham and Moses, and Jesus was the rescuer God had planned to send them. When they ignored that truth, they were disobeying God.

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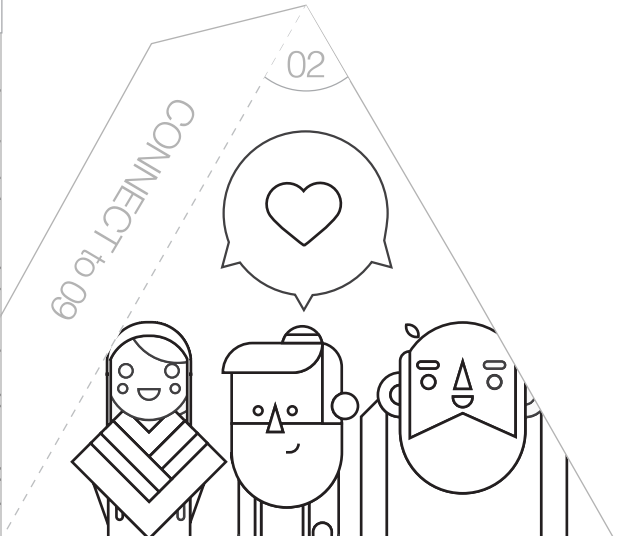




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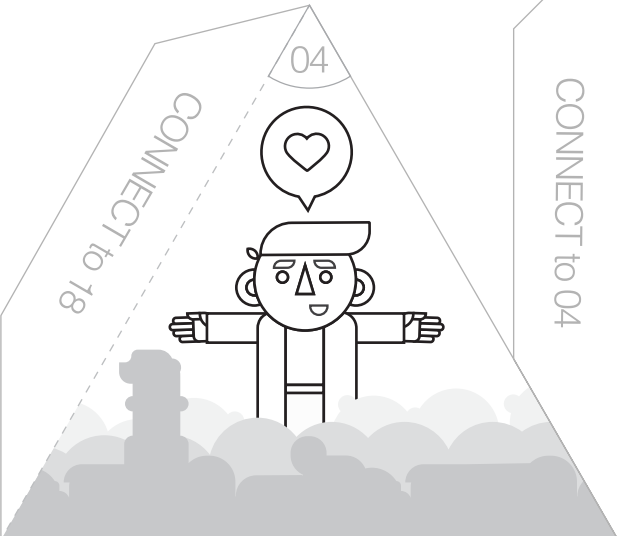
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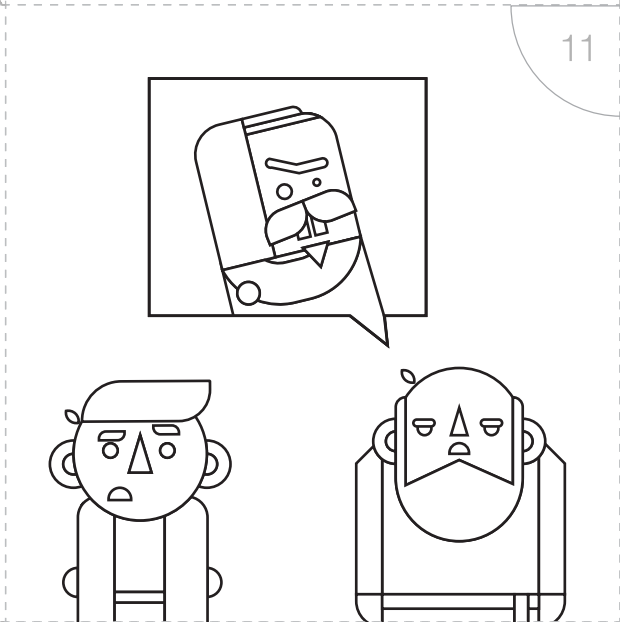
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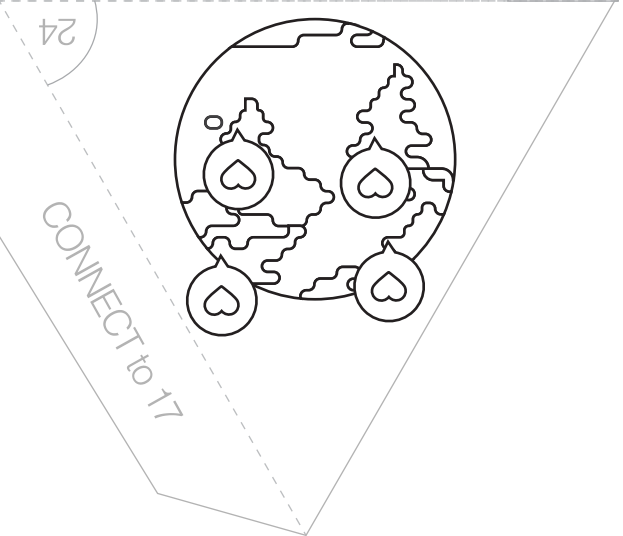


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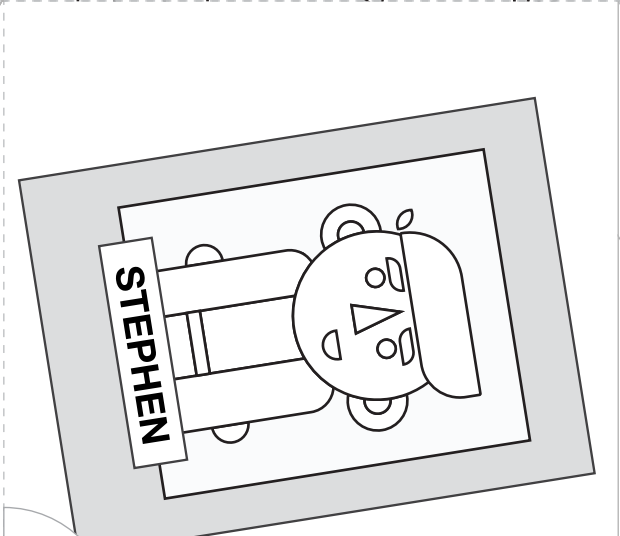


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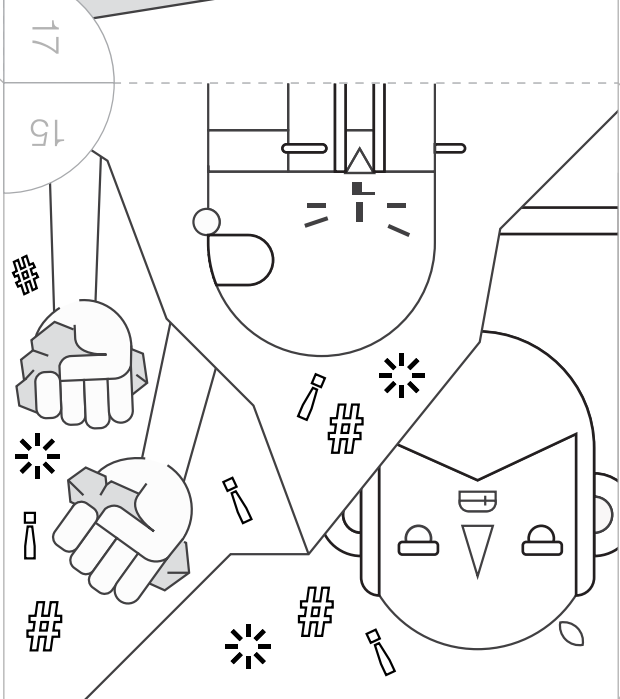
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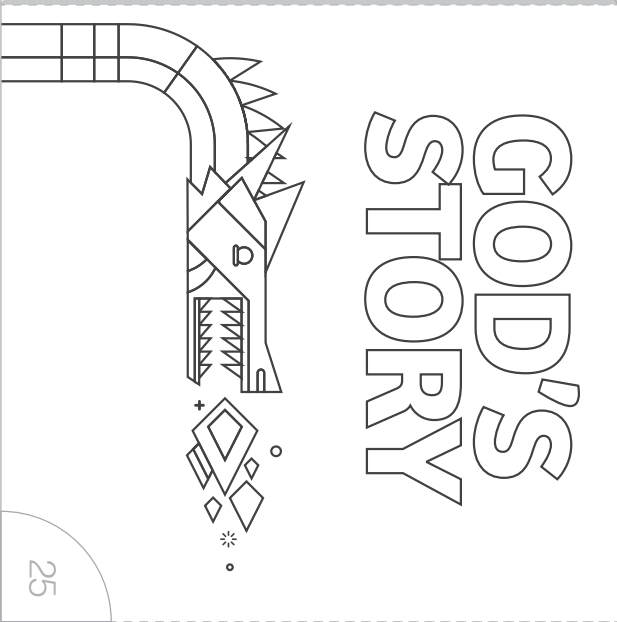
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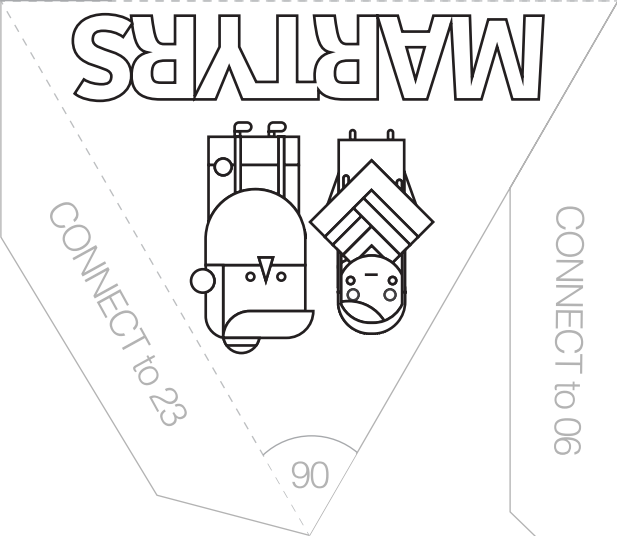
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GOD'S  
STORY

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MARTYRS

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**14** After he finished, Stephen looked up and saw Jesus standing next to God in heaven looking back down at him. We don't know for sure what they looked like, but we do know God loves it when we share his story, so maybe they were giving Stephen a big thumbs up.

**15** The members of the Sanhedrin were so mad after Stephen finished his speech that the Bible says they gnashed their teeth, yelled at the top of their lungs and dragged him out into the city. They gathered around Stephen and threw heavy stones at him.

**16** But even while they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord, receive my spirit." Then he fell on his knees and cried out, "Do not hold this sin against them." And the Bible says that when he finished saying this, he died.

**17** And that's it. That's the end of Stephen's life, at least on earth.

**18** An earthquake didn't save him, and fire didn't fall from the sky.

**19** That's not what this story is about. It's about how Stephen lived and died telling people about Jesus, no matter what others said or did.

And THAT's the story of Stephen.

**20** But that's not all there is... Here's a quick version of what happened AFTER Stephen was martyred:

**21** News of Stephen's death spread. '

**22** Followers of Jesus across the Roman empire were inspired.

**23** God's Family got even more bold, spreading His rescue plan further than ever.

**24** The Church grew and took God's good news across the globe, even when it wasn't safe. Just as Stephen did.

**25** And THAT'S a part of God's Story.



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