

The Case of the Man Who Kept on Loving

Acts 6-7

**Story-telling Tips**

Ahead of time:

1. Read the Bible verses and story. Pray!
2. Choose story action cues and prepare storyboard figures/story scenes, if using. (In Visual Aids book)
3. Practice telling story with the storyboard pictures, timing your presentation. Shorten, if necessary.

During your presentation:

1. Maintain as much eye contact as possible as you tell the story.
2. Put up storyboard figures/add story action cues/hold up storybook scenes as you tell the story. Allow the children to help you put them on the board, if desired.
3. Include the children in your story with a few questions about what they think will happen or words/concepts that might be new to them.
4. Watch the kids for signs that their attention span has been reached. Shorten, if necessary.

INTRODUCTION/ LISTENING ASSIGNMENTS

“Our story is called: The Case of the Man Who Kept on Loving. Here is your listening assignment.” Read from Detective Dan’s Listening Assignment signs, but questions are summarized below:

Detective Dan’s Lesson #1 Listening Assignment:

I need to know:

1. **Who was the man who kept on loving?**
2. **Who did he keep on loving?**

Detective Dan’s Lesson #2 Listening Assignment:**Our Bible Verse is 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, ESV**

“Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.”

I need to know:

1. **Who lived for God by loving others like this?**
2. **How did his life show this love?**

Detective Dan’s Lesson #3 Listening Assignment:I found six clues, but two of them are **NOT** in the story.

They are: a hat, a widow, some rocks, a squirrel, a healed person, and the Temple.

Hold each of them up for the children to see as you identify them.

I need to know:

1. **Which four belong in the story and which two don’t?**
2. **Who asked God to forgive his enemies for doing such mean things to him? Who gave him the love to do this?**

Read the assignment questions, THEN SAY,

“Ok, Deep Down Detectives! Put on your best listening ears and see if you can hear the answers to Detective Dan’s questions. When I finish telling the story, we will see if we can answer all the questions.”

Read the Bible Truth story, answer questions, present the gospel and lead in prayer.

Answers to questions; the gospel; and, ACTS prayer are included with the story text.

The Case of the Man Who Kept on Loving*Acts 6-7*

Story with lines separating paragraphs (text in bold, optional interaction cues in italics) Numbers correspond to storyboard pictures and placement upon the storyboard. Always feel free to use less pictures, if it's best for your kids. Simply black out the numbers next to pictures you do not plan to use. All pictures are found in the Visual Aids book. Put BG (background) pictures on storyboard ahead of time. SB pictures (listed below in story text) are added to board as you tell the story. These numbers are also found on the back of each picture. Tip: Stack pictures in numerical order before telling story for easy use. Use sticky-back velcro to attach pictures to storyboard felt. Use sticky-tac putty to stick a picture on top of another picture. OR, if using the Story Scenes to tell the story, disregard the storyboard picture references listed below.

(SB1) Stephen was a follower of Jesus. He heard the good news of Jesus and trusted in Him as his Savior. Stephen turned away from living life his own way. Now, he wanted to live God's good way. The Holy Spirit helped Stephen. He lived in Stephen's heart, filling him with love for God and for other people.

But it wasn't just Stephen's heart that was full of love for God and other people. Stephen's life was, too. In everything that Stephen did, he wanted to live out this love for God and for others.

(SB2) So, Stephen learned God's Word, the Bible, and he prayed. (SB3) He taught God's Word to others; and, he took care of the older widows in the church (women whose husbands had died and left them with no one to help them). Yes, in these ways and many more, Stephen lived a life of love for God and for other people.

But, there was something ELSE Stephen did that showed his love for God and for others: he told them the good news about Someone very special. Can you guess who that was?

Can you guess?

(SB4, SB5) Stephen told them the good news of Jesus.

"Listen to the good news!" Stephen told them. "Jesus is the Son of God. He is the Savior God promised to send. He suffered and died on the cross to save us from our sins," Stephen told them. "Then on the third day, Jesus rose from the dead to show He had really beaten sin and death.

"Come, turn away from disobeying God! Trust in Jesus as your Savior," Stephen urged all. "God will forgive your sins. You will be His people. You will get to know and love Him now. And when you die, you will go to live with Him and enjoy Him forever!" he promised them.

(SB6) Sometimes, God did amazing miracles as Stephen shared about Jesus. God did this so everyone would know that this good news was really true. Jesus really was God's Son, the Savior.

But the best miracle of all was what God's Holy Spirit did in the hearts of many who listened to Stephen.

Can you guess?

(SB7, SB8) The Holy Spirit helped them turn away from their sins and (SB9, SB10) trust in Jesus as their Savior. Now, they were God's people and the Holy Spirit lived in their hearts! Stephen and the other followers rejoiced to see God save (SB12) so many people.

Story with lines separating paragraphs (text in bold, optional interaction cues in italics)

But while Stephen and the other believers rejoiced, others were very upset.

(SB13) “Something must be done to stop Stephen from saying these things!” these enemies exclaimed. “Stephen is teaching lies to the people,” they said. “Jesus was a fake. He wasn’t really the Son of God. He didn’t save anyone from their sins when he died on the cross. He didn’t rise from the dead,” they said.

(SB14) “We must stop Stephen, but how?” these enemies wondered. “What can be done?”

Yes, this was quite a problem. Everyone could see how God did amazing things through Stephen. They heard the great wisdom God gave Stephen as he preached. They saw God’s great power in the miracles Stephen did. And, they could see God’s love in Stephen’s care for others. “How can you stop a man like this?” his enemies exclaimed.

But Stephen’s enemies DID think of a way. A very tricky, bad way. Instead of telling the truth about Stephen, they decided to tell lies about Stephen. Big, bad lies that would get Stephen in trouble.

(SB15) “Stephen is saying bad things about God’s laws,” they told others. “He’s saying bad things about God and the Temple, God’s special worship place,” they lied. Do you think these lies worked?

What do you think?

(SB16) Yes, they did! People forgot about all the amazing things Stephen did by God’s power. They forgot his words spoken with God’s wisdom, and the loving things he did for others. And instead, they believed the lies of Stephen’s enemies, and they became very angry.

“Let’s get rid of Stephen!” they decided. “He’s saying bad things about God. He should be punished,” they exclaimed. “Let’s take him to the leaders of the Temple, God’s special worship place. They will decide what to do with him!” the people said. (SB17, SB18) So, they grabbed Stephen and took him to the leaders of the Temple.

As Stephen stood before the leaders of the Temple, his enemies told their lies again: (SB19) “Stephen says that Jesus will break down the Temple, our special worship place. Stephen says that we shouldn’t keep God’s laws the way God’s Word tells us to,” they said.

(SB20) The leaders were very upset. What awful things these enemies were saying about Stephen! “What do you say about this, Stephen?” the leaders asked him.

Now it was Stephen’s turn. What would he say? These men had lied about him and about Jesus, yet he had done nothing wrong to them! They were hoping to get him in trouble and maybe even killed. Would he hate these men with his words? It would be easy to want to do that, wouldn’t it? They had treated him so badly.

What do you think Stephen would say? Was his heart filled with hate for these enemies?

Story with lines separating paragraphs (text in bold, optional interaction cues in italics)

But no! Stephen's heart was NOT filled with hate. (SB21) It was filled with love for God and other people, even these enemies! (SB22) God's Holy Spirit was at work in Stephen, filling him with the courage to speak God's truth to these leaders; and, filling him with love to forgive them. Everyone could see it in Stephen's face (SB23) which shone like an angel's, bright with God's goodness and glory.

Stephen answered the leaders, but he had no mean words for his enemies. He just warned them with stories from God's Word.

"(SB24) There have always been those who hear God's Word and believe," Stephen told them. "And there have always been those who hear God's Word and refuse to believe," he said. "I am one who has heard God's Word and believed. Jesus IS the Savior God promised to send," he told them. "But YOU are the ones who have heard God's Word and have refused to believe. YOU put Jesus, the Savior God sent, on the cross to die!" Stephen exclaimed.

(SB25) The leaders were furious! They ground their teeth! They plugged their ears! They shouted out loud! They didn't want to hear anything more from Stephen! They grabbed Stephen and dragged him down the street and outside the city. They wanted to kill him, just like the other enemies did! How could Stephen say that THEY refused to believe God's Word? They were the leaders of the Temple and the keepers of God's Word!

(SB26, SB27) Some picked up stones and threw them at him. Oh, no!

What would Stephen say now? What would he do now? NOW, was his heart filled with hate?

What do you think?

(SB28) Stephen's heart was STILL filled with love for God and for others—even these men who were his enemies!

Stephen looked up and (SB29) saw Jesus in heaven. Stephen knew he would soon be home with Him. Stephen forgave his enemies and asked for God to forgive them, too: "Lord, do not hold this sin against them," he pleaded.

(SB30) Then, Stephen died and (SB31) went to be with Jesus in heaven. Stephen had lived and died with a heart full of love for God and others. God's Holy Spirit had helped him love like this. He had even helped Stephen to love his enemies and forgive the mean things they did to him.

Now, in heaven, Stephen would go on living and loving, but in a way far better than he had ever enjoyed on earth. And there, he would be with His dear Savior, Jesus, face to face forever.

Cracking the Case: (story wrap-up for Listening Assignments)

It's time to see how we did with our Listening Assignment.

Detective Dan's Lesson 1 Listening Assignment:

- 1. Who was the man who kept on loving?** Stephen.
- 2. Who did he keep on loving?** He kept on loving everyone. He even kept on loving his enemies, even as they were hurting him.

For You and Me:

Stephen loved God and others his whole life. He even loved his enemies who were so mean to him! God wants all His people to love others as Stephen did AND as Jesus did! God knows no one can love others like this on their own, especially enemies. But He promises to give His Holy Spirit to help His people love others, even when it is very hard! We can become God's people when we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. His Holy Spirit can come live in us and help us love others like this, too.

Detective Dan's Lesson 2 Listening Assignment:**Our Bible Verse is 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, ESV**

"Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends."

I need to find out:

- 1. Who lived for God by loving others like this?** Stephen.
- 2. How did his life show this love?** He tried to always love others. He even kept on loving his enemies as they were hurting him. He always tried to love God most of all, too. He kept on living for God, even when his enemies told him to stop talking about Jesus. He even chose to die, rather than stop living the way God wanted him to live.

For You and Me:

God wants His people to love Him most of all. He wants them to love others and live like Jesus. But God knows how weak His people are. He knows they can't love Him or others the way He wants them to by themselves. That's why He forgives their sins through Jesus. And that's why He sends His Holy Spirit to live inside of them and help them. He helps them love God and others in ways they could never love on their own. We can become God's people when we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Ask Him to help you do this. He loves to answer this prayer.

Detective Dan's Lesson 3 Listening Assignment:

Our six clues were: a hat, a widow, some rocks, a squirrel, a healed person, and the Temple.

1. Which four belong in our story?

The widow, the rocks, the healed person and the Temple belong. The squirrel and the hat do not.

2. Who asked God to forgive his enemies for doing such mean things to him? Who gave him the love to do this? Stephen did. God did, through His Holy Spirit living inside of Stephen and helping him.

For You and Me:

God wants His people to love Him most of all. He wants them to love others and live like Jesus. But God knows how weak His people are. He knows they can't love Him or others the way He wants them to by themselves. That's why He forgives their sins through Jesus. And that's why He sends His Holy Spirit to live inside of them and help them. He helps them love God and others in ways they could never love on their own. We can become God's people when we turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Ask Him to help you do this. He loves to answer this prayer.

The Gospel (story wrap-up if NOT using Listening Assignments)**Our Bible Truth is:****How Should God's People Live?****They Should Live Like Jesus!****By Loving Other People as God Has Loved Them!**

God wants all of His people to love others the way He has loved them. He EVEN wants His people to love their enemies by forgiving them, like Stephen did. Why should they do this? Because of how much God has forgiven them! He has forgiven all their sins through Jesus! And HOW can God's people love others and forgive like this? The same way Stephen did: by the Holy Spirit living in their hearts, helping them.

Can WE ever love like this? Yes, we can! God can work in our hearts. He can help us to turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. And if we do, then God will make us His people and He will fill us with His Holy Spirit, giving us hearts full of love for Him and for others. He can even help us to love our enemies and forgive them, like Stephen did.

Close in prayer.

Closing ACTS Prayer

- A** God, we praise You for being the God who loves and is able to help us love.
- C** God, please forgive us for not loving others as You want us to. Many times, we choose to love ourselves more than others. We need a Savior!
- T** Thank You, God, for sending Your Son to be our Savior. He loved us in everything He said and did. Thank You for Your Holy Spirit who can help us love others the way You want us to.
- S** God, please work in our hearts. Help us turn away from our sins and trust in Jesus as our Savior. Fill us with Your Holy Spirit. Help us to love You and others as Jesus did. Help us to even love our enemies.

In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.

Go to Lesson Plan, p.9 for the script to the rest of the lesson.