2

Spreading the Word

Key References: Acts 8:1-8; *The Acts of the Apostles*, chap. 11, pp. 103-111; *The Bible Story* (1994), vol. 10, pp. 31-37; Our Beliefs nos. 3, 11, 14.















powertext

"And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Sabbath

DO Do the activity on page 19.

powerpoint



God's love unites us and brings us joy.

How would you feel if you had to leave the only home you've ever known because of something you didn't even do? We often read about people who were driven from a place because of persecution. This story is about how a teen living at the time of the early church may have reacted.

The teenage girl was sure she was going to erupt. Standing outside the gate of Jerusalem, she leaned against a cart. Her stomach felt like a rope that had been tied and soaked in water. The hot sun, the sight of Stephen's dead body, and the women wailing in grief—all of it was too much. Her eyes frantically searched for her father. Spying him with a group of believers surrounding Philip, she just wanted to be near him.

The group split up.

"Abba," she cried, clutching her stomach.

"Daughter, I'm so sorry. I forgot you were with me," he said, rushing toward her. "You're sick. I knew I shouldn't have let you come."

"I want to go home," she whimpered. Her father whipped off his outer robe and laid it in the cart. He gently helped her in and draped canvas over the top to shield her from the sun.

Her father knew he'd get very little rest that night. He couldn't believe what he had seen today. It was definitely a turning point for the followers of Jesus. He was beginning to understand how angry the priests were against the believers. Saul, the zealous young Pharisee was also in the crowd. Although he hadn't picked up so much as a pebble, Saul was an attentive observer of the stoning of Stephen.

2

Sunday

READ Read Acts 7:54-58 and this week's story, "Spreading the Word."

REVIEW Begin memorizing the power text.

THINK When did a bad situation work for your good?

PRAY Thank God that you belong to a community of believers who can support one another in times of crisis.

Monday

READ Read Acts 7:59, 60.

SEARCH Look up the word "martyr" in the dictionary. What does it mean? How can a dead person witness?

FIND Where in the Bible is the word "martyr" used?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray that you will trust God to be with you, even when others are against you.

Tuesday

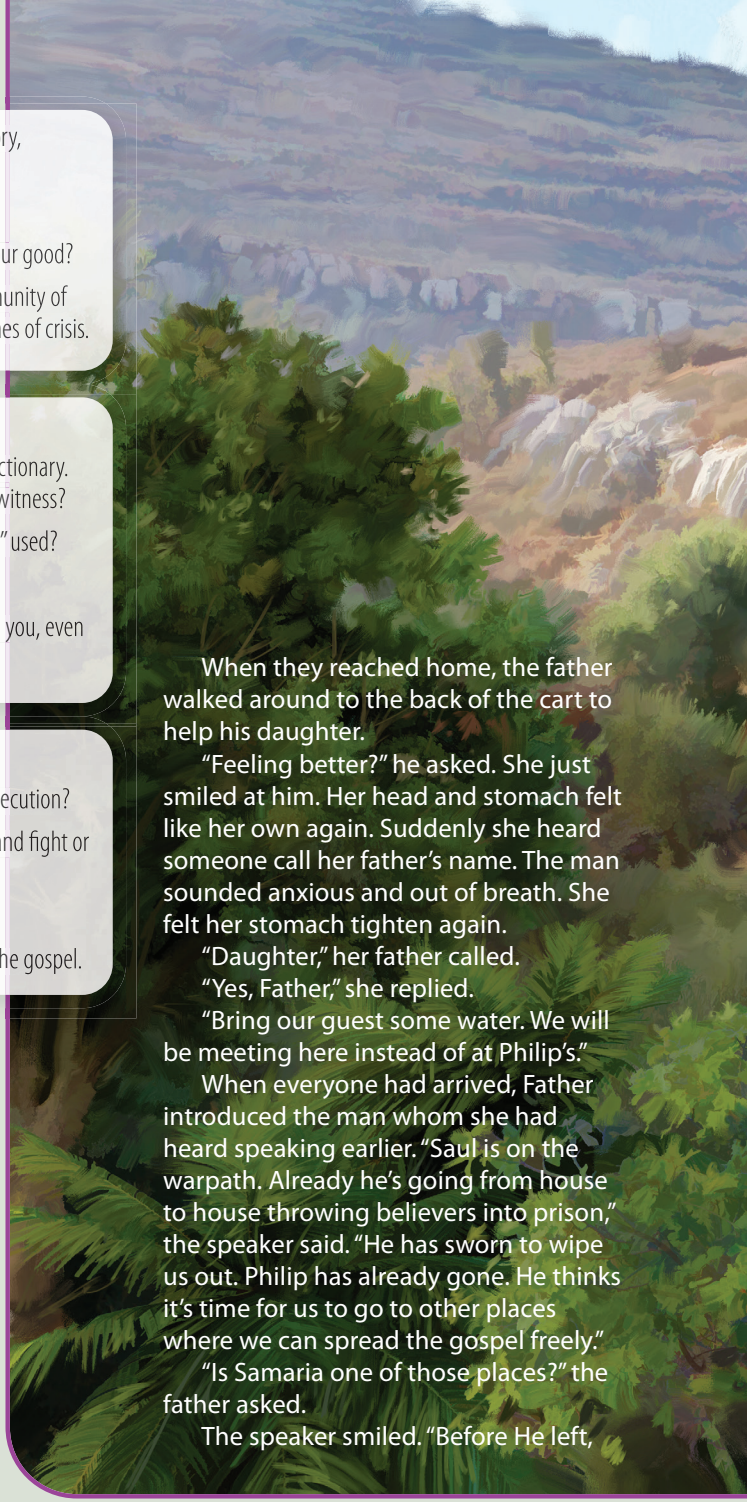
READ Read Acts 8:1, 2.

THINK Why did Stephen's death lead to persecution?

APPLY How do you decide whether to stay and fight or leave and be safe in a dangerous situation?

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Thank God that you are able to share the gospel.



When they reached home, the father walked around to the back of the cart to help his daughter.

"Feeling better?" he asked. She just smiled at him. Her head and stomach felt like her own again. Suddenly she heard someone call her father's name. The man sounded anxious and out of breath. She felt her stomach tighten again.

"Daughter," her father called.

"Yes, Father," she replied.

"Bring our guest some water. We will be meeting here instead of at Philip's."

When everyone had arrived, Father introduced the man whom she had heard speaking earlier. "Saul is on the warpath. Already he's going from house to house throwing believers into prison," the speaker said. "He has sworn to wipe us out. Philip has already gone. He thinks it's time for us to go to other places where we can spread the gospel freely."

"Is Samaria one of those places?" the father asked.

The speaker smiled. "Before He left,



our Lord said we would be His witnesses in Samaria. Remember?" Everyone nodded. "Philip—and I—think the time has come."

The girl's head ached again. Leave Jerusalem and their home? The tears that she had held back streamed down her face.

She waited to talk with her father until everyone had left.

"Abba," she said.

"You're still awake?" he asked.

"How soon are we going to leave Jerusalem?" she asked.

"Probably in the next couple weeks."

"Oh," the girl moaned.

"I know it's not easy, but we must go," he said. "It's not safe for us here any longer."

Two weeks later they were traveling north from Jerusalem. They had packed only what they could take in the cart. News of Philip in Samaria had already reached the believers.

The Samaritans had swarmed to hear Philip preach. Philip had impressed them not only with his words, but also with signs. He had healed the sick and cast out evil spirits, convincing the Samaritans that Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Now the girl and her father were moving to Phoenicia. It was so far away. It seemed like the end of the earth to her.

2

Wednesday

READ Read Acts 8:3.

THINK In what ways could the believers support one another in this situation?

WRITE Write a letter of encouragement to someone.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray that your words and actions will uplift and support others in the church.

Thursday

READ Read Acts 8:4.

THINK What was good about the church being scattered? What did the apostles do everywhere they went?

SHARE Get the name and address of a missionary from your pastor and write that person a short letter.

PLOT Find a New Testament map and measure the distance between Samaria and Jerusalem.

REVIEW Review the power text.

PRAY Pray for the missionary you chose to write to.

Friday

READ Review Acts 8:5-8.

THINK Has anyone teased or hurt you for your faith? How did you react? What would have been the best way to respond when you were ridiculed for the sake of Jesus?

CREATE Write a story or skit about what happened in Jerusalem as if you are there.

PRESENT Perform your skit in family worship.

SAY Repeat the power text from memory.

PRAY Praise God for Christian friends who encourage you.

"You know," her father said, "your mother would have been so happy."

The girl nodded yes. Before her mother had died, she had made her husband promise to take the good news to her family in Phoenicia.

"We probably should have moved to Tyre long ago," Father continued.

The girl thought about the house she had lived in all her life. She pictured the faces of her friends, whom she would never see again. Then her thoughts turned to her mother's family, to bringing them the news of the risen Christ.

"You know, Father," she said. Her father turned around from his place walking beside their donkey and looked at her. "It's strange, isn't it?" she continued. "This persecution that's been so terrible has brought something good after all. Right?"

His smile said yes.



