STEPHEN'S LAST WORDS

Message: Forgiving those who hurt us
Scripture: Acts 7:60
Prop: A large stone

Today we're going to talk about a deacon. But not a deacon here at our church. In fact we're going to talk about the very first deacon mentioned in the Bible. Do you know what his name was? His name was Stephen.

The Bible says that Stephen was full of God's grace and power and he did great wonders and miraculous signs. But some of the Jews were jealous of Stephen and were very angry. They didn't like him preaching about Jesus, so they tried to make him stop. But Stephen refused to stop preaching about Jesus.

So they decided to drag him out of the city and put him to death. And they did that by throwing these. *(Show stone.)* Can you imagine how it would feel if you were hit in the head with one of these? They kept on throwing stones at him until he died.

But let me read you what Stephen said just before he died. Acts, chapter 7 says that while they were stoning him "He fell on his knees and cried out, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.'" (NIV)

So while they were stoning him, he asked God to forgive them!

Most of us have never had people throwing stones at us, but we've all had people hurt us in other ways, like saying or doing things to hurt our feelings. It's hard to forgive people who have hurt us, but if Stephen can forgive the people who threw stones at him, shouldn't we forgive people who say things that hurt our feelings? God forgives us; shouldn't we forgive others?

But forgiving is hard without God's help, so let's pray: Dear Father, thank you for forgiving us our sins. Please help us to be better at forgiving others, no matter how much they hurt us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen