

SUNDAY SCHOOL MATERIALS FOR ADULTS

LESSON 10



MEETING NEEDS WITH HUMBLE SERVICE

Scripture Text: Acts 6:1-15

The Apostles were called to preach the Gospel, not to take care of the more minor functions in the church. In our lesson today, we have a beginning of church organization. These men were not chosen on the basis of their wealth or their influence in the community, but on the basis of their relationship to God and their ability to do the work. We are taught that even the Apostles could not live without prayer; what they had could not be retained without an increase; and this increase must come from God through prayer and supplication and their continual dependence on Him.

Among the thousands being saved, there were the weak ones, the immature and unstable, who would need care, patience, and teaching, along with those with material needs. This church was people like us.

They had problems as we do. They needed to solve them by the same method that is available to us.

MEMORY VERSE: *And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and miracles among the people.*

—Acts 6:8

DAILY READINGS:

Mon.—**Matthew 25:31-46** Help to the least of these.

Tue.—**Luke 14:12-24** Christ's supper.

Wed.—**James 2:1-13** True faith is impartial.

Thu.—**Psalms 113** God cares for the poor.

Fri.—**Job 5:8-16** God saves the poor.

Devotional Reading: **Luke 6:17-26** Poor in condition to receive.

A Murmuring

Acts 6:1 When the number of the disciples was multiplied—many thousands by this time—**there arose a murmuring** (a half-suppressed complaint), **their widows were neglected**. Here was a little leaven, and it was beginning to work within the church. These widows needed help to obtain supplies. The Jews that were scattered in Greece and other places, many being at Jerusalem at the feast, took faith in Christ and were added to the church, and so continued there; these complained against the Hebrews, the native Jews. Not understanding or not remembering that in Christ Jesus there is neither Greek nor Jew, but all are alike welcome to Christ, they had retained some of the old jealousy they had toward one another before their conversion. The Apostles responded to the complaint.

Set Priorities in Order

Acts 6:2-7 The twelve called the multitude of the disciples—the whole church had a part in deciding. **It is not reason**—not good judgment—that we . . . **leave the word of God, and serve tables**—neglect spiritual needs to supply physical needs. Their first call was to preach the Gospel, not to take care of minor duties of the church. Choose **seven men of honest report**. Choose people in whom you can confide, who will be impartial in their distribution of the provisions. **Full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom**. ALL are to be Spirit-filled. These men were not chosen on the basis of their wealth or their influence in the community, but on their relationship to God

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and their ability to do the work. The qualification demanded of them was threefold: honest, full of the Holy Ghost, and full of wisdom. These seven would administer help to the needy of the church, while the Apostles **give ourselves continually**—unhindered, exclusively—**to prayer and ministry of the word**. Even the Apostles could not live without prayer. They must depend continually on God. The **multitude**—whole church was **pleased**. They were Greeks, a wise choice, as the complaint was from Greeks. **They set the men before the apostles** who **prayed**—asking God's blessing—**laid their hands**—recognition by all of the authority given them for this responsibility. The result was a strengthened church. **Word of God increased**—spread and had power. **Disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly**—many were saved.

The disciples said they should not leave the Word of God to serve tables. Nominal religion today would have us believe that the work of the Gospel is in serving the temporal needs of the people. This appeals to the world because they can understand it. They live in the realm of the flesh and do not understand spiritual things. Some think charitable works are all there is to Christianity. But **the life is more than meat, and the body than raiment (Matthew 6:25)**. Saints know that man's deepest need is to be made alive in Christ. Spiritual needs must never be neglected in favor of giving material aid. It is to those who keep the Gospel first that material blessings are promised (**Matthew 6:33**).

Stephen Goes "All Out"

Acts 6:8-10 Stephen, full of faith and power, did . . . wonders . . . miracles. This was a number of years after Pentecost, and miracles were still causing a stir **among the people**. **Arose certain of the synagogue**—those holding to the Jewish religion. Libertines were former slaves of the Romans, liberated and returned to Jerusalem. The other groups were from Jewish colonies around the area. **Disputing with Stephen**. But his **wisdom and . . . spirit** were stronger than their arguments. So they turned to falseness and persecution.

Persecution of one kind or another is inescapable for one who goes "all out" for God (**2 Timothy 3:12**). Stephen might have escaped by keeping still, by using his own wisdom, but he followed the Spirit and kept his soul clean.

Angel Face

Acts 6:11-15 They suborned men—procured to swear falsely that Stephen had blasphemed **against Moses, and . . . God**. This angered **the people . . . elders . . . scribes**. Forming a mob, they brought him to the council. There the false witnesses said he had blasphemed **this holy place**—the temple—**and the law**, saying **Jesus . . . shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs of Moses**. Stephen had not blasphemed. He had explained how Jesus was the fulfillment of the Law, and the Law had given way for the Gospel. They twisted his words. **The council, looking . . . saw his face as . . . the face of an angel**—the Holy Spirit shining in it. The Spirit witnessed to God by making Himself visible in Stephen's face. The unsaved council recognized God in him.

JUST A THOUGHT

A closed Bible is worse than a locked refrigerator.

This lesson is adapted from a lesson by Mary Lehmann.
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