

Called to Witness – Teaching Notes

(Acts 6:1-8; 8/6/17)

Introduction: A key idea in today's Sunday School material is that the early church used teamwork to help them be more effective in God's service. Prayerfully, we will be challenged to work on teamwork today, so we can be more effective in the Lord's service as well.

Body:

Read Acts 6:1-4

I. Growing Pain. There was a conflict among the widows. The Apostles proposed the delegation of the matter to some mature people. The Apostles would use their personal energy on prayer and the word.

Applications –

- **Effective issue resolution.** Notice in vss. 1-4 that the people dealt with complaints in an effective way. First, we should strive to solve problems, instead of just complain. There are too many people who do better sharing their issues with the wrong people than with the appropriate people. Second, it is good for families, churches, and communities to have effective ways of dealing with issues or concerns. Ideally, everyone should be treated fairly. But if a person feels they are not being treated fairly, there needs to be an effective way of dealing those feelings. *Let's work on dealing with our issues in effective ways.* The devil loves for us to complain and waddle in negative thinking. God wants us to solve the problems and get back to living by His purpose.

- **The church's benevolent fund.** Notice in vs. 1 that the widows came to the church of their day looking for what we may call the benevolent fund today. On one hand, the church should try to help especially the members of the church who experience misfortune from time to time. Most churches would do better with supporting outside social agencies who help people with financial needs, instead of trying to help the people directly on Sunday mornings. On the other hand, the church is not prepared to take care of even the members on an ongoing basis. In America, Christians pay taxes, so government and non-profits can provide supportive services for the less fortunate. *Let's work on developing and/or standing by an agreement about how our church will handle benevolent cases.* /// The best thing for all of us to do is to be wise stewards of our resources, so we will not need the church nor the government to take care of us.

- **Pastoral priorities.** Notice in vss. 2-4 that the Apostles understood the value of them staying in their roles, instead of trying to take on additional and demanding roles. In like manner, Pastors would do well to prioritize feeding and leading the church. This is different than trying to visit all of the hospitals, nursing homes, and homebound on a regular basis. This is different than engaging in long term counseling with numerous members. This is different than being highly involved with multiple community and denominational efforts. Being prepared to preach and teach on a regular basis is demanding. Lifting a vision and managing the affairs related to making the vision a reality is demanding. *Let's work on helping our Pastors stay focused on their priorities.* This calls for others stepping up and using their gifts, so the needs of the body are attended to. This also calls for the body to appreciate that there are others who can be helpful besides just the Pastor.

- **Godly leaders.** Notice in vs. 3 that the seven men in question had to be qualified. In this case, they had to have godly character as viewed by both the disciples and the Apostles in the church. On one hand, there should be some godliness in everyone who does anything in the church. But on the other hand, some things call for “extra godliness.” Where there is money and/or conflict among large groups, extra godliness becomes more important. Furthermore, there are times when the godliness of the person should be discerned by the disciples of the church and the Pastor. In many churches, this is the case with those who serve for longer terms and/or those who handle the money. *Let’s work on putting godly people in positions of influence in the church.* Sometimes those who are popular are **not** godly.

Read Acts 6:5-6

II. Pleasing Consensus. The crowd of disciples were pleased with the proposal. Seven men were chosen because of their maturity. The Apostles laid their hands on them and prayed for them.

Applications –

- **Positioning godly people.** Notice in vss. 5-6 that seven men are chosen. The disciples and the Apostles are involved in determining which godly people will serve. Every member of the church should strive to live a godly life and serve in their maximum capacity, not their minimum capacity. The church should develop a plan to know who are the godly people who are willing to serve in leadership. (Think about the challenges involved in choosing seven men from among over 3,000 people in Acts 6.) Disciples (i.e., study, serve, and give) who complete Training Union and/or who serve as growth group leaders are targeted for leadership roles. *Let’s work on developing ways to put godly people in positions of influence.* This calls for members working on their discipleship, competency, and willingness to serve in the body.

Read Acts 6:7-8

III. Marvelous Result. The word of God spread. The number of disciples increased rapidly. And Stephen did great wonders and signs among the people.

Applications –

- **Teamwork and effectiveness.** Notice in vss. 7-9 that it seems as if the teamwork of verses 1-6 led to great results in vss. 7-9. We see the spreading of the word, rapid increasing of disciples, priest becoming obedient to the faith, and wonders and signs being done. In like manner, when we work on teamwork, we can expect great results in our churches today. Think about how much further along we would be, if just 2/3 of the members of the church did their part as a part of this one body of Christ. *Let’s work on teamwork, so we can be more effective in helping people to get saved and growing in the Lord.*

Conclusion: Let’s work on teamwork today, so we can be more effective in the Lord’s service. God has much for those who obey His will.