

Community Group Discussion Questions

“The Service of Stephen”

Acts 6

Sermon Series Title: “Church Beginnings”

Sermon Series Summary: From now until around Easter, we will be in the book of Acts, covering chapters 1-12. After the Ascension of Jesus Christ, we see the NT church being born by the power of the Holy Spirit. Through this series, we see the church being built, the kingdom going forth, and the gospel being proclaimed.

Setting: The book of Acts is a transitional book between the resurrection of Jesus and the established local churches of the epistles. With Jesus’ call to the church in Acts 1, we see how the gospel spreads to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the end of the earth.

Summary: In Acts 6, we see the establishment of the office of Deacon to address the problem of the Hellenist widows being neglected. In the office of Deacon, we see the priority of Word, prayer, and mercy in the church. The latter half of ch. 6 shows us the ministry of one of the Deacons, Stephen. In it, we see God working through Stephen and Stephen being unjustly persecuted for Jesus.

Sermon Points:

1. The Problem
2. The Provision
3. The Persecution

Main Idea: *“Jesus is the ultimate Deacon who served us and the ultimate Stephen who suffered on our behalf.”*

Before you read the passage...

1. Are there people neglected in our ministry? How should we address this need?

(Answers may vary.)

The first conflict that arose among the people in the early church was because the Hellenist widows were being neglected. We see how the church addresses the issue and how Stephen rises in such an occasion.

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Read Acts 6

2. What does Acts 6 teach us about the office of Deacon?

(We see that the office of Deacon was created to serve the people in need in the church. The Hellenist widows were neglected, so it was the role of the Deacons to manage, distribute, wait tables, and minister. The call to mercy is why the office is established, so that the apostles can focus on the matters of Word and prayer.)

We see the biblical call for our churches to have Deacons. They are to be “men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom.” They are called to be faithful stewards and managers of the church’s resources in order to serve the needs of the congregation.

We see that it’s not a step to becoming an Elder, but it’s a completely different office with a different calling. Stephen could have been one of the apostles and elders in the church. But it was his call to serve the church as a Deacon.

Lastly, we see that the church elects 7 Hellenist men to serve the Hellenist widows. Minority men are chosen by the church to serve everyone, including the ones in need.)

3. How does this passage speak into our call to show mercy?

(The apostles don’t justify their neglect of the Hellenist widows because of the priority of Word and prayer. They show us that showing mercy and meeting the needs of our members are just as important as Word and prayer. It’s so important that an office was created and established in the church to meet such needs. Lastly, it shows us that showing mercy is not just a physical/financial act, but it’s a spiritual one. That’s why we need men, full of the Spirit, to serve in the office of Deacon.)

4. What are some lessons we can learn from Stephen’s life and ministry?

(We see Stephen is a reflection of Christ. He is a reflection of Christ’s grace- “full of grace” being the term used to describe Jesus in John 1. He is a reflection of Christ’s power as “signs and wonders” is the language first used in Acts 2 to describe Jesus’ ministry. He is a reflection of Jesus’ wisdom, as the Jewish leaders are unable to argue with him. He is a reflection of Jesus’ persecution and sacrifice, as he is unjustly accused and wrongfully tried.)

Next week, we will see that his ministry is based on truth and love. We see the truth of God’s word, and we see his love toward his enemies. In this week’s passage, we see his perseverance as he stands for the gospel and calls people to Christ, even if it means it will cost him everything.

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Lastly, we see the beauty and the joy of God's presence in Stephen's life and ministry, as his face shines like an angel. It is that presence that gives him boldness and joy, even in the face of death.)

Final Thoughts: *In this passage, we see the church be in conflict with one another. However, we see God's glorious resolution in establishing the office of Deacon to not compromise the priority of word and prayer but also to maintain the priority of mercy. We also see Stephen, one of the deacons, display Christ in his life and ministry, and eventually his death. He is able to serve and suffer for the name of Christ because Christ first served and suffered for him.*