

4Ws When Momma Ain't Happy | Acts 6:1-15

WORSHIP

Consider reading **Psalm 132** together, taking turns reading a verse a time, or reading responsively with the leader reading a verse and the group responding with the next verse

Consider singing some of the songs on the sheets that were included in your packet if you have someone in the group that plays the guitar or can lead music and/or play the guitar.

WELCOME

Questions.

Have you ever received an award for some kind of service or exploit? What award did you receive and how did receiving that award make you feel? Tell us the story.

WORD

Discussion Questions.

1. Elders and Deacons have different responsibilities in the church. How do their responsibilities differ and what is the reason for these differences?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read Acts 6:1-2.) Elders were around long before the church was born. Every synagogue and every Jewish community had men who were fulfilling the office of elders locally. The elders in a community functioned as a consulting body who helped the people hold to the tenets of their faith and law. So, when the disciples who had become apostles began to lead in the church, it was very natural for the fellowship to think of them as elders, and that term took root along with pastor, bishop, shepherd and overseer. All five terms (elder, pastor, shepherd, overseer and bishop) are used, often interchangeably in the scripture to refer to the same office. These elders are men who have the primary responsibility of praying and teaching the Word – that is their two-fold ministry. Here in Acts chapter 6 a need arose that was primarily administrative: Feeding widows who were being neglected in the distribution of the offerings the elders were receiving. The elders found themselves in a place where they were doing church administration at the expense of their prayer and study and teaching of the Word. That was when they decided to create another office in the church, one that would have people who were primarily responsible for the PHYSICAL needs of the church. The elders took this step so that they would have the time and liberty to care for the SPIRITUAL needs of the church. Both kinds of needs must be met for the church to get its primary job done: The spread of the Gospel and the growth of the Kingdom. Elders have the primary responsibility for the spiritual aspects of that growth, while deacons have the primary responsibility for the physical aspects of that growth.

2. The elders asked the fellowship to look for men who met two qualifications so that they could be ordained as deacons. What were those two qualifications and what do they mean? Are the qualifications for becoming a deacon now different than those mentioned in Acts 6?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read Acts 6:3-4.) The elders told the fellowship to choose men who were full of the Spirit and full of wisdom. "Full" in this case refers to control. In other words, the fellowship was to look for men who were controlled by the Spirit of God and controlled by wisdom. This means men who were living lives that expressed the Spirit of God and exemplified wisdom. This is speaking of their character. The elders were looking for men whose character and lifestyle reflected the Spirit of God and God's Word. This was important because these men would be representing God as they fulfilled the responsibilities they had accepted when they accepted the ministry of a deacon. Remind the group that Acts is a book of history. It explains historically what happened at various junctures when the church was becoming the church. At the first choosing of deacons there were only two qualifications: Full of the Spirit and full of wisdom. As time went on men like Paul, Peter and James wrote the epistles, and it is in the epistles where we can find a more detailed list of HOW a deacon can qualify himself for the role of a deacon in the church. Have the group read 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and discuss the qualifications that are listed there. Help the group to see that Paul, as he writes to Timothy, is not changing the qualifications, but is fleshing them out. He is specifically describing a man or woman who is full of the Spirit and full of wisdom. Paul is explaining how that plays out in a life and what it looks like when a man or woman is full of the Spirit and wisdom, and Paul's explanation helps us to know what qualities to look for in a person who might become a deacon.

3. We know that creating the office of a deacon was a good idea because it came from the Spirit of God. Is there something in the Acts 6 passage that helps to prove that having deacons was a good idea?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read Acts 6:7.) The Spirit of God gave the idea of deacons to the first elders of the church, so we know that it was a good idea. Here in this passage we have even more concrete evidence that it was a good idea. After the deacons were in place and the widows were being fed and cared for, the dispute between the Hellenistic Jews and the Hebraic Jews eased. Because the deacons were doing their job, the elders were able to be busy about the things that were their primary responsibility: Prayer and the ministry of the Word. As the elders continued to minister, teaching the fellowship about their new life in Christ, the Word of God spread. More and more people were becoming followers of Jesus, so the church was still growing at an amazing rate. Besides this there were even large numbers of Jewish priests who were becoming followers of Jesus as well. The primary job of the church is to spread the Gospel and grow the Kingdom, and for a little while that was threatened as the elders were forced to deal with administrative responsibilities, but the addition of deacons to the core team of the church made it possible for the church to do what the church is primarily supposed to do. As the elders worked together with the deacons and with the other members of the fellowship the work of the ministry got done. That's always a good idea.

4. No matter what the enemy did, the 1st century church countered his attacks; no matter how the Devil attacked he has been so far unable to stop the church. What do we mean by this? What kind of attacks did the Devil mount? How has the 1st century church responded?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read Acts 6:7 again.) The Devil has been on the attack since Jesus rose from the dead. He has been trying to destroy the church and prevent the church from becoming what it should become and doing what it should be doing. Some of his attacks have come from OUTSIDE the church. There have been threats and beatings from the Sanhedrin. The leadership and members of the church have been strictly forbidden to speak in the name of Jesus. They have been threatened with punishment if they continue to share the Good News or represent Jesus in any way. There have been other attacks that have come from outside, but there are also attacks that come from INSIDE. Ananias and Sapphira lied to the Spirit of God and their hypocrisy led to them dying during one of the meetings of the church. There has also now been a dispute between the Hellenistic and the Hebraic Jews. If this dispute had not been properly managed it could have caused a major division in the church. If there had been division on that level, the elders would have had to take time to deal with the division and would not have been able to be devoted to the World of God and prayer. Thankfully, God gave wisdom to the elders and they created the office of deacon so that the potential for division was avoided. In the midst of all this, the church has continued without a hiccup in BEING what they were supposed to BE and DOING what they were supposed to DO. They have kept the main thing the main thing and have continued to spread the Good News and grow the Kingdom. The Devil has tried to stop them, but they have been unstoppable.

5. A day is coming when we will stand before Jesus and be rewarded by Him. For what will He reward us? What might prevent us from getting the reward that Jesus wants to give us?

Answer:

Let them discuss this. (Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-26 and Revelation 3:11.) We have it on good authority from the Scripture that Jesus is looking forward to the day when He will have the opportunity to reward us for the service that we have offered Him. He loves it when we get out of the bleachers and off the sidelines and get into the game. The rewards that He will offer will be based on His examination of the things that we have done to build the Kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 3:10-15). The EXPENSIVE things that we have done to build the Kingdom will show up as gold, silver and precious stones, while the INEXPENSIVE things we have done to build the Kingdom will show up as wood, hay and stubble. The operative word here is 'done'. Jesus will reward the things that we have DONE to build the Kingdom. There are no rewards so far as we know, for simply showing up to sit in the bleachers or stand on the sidelines. The trophies go to those who have gotten in the game and used time that could have been used for personal pursuits instead of Kingdom pursuits. Help the group to understand that the time has come for them to BE the church rather than continuing to simply GO to church. Rewards are waiting, but they are being held in reserve for those who use their lives for God's glory instead of for their own comfort or advancement.

WORK

The 1st century church made some remarkably good decisions in the chapter that we have studied this week. They have created the office of deacon and made it possible for the members of the church to be intensive about spreading the Good News and building the Kingdom. We have also talked this week about the rewards that Jesus will give to those who have been intentional in their pursuit of Him and His Kingdom. Some of us are still content to 'sit and soak' week after week whether we're in church or at small group. We all need to understand that we don't live with a demerit system where God might punish our lack of zeal, but we do live with a reward system that is based on our willingness to get in the game instead of just sitting and watching the game. Let's encourage one another to get in the game and play our hearts out!

Ask them to discuss this and then ask them to think through the list of people you have been praying for each week. Discuss how we can be more aggressively involved in sharing the good news with these folks for whom God has burdened us. We will pray for these people tonight and each night we're together until they come to Life Group or come to Christ through some other means. Have each couple/individual share the name of one couple/person to pray for and then ask one of the other people in the group to pray for them.

Close your time together in prayer.

WEEKLY PRAYER POINTS

I. Thanksgiving

- Worship God for who He is, what He has done, and what He will do in our lives

II. Country and the World

- Repentance and Salvation

III. Church

- That CCF Singapore Members would honor and love God and make disciples
- Core, Pastors, Leaders, and Families
- Ministries and Churches worldwide

IV. CCF Singapore Facilities

- CCF Singapore Center
- Equipments

V. Personal Concerns

- Deeper intimate relationship with God
- Righteous living
- Salvation of family and friends