

GROUP DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS

MAY 18, 2008

ACTS 6:1-7



DEVELOPING
AN
ENVIRONMENT
OF SERVING

Thinking

What do you think qualifies someone to serve another person? What are the basic requirements to be a servant?

Reflecting

At times, in the church, there is a tendency to see certain kinds of serving as more acceptable or more God-honoring than others. But that idea is foreign to the Scriptures. Let's see how it plays out in the early church. Read Acts 6:1-7.

What was the need being faced by the church?

What kind of qualifications might you initially think would be necessary to address such a need?

What do the apostles ask the community of faith to look for in those who will serve this need?

Why do you think the apostles look for those "qualifications"?

Taking it to heart

Apparently, the apostles served the way they did in the power of the Spirit; and, they wanted those who served food to serve in the same way. How does this thinking challenge the way you think about the broad spectrum of serving that happens in any church?

What does this mean for you, as you consider how God has designed you to serve?



GROUP DISCUSSION
QUESTIONS

MAY 18, 2008

ACTS 6:1-7



DEVELOPING
AN
ENVIRONMENT
OF SERVING

Thinking

What do you think qualifies someone to serve another person? What are the basic requirements to be a servant?

Reflecting

At times, in the church, there is a tendency to see certain kinds of serving as more acceptable or more God-honoring than others. But that idea is foreign to the Scriptures. Let's see how it plays out in the early church. Read Acts 6:1-7.

What was the need being faced by the church?

What kind of qualifications might you initially think would be necessary to address such a need?

What do the apostles ask the community of faith to look for in those who will serve this need?

Why do you think the apostles look for those "qualifications"?

Taking it to heart

Apparently, the apostles served the way they did in the power of the Spirit; and, they wanted those who served food to serve in the same way. How does this thinking challenge the way you think about the broad spectrum of serving that happens in any church?

What does this mean for you, as you consider how God has designed you to serve?





LEADERS' GUIDE FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

MAY 18, 2008

ACTS 6:1-7

DEVELOPING AN ENVIRONMENT OF SERVING

The big picture

When we talk about serving, as we noted last week, it is all too common to think in terms of what we are "doing for God" or "giving to Him." In reality, even in serving, we are on the receiving end of grace! When we serve, we serve because of how and what God has poured in and through us. Our serving must happen through what He does in us. And that is pictured in a simple passage in Acts, where the early church explores how to meet a basic need. The idea? All serving is done in the power of the Spirit.

Thinking

The opening questions are broad; feel free to explore whatever comes to mind as people think out loud about what qualifies someone to "serve." Although there is no "right answer" to the questions, as your people discuss the kind of things they think are needed to serve well, keep note of those qualities that reflect the "fruit of the Spirit" mentioned in Galatians 5:22-23. When you then turn to the Acts passage and note that even basic serving requires the Spirit's presence and empowering, the reality of the necessity of the fruit of the Spirit will become clear.

Reflecting

A little background may help set the frame for the picture Luke presents us with in Acts 6:1-7.

After Peter's amazing Pentecost message (recorded in Acts 2), thousands respond to the good news about Jesus. Many of these were apparently pilgrims, having come to Jerusalem for the feast. Having responded to the good news, they apparently stayed in town. That, coupled with the response of many who lived in the city to the message

LEADERS' GUIDE MAY 18, 2008



about Jesus resulted in a somewhat "mixed group" of converts. And, in the midst of that group were those with very practical needs.

The Hellenistic Jews were Gentiles who had converted to Judaism and, upon hearing the good news, responded and came to faith in Jesus. The "native Hebrews" were Jewish people who had, similarly, come to faith in Jesus. And there was some tension between these groups in the meeting of practical needs of the widows.

The apostles recognize this real need. But they also recognize that they are neither called nor gifted to meet every need that will arise in this growing community of faith. They wisely invite others to step in and shoulder this responsibility. What is important to note is how they think about this "serving."

First, note that the qualifications for this simple act of serving food is startlingly "spiritual." Those selected must be filled with wisdom and characteristically "full of the Spirit." For people who think "religious work" like teaching or preaching might require the Spirit's help while "regular work" like serving food can be done "naturally," this is a remarkable idea. Even simply serving in the life of the church is not to be carried out apart from the Spirit.

What is also interesting to note is the language the apostles use to describe this ministry of caring for widows. In 6:2, they address the need to have someone "serve tables." The word used for "serve" in that passage is the same word that they use to describe their own "ministry" in 6:4. The apostles "serve" in the context of the Word while these selected individuals "serve" in the context of providing food. But the same basic word is used to describe both "ministries" (even if the English translation does not fully reflect this insight).

All that to say that this snapshot from Acts provides some interesting insight into "serving":

1. All serving is fundamentally the same. It is all a kind of "serving," a kind of "ministry" that allows the server to be involved in a particular way in the life of the community of faith.
2. All serving is "resourced" in a similar fashion. Whether it's teaching or slicing bread the one serving can and should serve through the enablement of the Spirit. (Peter touches on this same idea in 1 Peter 4: 10-11; serving is done through what God has gifted each to do and is a display of His grace.)

Taking it to heart

Next week we will be exploring a bit more the whole idea of how and where we serve, but this week if we can help people see that all ministry is "Spirit-given" and "Spirit-driven," we may just open fresh understanding about what serving is really all about.