

## Problem Solving

### I. Slide1 Announce:

- A. **Slide2** Monday in May Food Drive: May 11, 9-11am. *Murr Comm Food Pantry.*
- B. **Slide3** 4 Part Series starts this Wed night. *Understanding God in a Confusing World*
  1. **How to Live with the God We Love.** *Living in Life's Tension. Living with a Hide and Seek God. Living Forward in Faith and Back in Wisdom. Living His Master Plan*
- C. Pray for **Maryl Wilson**. **Steve** went suddenly & unexpectedly to be with the Lord Thurs night. I was able to talk to **Steve Nauert** Thursday (praying him out of ICU).

### II. Slide4 Intro: Problem Solving in the early church

- A. Well, we've seen how **the church** weathered its 1st storm of **persecution** from the **outside**. **And then hypocrisy** on the **inside**. **Now**, let's see how well they did on **Problem Solving**. [persecution - corruption - *now, devil's best strategy...* distraction]
  1. For the 1st time a **major division** confronts the church.
  2. This describes **how to face & meet crisis** in the church.
- B. Is it possible that doing something is **good**, **but** doing something else can be **better**?

### III. PROBLEM SOLVING (1-7)

- A. **Slide5a COMPLAINT** (1)
- B. **Widows** - in the Ancient Near East, **widows** often could not survive unless immediate family members provided for them.
  1. **Overlooking** fellow believers who were **in such need** because of a **cultural difference** **betrays a serious and highly problematic tension** within **the Jerusalem church**.
  2. One of the ministries of the **synagogue** & for the **church** today, is to provide **food & or financial assistance** to those **widows & children** **not** supported by relatives.

- C. **Slide5b Hellenists** - refers to **ethnic Jews** who **practiced Judaism** and *here's the rub*, largely adopted **Greek language and culture**. [may have lived most of their lives outside of Judaea]
- D. **Hebrews** - refers to **Jews** who have **NOT** widely adopted **Greek language or culture**.
1. This group primarily spoke **Aramaic or Hebrew**, & although they may have spoken **Greek** too, *they remained fundamentally Jewish in their lifestyle*.
    - a) They viewed *other Jews* with suspicion, seeing them either **not purely Jewish**, or as **compromisers** of their **identity**.
  2. This **antagonism** represents an **obstacle** to the early church's goal of becoming **a new expression of humanity**, **united** in Christ **rather than divided** along cultural or social lines. (next will be *ethnic* lines/Gentiles)
    - a) 1Cor.12:13 *For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - Jews or Greeks, slaves or free - and all were made to drink of one Spirit.*
- E. **Slide6 FIRST CONCERN** (2,4) *1st Care - Self care*
- F. **The issue at hand** was *more than* one of **cultural tension**. It was a deeper problem!  
\* *“Social administration was threatening to occupy all their time.”*
- G. (2) **To serve tables** - *the apostles do not denigrate the practice of meeting the practical needs of other believers, but delegate responsibilities based on calling and suitability.*
- H. **Praying, teaching, preaching** - The disciples remind the other believers of their **true responsibility** to **teach** the message of God and **witness** to Christ - *the main priority of the Church*.
1. Acts 1:8 *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.* [within/without] *airplane example...*
  2. **Why are you told to put on your oxygen mask 1st?** Cuz if you run out of oxygen, you can't help anyone else/**Hypoxia/oxygen deprivation**. *self-care*
- I. Every believer will have an opinion on what **YOU** do (or *don't* do).

1. I can't worry about what everyone at CM thinks I should do **or** don't do.  
*I need to stick to what I believe is my calling.*
  2. I **cannot** do everything, I **should not** do everything. I need to identify and stick to **my gifts**, **and** not presume that I have **all the gifts**.
- J. Is it possible that doing something is **good**, **but** doing something else can be **better?**  
(for themselves personally)
1. Jesus said, **Tithing** is **good**, **justice and mercy and faith** are **weightier**.
  2. Mt.23:23 *Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you **tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others.***
  3. *Praying, teaching, preaching* is better...for us, they said!
- K. I love how the **leadership** summoned **the whole church** for help; **not the church** summoning the **leadership** to do it.
1. They **showed leadership** by coming up with **the solution**.
  2. They also seem to recognize their gift was **spiritual leadership & not necessarily administrative matters**.
- L. **Slide7a COMMISSION OF CARE** (3,4)
- M. **The tables** (*trapazas*) - 4 different uses for this Greek word: **1)** eating table.  
**2)** food placed on a table. **3)** banquet table, in a hall. **4)** money table, *\$ changer*.
1. So they **weren't bussing tables**, they were helping with **benevolence**.
  2. This was **a table** used where **food & funds** were being administered.
- N. Though they are not called **deacons** here, they seem to be the **prototype** of this office later revealed by Paul. [**elders/sp needs & deacons practical needs**]
- O. (3) I like the balance of who they were looking for...**men both spiritual minded & practical minded**. [**full of the Spirit & wisdom & good reputation**]
1. **Why full of the Holy Spirit?** So **He** could **illuminate** their natural wisdom, **help** to control their feelings, **direct** their wills **& possess** every faculty.
  2. **What's wisdom?** *Knowledge* rightly applied.

3. **Why is wisdom necessary?** They had to distinguish between cases. Administer charity. Use money with impartiality & integrity. They couldn't be weak, nor prejudiced. [pray for AL & our benevolence team]
- P. Q: Would any of these hold **you** back from serving? How is your *reputation*? Would your friends consider **you** *full of the HS*? Do you *rightly apply knowledge* in your life?
- Q. (4) Were the Apostles *too good* for this work? Were they saying, *We don't do tables!*
1. There is no ministry that is **unimportant** for a **Christlike servant**.
  2. For Jesus said, **I am among you as the One who serves**. Lk.22:27
- R. In serving tables, the men released the apostles for **their** ministry of **Prayer/Word**.
1. People *filled with the Spirit* see **no small jobs or big places**. They see only **their Master & the opportunity to glorify Jesus**.
  2. **Slide7b** No ministry is **less** of a ministry than another...*just different*.
- S. We are not saved **by** service, **but** are saved **for** service.
1. **Slide7c** One church in China welcomed new believers by saying, Jesus now has a **new pair of eyes** to see with, **new ears** to listen with, **new hands** to help with & a **new heart** to love others with.<sup>1</sup>
- T. **Slide7d Principle:** God calls **all** His people to ministry. God calls **different** people to **different** ministries. Don't be distracted from His priorities for **your** life.
- U. **Slide8a CAREFUL CHOOSING** (5,6)
- V. You know who blesses me here? *The Hebrew Jews*. Why? *Their beautiful faith move*
1. Faith move? **Yep**, all 7 guys have a **Greek name**.
  2. To advert further trouble they basically say, *we fully trust these 7 Greek speaking Jewish believers*.
    - a) **Stephen** is named 1<sup>st</sup>. He becomes the primary character in ch.7.
    - b) **Philip** becomes a major figure in the early church. (& ch.8)
    - c) **Nicolas** is none other than *St. Nicolas* (just kiddin).
      - (1) He was **not** born an ethnic Jew. He was born a **Gentile** & later chose to become a Jew. **A Jew by adoption, not by birth**.

d) **Prochorus** later becomes a **bishop**, according to history.

e) **The other 3** – play no further role *in Acts*. [but **Timon** later became a star in **Lion King** w/his sidekick *Pumba*]

W. Right from the beginning the Apostles try to help the church towards being *self-governing; self-sufficient; & self-propagating*.

X. **So the Church** identified them & brought them to the Apostles.

Y. The Apostles *confirmed* the churches decision by **praying & laying hands** on the 7.

1. *The laying on of the hands*, was like the passing of the **anointing**, the passing of the **torch**, *from the orig 12, to these newly raised up leaders*.

Z. The 7 did not become leaders as a result of an **election**; they had obviously *already emerged* as leaders.

1. **Slide8b** **We** don't create leaders in the church by **choosing** them; **God** has already *created, chosen, & gifted them*. We simply **recognize** what God has done in them.

AA. **Slide9a CONFLICT RESOLVED** (7)

BB. **Conflict resolved by:** leadership **acting**, the church **helping &** these 7 men **servicing**.

CC. **The Results:** *Word increased - disciples multiplied - priests became followers*.

1. Everyone must find & fulfill **their** niche. Eph.4:16 **He** (*Christ who is the head of the body*) **makes the whole body fit together perfectly. As each part does its own special work, it helps the other parts grow, so that the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.**

DD. **A great many of the priests** - the gospel message begins to win over **even religious leaders**, despite ongoing opposition by the local Jewish religious leadership.

EE. **Slide9b** Church problems are **inevitable**. Church problems are **not invincible**. Church problems should be **handled by love...**

1. by setting aside **differences**, seeking the **good of all**, realizing the need for each other, & by honoring **diversities of gifts & division of work**.

#### IV. **Slide10 STEPHEN** (8-15)

- A. (8) From **servicing tables** to **doing miracles** – the Lord honors being faithful in the *little* things.
- B. **Slide11a DEBATING & HATING** (9-14)
- C. (9) **Synagogue of the Freedmen** - Men who belonged to a *Greek-speaking synagogue*, perhaps founded by or attended by freed slaves (from captivity/dispersion).
- D. (10) His message was so **reasonable** & he could **defend** it so well, that he **won** all the arguments. *This will make more sense when you hear his argument for His Messiah (ch.7).*
- E. **Slide11b** As we see in our politics...*when arguments fail, mud becomes an excellent substitute.* They thought if you can't **beat em...Lie**.
1. They arrested him on trumped-up charges & hired false witnesses *(like Jesus)*
- F. (13) **Blasphemous words against the law** – The council was **behind the times** as... *the law had been nailed to the cross.*
- G. **Slide11c THE MEEKNESS OF STEPHEN** (15)
- H. (15) Interesting, they said **Stephen** was opposing Moses, *but here he had a shining face just like Moses.* Ex.34
1. Is this what your face looks like when someone's **lying** about you?
  2. Here's the true sign of **God's presence**.
- I. **Slide12a Shine, Stephen...Shine.**
1. **But what does a face of an angel look like?** [not fat pink winged baby, w/a bow-n-arrow]
    - a) Scripture shows **an angelic face** as something to be *feared*.
    - b) The angel who appeared to **Manoah** was said to of been, *very awesome/terrible*
    - c) When **Moses** face shone they were *afraid to come near him*. Ex.34:35
    - d) The **angel** that appeared at the tomb was explained, *like lightning*.
    - e) Maybe we can picture Stephen's face as expressing *both strength & sweetness*
  2. **Slide12b** Phil.2:15 *Live clean, innocent lives as children of God, shining like bright lights in a world full of crooked and perverse people.*
- J. Next Sunday, **Mother's Day** - special message from 1 vs in Acts.7.