

GROWTHguide

FOR THE WEEK OF JULY 24, 2016

Waiting on Tables



THIS WEEK'S SCRIPTURES

Luke 14:16-23, Acts 6:1-10, Luke 14:12-14, Malachi 3:5, Galatians 3:27-29, John 13:1-17

REFLECTION AND STUDY

DAY 1: Read Acts 6:1-10

The first-century church grew rapidly in its early years, so rapidly that there weren't enough apostles to do everything that was needed. In today's scripture, we see that there was a problem where vulnerable widows were being neglected because the apostles were stretched too thin. Disunity and cultural division were threatening the church, so the decision was made to create a loose division of labor. A few worthy disciples were chosen to focus their attentions on serving, while the apostles would focus their attention on prayer and the Word. The chosen disciples were affirmed by the apostles who laid hands on them and prayed over them. As we can see from scripture, separating these responsibilities among the leaders of the early church helped quiet divisions and problems so that the gospel could be spread.

We will explore our contemporary division of labor in the following days but today, give thanks to God for his leadership to the early church. Also, pray that God would lead you to your role in the modern church, that God would use your spiritual gifts and graces to help serve and share the truth of the gospel.

DAY 2

How does the first-century church structure relate to the modern church? We have two types of clergy, Elders and Deacons. The ministry of an Elder is to preach the Word, to lead services, to preside over the sacraments, and to keep order within the church. In the United Methodist Church, this is accomplished through Bishops, District Superintendents, Senior Pastors and Pastors. The Deacon is called to preach the Word, to lead services, and to ensure compassion and justice in the church and community. As you may have noticed, the Deacon and Elder overlap on preaching the Word and leading services, but they have a different focus, with the Elder focusing more internally within the church while the Deacon's focus is more outwardly toward the community. This separation of labor helps to ensure that the needs of the church, both spiritual and physical, are met.

Give thanks to God for the deacons and deaconesses that God has called to serve his Church. Pray for their role in the church, that God would enable them to fulfill their calling and do it well. Ask God to show you what you can do to assist our Deacon, Pastor Pam, in fulfilling her ministry.

DAY 3

As we read yesterday, the Clergy's job in the church is to care for the believers entrusted to them, to equip them for ministry to the world, and to lead the congregation to serve. What role do we have as Laity? The congregation is to serve within the church, to help the stranger in need, to help in the local community and the world. No one person can do it all, but we are all one in Christ. This is why we must all work together for God's purpose, each taking on a portion of the necessary work. There are so many ways that God can use our spiritual gifts and graces in the church and in the community.

Some of the things laity can do within the church include:

- Help teach the Word by leading Bible studies, Sunday school classes, or Source Groups.
- Taking part in order of the church through our church leadership teams
- Helping with church services by serving communion, greeting, ushering, cleaning up or setting up the sanctuary, helping with live streaming or technical arts, etc.

Are you involved in these or any other ministries within the church? Have you limited how God can use you by not serving in different areas of the church?

Outside the church, we have the opportunity to do ministry in the home, in missions and outreach, in the workplace, in the government, in our neighborhoods, and in the whole world as missionaries.

- Where are you ministering outside the church?
- Do you take the role of Laity seriously and help to feed God's sheep?

God can do amazing things through willing servants. **Pray and ask God to use you. Obtain a volunteer sheet from the church office or the Connection Center and pray over it, asking God to show you which areas he wants you to serve.** God uses our service to grow our faith.

DAY 4: Read Luke 14:12-14 and Malachi 3:5

- **Read the scripture from Luke and think over this question:** Why are Deacons called to "wait on tables" for "the poor, the crippled, the lame, [and] the blind?"
- **Now, read the scripture from Malachi and consider this question:** What is consistent with all the people whom the Lord will be "quick to testify against?"

God's character and commands are consistent in the Old and New Testament. Since the Bible reveals that God is love, we know that he cares for the poor and the sick. As His people, we are called to follow His example and care for the vulnerable, the lost, the excluded, and for the sinner. What are you doing to obey this command from God?

Pray and ask God to equip you to care for the lost, the poor, and the sick.

DAY 5

Read Galatians 3:27-29 and John 13:1-17. The Deacon is here to serve the church and is an example of how to serve, just like Jesus demonstrated. Sometimes people can view "washing feet" or "waiting on tables" as beneath them, but Jesus did these acts of service to show us that we too are called to serve. We, as men and women of the church, have a responsibility to help Deacons and Elders in ministry.

It is important to always be transparent with God and to evaluate ourselves in light of scripture. **Pray and ask God to reveal if you are lacking in any area of your service to Him and His ministry. Pray for the Back to School Jubilee. We are inviting people who are poor and are sometimes hungry. They are the newcomers, the strangers, and the needy that we are called to serve.**

DAY 6

Today, let the lyrics to this Casting Crowns song be your prayer and remember that these are the people Jesus served, whom we are called to serve too:

Jesus, friend of sinners the one who's writing in the sand, made the righteous turn away and the stones fall from their hands. Help us to remember we are all the least of these, let the memory of your mercy bring your people to their knees. Nobody knows what we're for only what we're against when we judge the wounded.

What if we put down our signs, crossed over the lines and loved like you did? You love every lost cause, you reach for the outcast, for the leper and the lame they're the reason that you came. Lord, I was that lost cause, and I was the outcast, but you died for sinners just like me, a grateful leper at your feet.

DAY 7

Today is your "Sabbath" and a time for reflection. How has God been speaking to you over the week? Use what the Lord has said to you to remold and reshape your life. If you are having trouble hearing God's voice, slow down or even stop what you are doing so that the busyness of life's demands do not squelch the whispers of God's language of love upon your heart.