

LESSON PLAN

Scripture Texts:

Acts 6:1-15

1 Timothy 3:8-13

Session Theme:

Integrity

a. Welcome to Class

Teachers should arrive in the classroom well in advance of class. Welcome students as they enter, and inquire about their week. Pass out name tags and record attendance on a classroom chart.

b. Icebreaker: Scrambled Words

On the board, write the following word, "VERSE." Give everyone a piece of paper and a pencil. Ask kids to look at this word and see if they can use the same letters to make a different word. After a few minutes, invite them to share the words they created. Then, write the word, "SERVE" on the board. Did anyone guess it?

What does it mean to serve others? (Invite volunteers to answer.) Is serving as important as leading? (Call on a volunteer) In today's Bible story, there were leaders, but not enough servers, and things were getting all scrambled. How did the early Christians solve this problem? Let's begin our lesson and find out!

c. Opening Prayer

Gracious Lord God, we want to live good lives that are pleasing to you. Give us servants' hearts. Open our eyes to the needs around us, and help us to lead and to do for others. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

d. SEED Video or Song (Optional)

The teacher may introduce the lesson by playing the video clip from the SEED website. This time may also include an opening song or two, using a commercial Sunday School music CD.

Song suggestions for this lesson:

- *"Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service" (hymn)*
- *"Kumbayah" (African-American hymn)*

e. Brief Bible Background

Read together the introduction to the lessons for the day, and briefly summarize the context and setting:

- Today's Lesson is from the New Testament
- Scripture Section: Service

The believers of the early Church cared for each other and took care of one another's needs. The apostles chose deacons to help serve the physical and spiritual needs of the growing group of believers.

f. Communicate the Bible Story

Always keep in mind that the main purpose of Sunday School is to put people in contact with Bible stories. Use a version that is appropriate to the age level.

Upper Elementary: Read the Bible Story and Rhyme

Youth/Adults: Read the Scripture text from the Bible

For Upper and Lower Elementary, use the Storyteller questions to help students think about details of the story.

g. Complete the Worksheet(s)

Continue with the handout sheets appropriate to the age level of the students in class:

Upper Elementary: Worksheet and Drama

Youth: Bible Study (Maps, Timelines, Questions)

Adult: Bible Study Sheet (Introduction and Discussion)

h. Craft and Activity Time

If there is time after covering the Bible story, the class may move to craft and activity time, described on the following page. (Do not let the activity time supersede the actual time spent on the Scripture lesson.)

i. Summarize and Review

Before ending class, briefly summarize the day's lesson one last time. If you have not already done so, introduce the Theme Word for the week, providing the definition, and asking how the lesson connects to that theme.

Youth/Adult: Discuss "Reflection for the Week Ahead"

j. Closing Prayer

Close the session in prayer before dismissal:

Upper Elementary: Practice a prayer from memory (e.g., the Lord's Prayer, Luther's Morning Prayer, etc.)

Youth/Adult: Use the ADTRC Prayer format

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Bible Study Leader's Guide

The following is a discussion and answer guide for the Youth and Adult Bible Study sheets. For all leaders, it can serve to provide some background on the Bible lesson.

Discuss: Acts 6:1-15

1. Why were the Hellenists (Greek-speaking Jews) complaining about the Hebrews (native Jews)? Did they have a good reason for being upset?

   The Hellenists felt their widows weren't getting enough food and other necessities as part of the regular distribution. This doesn't necessarily suggest that anyone was deliberately being mean or hurtful. They were simply making others aware that there were some people who were being forgotten. They wanted to be sure that everyone's needs were being taken care of.

2. Why did the believers decide to choose seven additional leaders for the church? What were the original disciples focusing on? Why are both these tasks important?

   As the number of believers kept growing, there was more and more that needed to be done. The original Twelve had been commissioned as apostles, sent out to tell others the message of Jesus. They knew that they could not neglect the duty of preaching and teaching, but at the same time, they wanted to make sure that everyone was receiving food. Therefore, it was wise to choose others to serve. In this way, the church could serve both the spiritual *and* the physical needs of the people.

3. What were the names of the people chosen for this new responsibility? What did the disciples do to set these seven leaders apart?

   Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus were chosen to serve. The disciples prayed and laid hands on them, asking for God to help them in their task. This was a way that the whole group could show their support and encouragement, while at the same time acknowledging that it is only by the power of the Holy Spirit that we are able to carry out the ministry Jesus has given us.

4. Why do we remember Stephen in particular from this list of men? What about him was so remarkable? Do you know what eventually happened to him?

   Stephen was known as a person of faith, filled with the Holy Spirit. People listened to him, which upset some synagogue leaders. After being arrested, Stephen ended up dying for his faith as the first Christian martyr, being stoned to death by the crowds. (You can read the rest of this story by continuing on in Acts, chapters 6 and 7.)

5. If we do good things for others in our life, does this mean that everyone will like us? Why would we strive to do what is good and right, even when we are not appreciated or recognized by the world?

   This story is a good illustration of the fact that doing good for others does not necessarily mean they will do good to us in return. But we do it anyway, because it is the right thing to do, and it is what we are called to do by God.

   Sometimes, it is the people we help the most that turn against us (just as it was for Jesus.) But we don't do good because of what we expect to get in return; we do good to serve God.

6. The Greek word "deacon" means "servant." Why do you think the disciples considered service to others to be such an important part of faith? How did Jesus exemplify for us the role of a servant?

   In some churches, serving as a deacon is a special job or designation within a congregation. But God calls all of us to be servants of one another — whether we have a special title or not.

   Jesus said: "Whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:26b-28).

7. Read 1 Timothy 3:8-13, where Paul describes the qualities that should be expected from a servant of God. Why is it important that our outward behavior reflects our inward faith?

   We serve as a good example to others by the way we act, helping others to live as better people. This is especially true of those in leadership positions. But on a more basic level, our words and actions should match what we claim to believe. Those that say one thing but do another are hypocrites. They give the impression that they do not really believe, but are just fakers, not to be trusted.

8. What are some things you do because you are a servant of God? Are these things you would do if you were *not* a person of faith? Why or why not?

   Answers will vary. If we go about our tasks with a willing heart and look for the larger purpose in what we do, we can serve God as we work. The good we do for others flows from the faith inside of us — as Jesus said: "a good tree produces good fruit" (Matthew 7:15-20).

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Classroom Craft and Activity Page

Listed below are in-class activities and craft projects related to the theme for the day. Choose one of the following based on the age and capabilities of the students. (Never let the activity or craft time take precedence over the biblical story.)

Activity 1: Kids' Care Bags Project

Materials Needed:

- Small plastic baggies
- Small treats (fruit snacks, candies, etc.)
- Index cards
- Markers
- Stapler



Instructions:

Discussion: Talk to kids about today's Bible story. One of the reasons deacons were chosen to serve was that widows were being forgotten and neglected in the daily distribution of food.

Explain that in the early church, deacons were needed to help with a whole host of practical things. They might have visited the sick, helped with worship, and distributed communion bread and wine, among other tasks. Many churches have people who do the work of deacons, even today. Not only do they still help with worship and bring communion to the homebound, but they may also serve in food pantries, teach classes, or offer free meals to their local communities. Ask kids if any of them have ever helped out with projects like this. While your class may not have the time to coordinate a large effort like preparing a community meal, you can still do a smaller, symbolic act of service for others. The following project will remind students of how the deacons passed out food as they make and pass out little food packages themselves.

Project: Invite kids to take one small plastic baggie for each member of their immediate family. (If you have enough supplies, they can also make a snack bag for themselves.) Have everyone fill each of their baggies with the little snacks. When they have done this, give them one index card per baggie, along with a handful of markers. Invite them to fold the card in half, the long way. On one side of the fold, write, "God cares for you ..." On the other side, write, "... and I do, too!" Decorate around the index card. Seal the baggie shut. Then, place the index card over the top of the baggie, with the fold along the top of the bag. Staple in place, as shown in the illustration. In sharing these with others, kids can learn of the joy of giving and serving!

Activity 2: Helping Hands Picture

Materials Needed:

- Colored paper (two different colors, plus a half sheet of red or pink paper)
- Pencils
- Scissors
- Glue
- Markers
- Glitter glue



Instructions:

Give each student two pieces of construction paper in contrasting colors, a pencil, and a pair of scissors. Make sure they also have access to glue, markers, and glitter glue.

Invite kids to trace around each of their hands on one sheet of paper. Cut out both hand shapes.

Next, have them place the hand shapes on the background piece of paper. Make sure both pieces will fit. If they are too large, have kids trim them down a bit. Glue these in place.

Give everyone a piece of red or pink scrap paper and invite them to draw and cut out two small hearts. These should be no bigger than the palms of each hand. Glue the hearts in the center of each hand.

Invite kids to write, "Love God" on the top of the picture (or inside the first heart). On the bottom of the picture, (or inside the second heart) have them write, "Love your neighbor." Using other colors, kids can write a variety of ways to serve in open areas of the picture. Finally, invite kids to decorate around the rest of the background with swirls or dots in marker or glitter glue.

We use our hands in almost all we do. In today's Bible story, hands were used to pray over deacons and ask God's blessing. They were also used in service, distributing communion to widows and feeding the poor. Let this picture remind you to use your hands, and all that God gave you, to do good!

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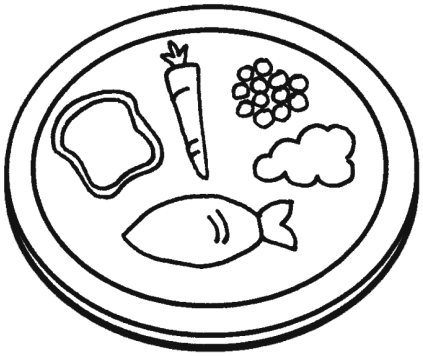
Worksheet Answer Key

Shown below are the answers and solution to the children's worksheet for this week's lesson:

Each plate should look like this:



Math at Mealtime:

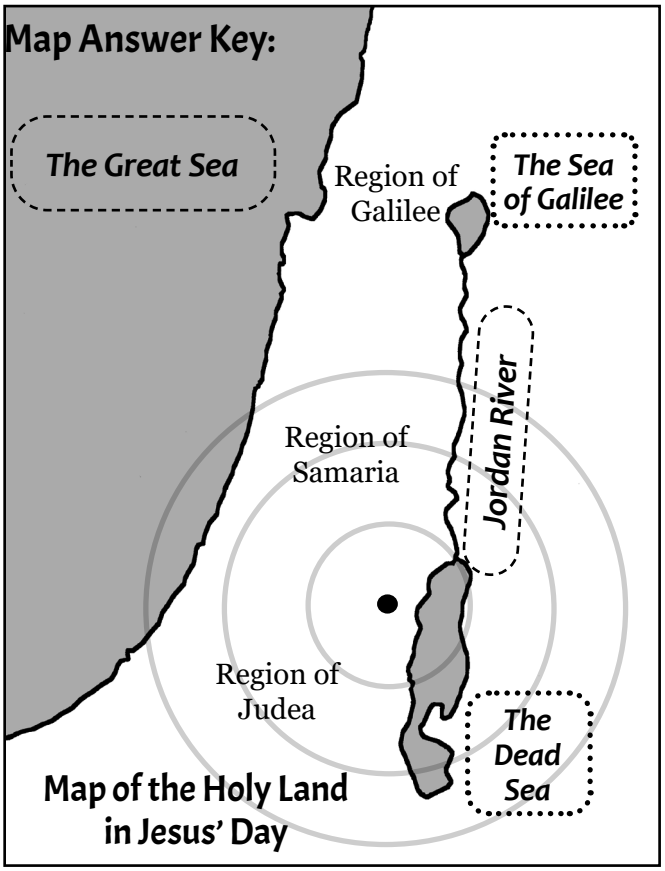
How many plates of food do you see? **8**

How many different items of food do you see on the fullest plate? **5**

Add both of those numbers together to find the sum: **13**

Now subtract 6 from the last number, and you get: **7**

(That's how many people were chosen to be deacons in the early church!)



Vocabulary Word for the Week

Teachers may want to introduce the theme word for the week to help expand students' biblical vocabulary.

Integrity

an honest, moral, decent way of being

People chosen to serve the church are expected to have integrity. They need to be fair, honest, and responsible.

Reflection for the Week Ahead

Have you ever been asked to set the table? How about clear the table, or wash and put away dishes? Most kids (and many adults!) don't like to do tasks like these. After all, if we're honest, many of us would rather be doing something more "fun" or seemingly "important" than repetitive chores.



In today's Bible story, deacons were chosen to serve the greater Christian community. Have you ever thought about what types of jobs those deacons might have done? These were not necessarily the preachers and traveling evangelists; deacons were often the people doing the background work. Quite possibly, setting and clearing tables were among their tasks, as well as distributing communion and other quiet (but equally valuable) jobs.

Talk to each other about these questions:

What does it mean to serve?

How do you think the deacons felt about their work?

What might have made these tasks meaningful? How can we ourselves see the meaning in everyday chores?

The Practice of Prayer

Write a prayer giving thanks for the gifts God has given you and your family. Ask the Lord to help you trust in him so you might be more generous and not worry about money or possessions.

Practice using the ADTRC Prayer Form: Address, Description, Thanks, Request, Conclusion.\

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