



# LIFE GROUP STUDY GUIDE

JANUARY–MARCH 2016

## WEEK 2

FULFILLING CALLINGS

*This study guide should be used the week following the sermon it supplements.*

**MAIN TEXT:** Acts 6:1-15

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. 2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. 3 Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”

5 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

7 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith.

8 Now Stephen, a man full of God’s grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. 9 Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)—Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia—who began to argue with Stephen. 10 But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

11 Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, “We have heard Stephen speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.”

12 So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. 13 They produced false witnesses, who testified, “This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law.

14 For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us.” ...contd.

### GETTING STARTED

Invite each person in your group to share what they think their main gifts are (noting Ephesians 4:7 and 1 Corinthians 12:7).

### DIGGING DEEPER

1. What advice can you offer each other about finding your personal calling? Hint: what do you feel *prompted* to do? Experience *pleasure* in doing? Experience *power* in doing? Receive *praise* for doing? Feel *passionate* about?
2. What was distracting the Apostles from fulfilling their calling? What can divert us from fulfilling ours?
3. What are the dangers and consequences of being distracted from what you’re primarily called to do, or continuing to operate in areas outside of your gifting? Hint: the Apostles themselves were also being complained against.
4. Why is it significant that both the work of the Twelve and the work of the Seven are called *diakonia* (serving ministries) in the original Greek (the *ministry* of the word and the *ministry* of the table, which can also be translated handling finances, see Acts 4:32-37)?
5. What are the dangers of thinking one form of ministry is superior to another (see 1 Corinthians 12:12-26)? How can we prevent ourselves from falling into this trap?
6. What are the most important qualities that qualify for service to look for in ourselves and others (verse 5)? How can we cultivate these?
7. What was the impact of getting the right people serving in the right roles (verse 7)? Could this be the much sought after secret to church growth (see Ephesians 4:14-16)? How encouraging is this?!
8. In light of Stephen’s example, does being given one role necessarily restrict a person from serving in others? What can this teach us about serving in different seasons and circumstances of life?

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15 All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

## COMING UP

Alpha Course | 11 Jan-14 Mar

Beta Course | 11 Jan-22 Feb

Prayer Meeting | 17 Feb

9. How does God strengthen and support Stephen in the face of persecution (see also Exodus 34:29-35)? How should this encourage us when we face opposition for sharing the gospel?

## NEXT STEPS

1. If the church grows by every person playing their part, what will your part be at Westminster Chapel? What contribution would you like to make to our mission: *bringing the kingdom of God to the heart of the nation*?

2. Review your gifts and calling. Complete a spiritual gifts survey (available online). Invite others, church leaders and friends, to tell you what they think your gifts are and where you'd serve most effectively. Ask yourself whether you've become distracted from the main thing. Consider the possibility that God is calling you into a different season of ministry. Is a change needed?

3. Discuss different roles people could play in your Life Group that would suit them, release them to grow and strengthen your group. Could someone be put in charge of organising prayer or an outreach event, for example?

4. Commit to memorising the following verse this week:

*"So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith."* (Acts 6:7)

## PRAYER

- Thank God for his generosity for the gifts he has given you, your leaders and the wider church body.
- Ask God for wisdom to know how best you, and every member of your Life Group and church, can serve in the right role, so that the word of God will spread and the number of disciples increase rapidly at Westminster Chapel.
- Pray for help for yourself and others not to get distracted or drift of course from the calling God has given.
- Pray for strength for yourself and other Christians all over the world facing opposition for sharing their faith.
- Pray for the gospel fruitfulness of courses and events coming up.