

Seven Helpers Are Chosen

Overview

Materials You'll Need

- light snack foods (i.e. fresh fruit, vegetables and dip, chips, candy)



Scriptures

Acts 6:1-7

Bible Truth Objective(s)

Jesus wants His followers to show love by helping others

Behavioral Objective(s)

To identify ways we can help others in need

Memory Verse

"If you love Me, keep My commandments."
(Jn 14:15)



Bible Knowledge

Widows and the Early Church

Acts 6:1-7 describes how the early Christian community handled disputes and responsibilities. The Hellenists (Jewish believers who spoke Greek, grew up outside the land of Israel, and used the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament) complained against the Hebrews (Palestinian Jews who spoke Aramaic and used the Hebrew Old Testament). They claimed that their widows were not being looked after properly in the daily distribution. In Jewish law, a woman did not receive any inheritance. She was dependent on her husband or relatives. So a widow was greatly disadvantaged during that time.

Jesus also condemned the teachers of the law for taking advantage of the widows (Mk 12:40). James described looking after widows and orphans as "pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father" (Jas 1:27).

1 Timothy lists the requirements necessary for widows to receive help from the church. They were to be over sixty years old, known for good deeds,

and to have been faithful to their husbands (see 1 Tim 5:9, 10). Obviously, this task was a priority to the early church.

The dispute over unfair distribution did not linger on indefinitely. The leaders of the community gathered the entire group together to consider the complaints and to take fair action to settle them. The solution involved a sharing of jobs. In that way, the apostles could continue to spread God's word while certain helpers took charge of other tasks.

The apostles chose seven men to serve as deacons. These men were to be responsible for the physical needs of the church while the apostles continued to preach the good news.

The administrative task of the deacons were not taken lightly. Notice the requirements for the men who were to handle the feeding program: (1) good reputation, (2) full of the Holy Spirit, and (3) full of wisdom.

While the seven helpers (Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas) were commissioned to oversee the distribution to those in need, two of them, Stephen and Philip, were also described as dynamic preachers.



Understanding Your Students

Everyone has experienced a feeling of loneliness at times. Even the students in your classroom have felt this at least once in their lives. There may be students who are without siblings, or those who are naturally too shy to interact with the others. Sometimes, children can feel alone on the first day of school. When good friends have to move, children can also experience anxiety and loneliness. These experiences can be discussed in the classroom.

In order for your students to realize the importance of extending their love to those who are lonely, they will need to know what it means to be lonely, how it feels to be lonely, and when people can feel

especially lonely. Have your students explain situations when they felt lonely, and let them tell each other how it felt. Afterwards, introduce a brand new addition to the classroom (a teddy bear or other stuffed animal). Explain that this new student has just come to our church and so far, he hasn't met friends yet. Ask your students to share how they think he might be feeling. After discussing how this new "student" might be feeling, ask for suggestions on how to help him feel less lonely. List their responses on the board. Then review the various ways the students can help people when they are lonely. This is a very important topic, especially if there are certain students who are being ignored in the class for various reasons. Even kindergartners can form cliques. It is vital to talk about including everybody and showing love to all of God's people.



Vocabulary

Apostles

the twelve followers Jesus chose to be His helpers while He was on earth

Preach

to tell others about Jesus and His salvation

Deacon

a person who looks after the needs of the church



Before You Teach

As the early church grew, there was more work involved in looking after the members. It came to a point where the apostles felt divided. They wanted to take care of the believers, but they also wanted to continue to preach the gospel. In the end, they decided to put seven people in charge of the administrative tasks of the church. That way they could concentrate on spreading the good news and not have to worry about the day to day needs of the members.

The seven who were chosen were not just some random believers. They had to meet strict requirements. "Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business" (Acts 6:3). Obviously, the apostles understood that this was a very important job. There were three criteria the appointed men had to

meet: to have a good reputation, to be full of the Holy Spirit, and to have wisdom. Why did the apostles single these out?

Good reputation comes from one's actions and speech. Although these are outward appearances, they stem from within. Usually our thoughts dictate what we do as well as the words that come out of our mouths. If we are pure and of good character, we will naturally do what pleases God. This is critical for leaders of the church. They are the ones who set the example.

The appointed men also had to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. Both of these go hand-in-hand. In order to effectively lead the church, the deacons had to have the abidance of God. They needed wisdom from above, in light of the conflicts the early church faced from within. To help the church grow, it was vital to maintain peace and harmony. It is the same for us today. As holy workers we need to be full of God's spirit so that we may know His will. Let us continue to pray for wisdom from above.



Bible Story

Teacher's Helpers

Depending on the size of the class, assign a different task for each student to do before the lesson starts (e.g. clear all the tables, arrange the chairs, pick up any garbage, put away the colored pencils or crayons, etc.). Give the students about three minutes to complete their task. Then ask them to sit in their chairs to begin the lesson.

Good morning How are you today? You have been wonderful helpers today. Look around you: our classroom is neat and tidy And that is because every one of you helped to make this room a beautiful and clean one. Thank you all for doing this. You are all great helpers. Today we are going to learn about some very special helpers in the Bible.

Jesus' Apostles

In our last lesson, we learned that more and more people came to believe in Christ. Do you remember when Jesus was living in the world? He chose some very special people called disciples or apostles to help Him preach the gospel. How many apostles did Jesus choose? He chose twelve. After Jesus resurrected and was taken up to heaven, these twelve apostles continued to preach to others about Jesus. They traveled to many places helping people in need and telling them about the love of Jesus. Wherever they went, many people listened to the apostles and believed in Jesus.

Day by day there were more and more believers. They got baptized and learned the word of God with other believers. It was like a big and happy family. This was how the church grew. We also learned that the members shared what they had with each other so that everyone had food to eat and clothes to wear. The believers showed a lot of love.

A Problem in the Church

The church continued to grow. More and more people came to believe. There were many different kinds of people. Some members were younger, some were older, some were men, and some were women. There were also people who spoke in different languages; some spoke in a language called Aramaic and some spoke Greek. It is just like our church

today. Some speak Mandarin, some speak Cantonese, some speak English, some speak Korean, some speak French, and some speak African dialects (languages). The church during the time of the apostles had all kinds of different people. The Bible also mentions a special group of people called widows. A widow is a woman whose husband has died. During that time, if a woman lost her husband, she would need other people's help in order to have enough food and clothes.

Remember we talked about how the believers shared everything at that time? They were happy because they loved one another, and they shared everything with one another. They were joyful because they had love for God and also love for others. But now because there were more and more people in the church, and they spoke in different languages, it became really difficult to share and it was hard to make sure everyone was taken care of.

After a while, some believers went to the apostles and said, "Some of our widows are hungry. They need food and clothes and a place to sleep. When you share the food and clothes with others, you have been missing the widows."

These members were worried because they knew that the widows needed special care, but now they had been forgotten.

Choosing Seven Helpers

When the apostles heard this, they called everyone together.

"We are very busy preaching and telling others about God's love. It would be wrong for us to spend all our time making sure everyone has food and other things. Then no one would be spreading the good news," they said. "So we need helpers. Choose among yourselves seven helpers. They must be men of good reputation, and be filled with God's Spirit and wisdom. They can take care of the sharing in the church and make sure that everyone is fed and clothed. Then we can use all our time praying, teaching, and preaching."

The apostles knew about the problem. They did not want anyone to be forgotten in the church. But they were so busy telling others about Jesus that they did not have time to take care of the church. So they came up with an idea. They wanted to pick seven good helpers to take care of the church.

When everyone heard this, they thought this

was a wonderful idea. These helpers would make sure that no one would miss out on the food or clothes. So the believers did just as the apostles told them. They chose seven special people to be the helpers. They had good reputations, which meant everyone who knew them said they did what was good. These people were also filled with the Holy Spirit. They had very good faith, and were filled with wisdom so that they could make good decisions for the church. Their names were Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas (write the names on the board to help the students with the pronunciation).

The Seven Helpers Have a New Job

After the believers chose the seven helpers, they brought the seven of them to the apostles. They prayed together, and the apostles laid hands on them to pray for them and to ask God to help them so that they could do their job well. Then the seven helpers started their job and made sure everyone had enough food and clothes. They were there to help all the believers. They were not bossy or

better than the other believers. They were there to serve, just as Jesus taught us. So now no one would miss out in the sharing and everyone was happy again.

Because of their help, the apostles continued to pray, teach, and preach to others. Then more and more people heard about Jesus and became believers too; the church grew very quickly and God worked with them.

We Can Be Helpers Too

The seven helpers had an important job. They helped in the church so that the apostles could continue to preach to others. Today, we call these helpers deacons. But grown-ups aren't the only ones who can help in the church. We can all be helpers too. Today we all helped to clean up our classroom. We are good helpers. It is important to keep God's house clean and tidy. What other things can we do to be good helpers at church and at home? (Allow students to answer.) Let's remember to be good helpers wherever we are.



Check For Understanding

1. **Who were the apostles?** (They were the twelve people Jesus picked to help Him when He was on earth.)
2. **Who missed out on food and clothes when the believers were sharing?** (The widows.)
3. **What did the apostles do to solve this problem?** (They asked the believers to choose seven helpers to make sure everyone had enough food and clothes.)

4. **What was so special about these seven people?** (They were filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom, and had good reputations.)
5. **While the seven helpers made sure everyone had whatever they needed, what did the apostles do?** (They continued to pray, teach, and preach to others about Jesus.)
6. **What happened when the helpers and the apostles all did their jobs?** (More people heard about Jesus, became believers, and the church grew quickly.)



Life Application Story

Helpers of God

On one bright, sunny day, Mrs. Laurie took her

kindergarten class to a picnic at a park near her house. Everyone was very excited, including Mrs. Laurie herself.

Everyone arrived on time, and a lot of parents came with the students, so there was a large group

of people. When Mrs. Laurie saw that there were so many people, she thought of a way to make sure everyone was taken care of.

"Students," Mrs. Laurie said loudly, "because there are so many of us, we are going to divide into teams; each team will have a team captain, and the team captain will help me make sure everyone is taken care of."

Even before Mrs. Laurie finished what she was saying, many students already raised their hands because they wanted to be team captains.

"Pick me " Juan yelled.

"Mrs. Laurie, please pick me " Susie raised her hand high in the air.

"Oh, pick me please, Mrs. Laurie " John pleaded.

Mrs. Laurie was happy to see how eager everyone was to help out.

"Hands down please " said Mrs. Laurie. "I know you all want to be good helpers, but being a team captain is hard work. For example, a team captain has to know what to do when something happens. Do you know what to do if someone has a fall? Or if someone is missing?" asked Mrs. Laurie.

"Not really..." the students answered in unison.

"Do we want to pick people who can tell us where to go and what to do when we are in trouble?" Mrs. Laurie asked.

"Yes," everyone answered.

Mrs. Laurie smiled and began to pick some of the adults as team captains while the children waited quietly.

After they were divided into teams, they played many games together. The team captains made sure everyone was playing and having a good time. All the students were running, jumping, and laughing. Each team won a prize at the end of the morning. When it was time for lunch, the team captains made sure their team members were sitting together, and had enough food to share. They all enjoyed a beau-

tiful Sunday morning together.

As the picnic came to an end, Mrs. Laurie called all the students and their families together again.

"Did you all have a good time?" Mrs. Laurie asked.

"Yes " the students answered together, all of them with big smiles on their faces.

"We thank God for protecting and guiding us through this morning's activities, so that we all had a wonderful time. And we also need to thank our team captains for taking good care of us, for making sure that no one was hurt or lost, and that everyone had enough food to eat. Let's all give them a big 'thank you.'"

"Thank you team captains " the students called out together.

"We can all learn from our team captains and be good helpers," said Mrs. Laurie.

"I thought we were not big enough to be team captains," said John.

"You may not be old enough to be a team captain today, but you are old enough to be a good helper now. Look around the picnic tables. What do you see?" asked Mrs. Laurie.

"Trash " shouted Susie.

"Yes. So now is our time to be good helpers by cleaning up our garbage. Can we do that?" asked Mrs. Laurie.

"Yes. We can be good helpers " shouted the students.

All of them got to work with their teams and cleaned up the picnic area.

Questions to Think About

1. **Why did all the students want to be team captains?** (They wanted to be helpers.)
2. **What can you do to help in church or at home?** (Allow students to answer. Encourage them to pick something they can do this week.)



Activity 1

How Many Helpers Were Chosen?

Count how many helpers were chosen by writing down the numbers in each box.



Activity 2

Who Can We Help?

Fill in the blanks and find out about the people we can help.

1. We can _____ (help) our grandparents.
2. We can help our _____ (parents).

3. We can help our _____ (teacher).
4. We can help our brother or _____ (sister).
5. We can help our _____ (friend).
6. We can help a truth _____ (seeker).



Activity 3

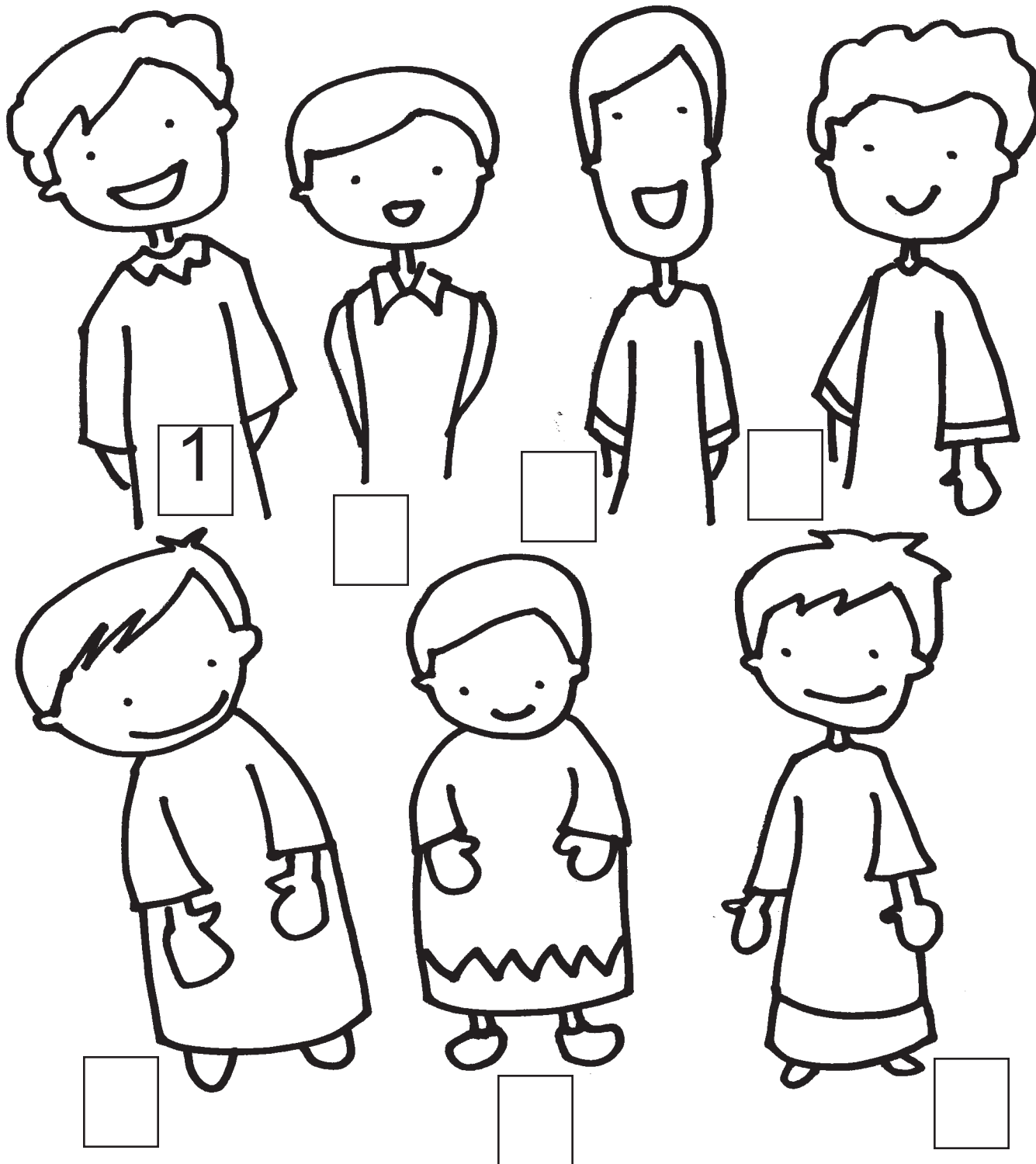
Chore Tickets

Help the students create chore tickets. They can create them on a piece of 8 1/2 by 11 inch paper, cut into two. They can write or draw the kinds of chores they can help their parents with. Brainstorm some ideas with them (e.g. wipe the table after dinner, tidy up room, etc.). Ask each student to make two chore tickets. When class is over, be sure to hand these tickets to the parents so that the students can follow-up with real action

Activity 6:1

How Many Helpers Were Chosen?

Count how many helpers were chosen by writing down the numbers in each box.

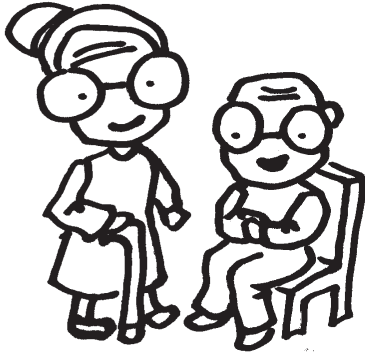


Activity 6.2

Who Can We Help?

Fill in the blanks and find out about the people we can help.

We can h ____ our grandparents.



WORD BANK

- help
- parents
- teacher
- sister
- friend
- seeker

We can help our p _____.



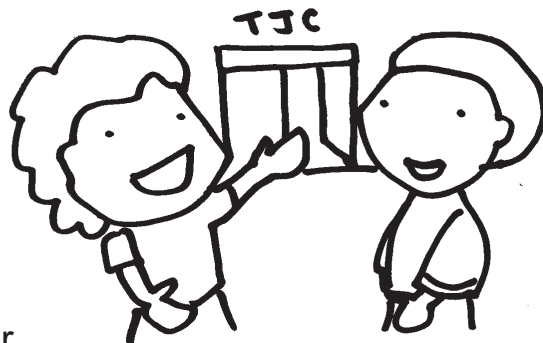
We can help our brother or s _____.



We can help our t _____.



We can pray for our f _____.



We can help a truth s _____.