



LIFE GROUP SERMON NOTES

A.D. Series: “YOU CAN’T STOP THE UNSTOPPABLE”

Ps. James Lowe – May 3, 2015

WARM-UP (10-15 minutes)

Choose a question below to answer, or ask another. *No right or wrong answers.*

- What’s your default mode to address problems? Do you tend to ignore them, fight them, look for consensus?
- What qualities do you admire the most in a leader?
- What’s the most insignificant job you have had? How long did you do it? What did you learn/gain from that assignment?

WORD (10-15 minutes)

Sermons can be heard online at <http://www.bethelworld.org/media/>

“Now at this time while the disciples were increasing *in number*, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic *Jews* against the *native* Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of *food*. So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” The statement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

The word of God kept on spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith. And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people”. (Acts 6:1-8)

At the church’s beginning, God did an immeasurable amount of miracles. The probabilities of a group of Galileans succeeding in an extremely hostile environment were extremely low. The enemy tried more than one strategy to take them down; from governmental threat, to religious opposition, and limited resources. Despite all of this, the church grew exponentially from 12, to 120, to 3000, to 5000, to a point that the narrative just says a great number. We can surely say that such miraculous growth was because of the power of the Spirit within the church. Nevertheless, the fact that the church was filled with the power of the Holy Spirit didn’t exempt them from having to face problems. When the external opposition couldn’t stop the church, the enemy tried to bring problems from within. If he did so within the early church, we can’t expect any less in our own church and life.

1. The **PROBLEM**: This passage shows us a reality: when the numbers increase, so do the problems.

Whenever we have something good going on, problems are on the rise. When the numbers increased, so did complaints. The first recorded internal problem in the church was an ethnic issue. When we grow a diverse church there are ethnicity challenges. When you mix ethnicity discrepancies with resources challenges, the problems increase exponentially. The first tendency when problems arise, is to get the leader to try to solve them. When there are problems on the surface, everybody has a job description for the leader. This approach to problems is not very effective. When we focus only on solving problems, then the mission gets neglected.

2. **THE SOLUTION:** For every problem there is a solution. The solution the apostles proposed was to choose Spirit-filled men from the church to take the responsibility of assuring proper care for all the widows from all ethnic backgrounds. In the house of the Lord, there is a solution for every problem we complain about, and the solution comes in the form of people gifted and called to serve in the area of need. There are people already in our group that may be unnamed, but they have the solution. We can't change the pastor's job description by inserting our own agenda. When everybody takes ownership and takes part in the solution, the pastors can focus on the Word and prayer. In this way, the mission of the church is accomplished. The Gospel keeps being preached. Disciples keep being made. The solution is to empower the church to advance God's Kingdom

3. **THE OUTCOME:** If the solution is applied properly, the outcome is favorable. Because those men were identified, and empowered, the result was that the church grew. People started coming to faith because the house was in order.

Another outcome was the growth of those who had been empowered to serve. Stephen was one of the seven deacons elected to serve the widows. Nevertheless, Stephen did more than what was required. His testimony was so powerful, the religious leaders became nervous about his impact. They were so concerned about Stephen's preaching and influence, they bribed false witnesses to stop him. Eventually they ended up stoning him, but not before Steven preached one of the best sermons ever recorded in the Scripture. Not only he did preach an outstanding message, he received a vision of Christ glorified and forgave his executioners. Such a powerful testimony to the point of martyrdom brought even more growth to the church. When a person is willing to serve wherever there is a need, God is willing to use that person to change the world for Christ. We do not need to run from problems, but rather offer our service as part of the solution, and let God himself grow us.

PERSONAL APPLICATION (10-15 minutes)

Choose an item below to discuss, or introduce another related topic for discussion.

- What kind of need does your church, or your community, have that you can help to solve?
- What has God given into your hands right now? Are you being faithful so God can give you even greater influence and impact for the Kingdom?
- Are you facing persecution or tribulation at this time? What are you going to do differently after this message?

PRAYER (10-15 minutes)

Pray for any of the following, as well as any other requests you may have.

- Pray that God will give you wisdom to address the problems you are facing in the right way.
- Pray that God will give you grace to be part of the solution, and not part of the problem, as we grow as a church.
- Pray for the right response in the midst of struggles and opposition.