

Who's On Your Fantasy Church Team?

THE PROBLEM ON THE TEAM:

Acts 6:1, Philippians 1:15-18, 2:1-4

The biggest threat is sometimes on **our roster!**

THE TEAM NEEDS PLAYERS WHO REALIZE THAT:

Acts 6:2-7, Romans 12:3-8, 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, Matthew 4:23, 1 Peter 4:10-11

- ▶ Serving others is THE **purpose** of the church.
- ▶ We all have an **essential part** to play.
- ▶ We need to go **above and beyond** what is expected.

PLAYER QUALIFICATIONS:

Acts 6:2-7, Ephesians 5:15-18, 2 Timothy 2:15

- ❶ Players who are under the **influence of God.**
- ❷ Players who use Common **Sense.**

NOTE: Spiritual growth does not just **happen over time!**

STEPHEN: “OUT FOR THE SEASON”

Acts 6:8-7:60, Matthew 5:11-16, Matthew 6:19-24, Philippians 1:20-23

He had studied **the Word.**

He lived a life without **glaring weaknesses.**

He saw beyond the **playing field.**

THE FINAL SCORE:

Acts 8:1-3, Philippians 3:13-16

God's will is done.

Growth Group Homework

For the week of September 14, 2008

Welcome to the Fall quarter of Growth Groups!

This week we kick off our Fall Growth Group quarter. Your first meeting will include a potluck dinner, time to get acquainted, as well as time to discuss your Growth Group Covenant. The homework has been shortened this week to allow ample time to accomplish this.

To prepare for this week's meeting, take some time to focus on the questions below and be prepared to share your answers with the group. Have a great first meeting as you come together to connect and encourage another to _____ one grow and to see God *change our lives* from the inside out!

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

1. What was a highlight of this past summer for you?

2. If you are new to Growth Group's this quarter, what's one reason you decided to join one?

If you're returning to a Growth Group this quarter, what are you looking forward to and what do you hope to get out of your Growth Group?

3. What is a favorite pastime or hobby of yours – and when was the last time you were able to participate in it?

DIGGING DEEPER

1. Looking back over your sermon notes, which particular point or passage of Scripture most challenged, confused or caught your attention regarding "Who's On Your Fantasy Church Team?"

2. Because of time, Chris had to skim over Stephen's sermon in Acts 7:2-50. Take some time now to read this condensed overview of Genesis and Exodus, the first two books of the Bible. What sticks out to you as you read this passage?

Acts 7:2-50

To this he replied: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me! The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was still in Mesopotamia, before he lived in Haran. [3] 'Leave your country and your people,' God said, 'and go to the land I will show you.'

[4] "So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Haran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living. [5] He gave him no inheritance here, not even a foot of ground. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child. [6] God spoke to him in this way: 'Your descendants will be strangers in a country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years. [7] But I will punish the nation they serve as slaves,' God said, 'and afterward they will come out of that country and worship me in this place.' [8] Then he gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision. And Abraham became the father of Isaac and circumcised him eight days after his birth. Later Isaac became the father of Jacob, and Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs.

[9] "Because the patriarchs were jealous of Joseph, they sold him as a slave into Egypt. But God was with him [10] and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh king of Egypt; so he made him ruler over Egypt and all his palace.

[11] "Then a famine struck all Egypt and Canaan, bringing great suffering, and our fathers could not find food. [12] When Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent our fathers on their first visit. [13] On their second visit, Joseph told his brothers who he was, and Pharaoh learned about Joseph's family. [14] After this, Joseph sent for his father Jacob and his whole family, seventy-five in all. [15] Then Jacob went down to Egypt, where he and our fathers died. [16] Their bodies were brought back to Shechem and placed in the tomb that Abraham had bought from the sons of Hamor at Shechem for a certain sum of money.

[17] "As the time drew near for God to fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt greatly increased. [18] Then another king, who knew nothing about Joseph, became ruler of Egypt. [19] He dealt treacherously with our people and oppressed our forefathers by forcing them to throw out their newborn babies so that they would die.

[20] "At that time Moses was born, and he was no ordinary child. For three months he was cared for in his father's house. [21] When he was placed outside, Pharaoh's daughter took him and brought him up as her own son. [22] Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.

[23] "When Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his fellow Israelites. [24] He saw one of them being mistreated by an Egyptian, so he went to his defense and avenged him by killing the Egyptian. [25] Moses thought that his own people would realize that God was using him to rescue them, but they did not. [26] The next day Moses came upon two Israelites who were fighting. He tried to reconcile them by saying, 'Men, you are brothers; why do you want to hurt each other?'

[27] "But the man who was mistreating the other pushed Moses aside and said, 'Who made you ruler and judge over us? [28] Do you want to kill me as you killed the Egyptian yesterday?' [29] When Moses heard this, he fled to Midian, where he settled as a foreigner and had two sons.

[30] "After forty years had passed, an angel appeared to Moses in the flames of a burning bush in the desert near Mount Sinai. [31] When he saw this, he was amazed at the sight. As he went over to look more closely, he heard the Lord's voice: [32] 'I am the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.' Moses trembled with fear and did not dare to look.

[33] "Then the Lord said to him, 'Take off your sandals; the place where you are standing is holy ground. [34] I have indeed seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groaning and have come down to set them free. Now come, I will send you back to Egypt.'

[35] "This is the same Moses whom they had rejected with the words, 'Who made you ruler and judge?' He was sent to be their ruler and deliverer by God himself, through the angel who appeared to him in the bush. [36] He led them out of Egypt and did wonders and miraculous signs in Egypt, at the Red Sea and for forty years in the desert.

[37] "This is that Moses who told the Israelites, 'God will send you a prophet like me from your own people.' [38] He was in the assembly in the desert, with the angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers; and he received living words to pass on to us.

[39] "But our fathers refused to obey him. Instead, they rejected him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt. [40] They told Aaron, 'Make us gods who will go before us. As for this fellow Moses who led us out of Egypt--we don't know what has happened to him!' [41] That was the time they made an idol in the form of a calf. They brought sacrifices to it and held a celebration in honor of what their hands had made. [42] But God turned away and gave them over to the worship of the heavenly bodies. This agrees with what is written in the book of the prophets:

" 'Did you bring me sacrifices and offerings
forty years in the desert, O house of Israel?

[43] You have lifted up the shrine of Molech
and the star of your god Rephan,
the idols you made to worship.

Therefore I will send you into exile' beyond Babylon.

[44] "Our forefathers had the tabernacle of the Testimony with them in the desert. It had been made as God directed Moses, according to the pattern he had seen. [45] Having received the tabernacle, our fathers under Joshua brought it with them when they took the land from the nations God drove out before them. It remained in the land until the time of David, [46] who enjoyed God's favor and asked that he might provide a dwelling place for the God of Jacob. [47] But it was Solomon who built the house for him.

[48] "However, the Most High does not live in houses made by men. As the prophet says:

[49] " 'Heaven is my throne,

and the earth is my footstool.

What kind of house will you build for me?

says the Lord.

Or where will my resting place be?

[50] Has not my hand made all these things?' [NIV]

What do you learn about God from Stephen's sermon? What do you learn about the people he uses?

3. Chris talked this weekend about how God uses people with strong character like Stephen. What insights do you see about strong character and how it's developed in the following passages?

Luke 6:43-45

"No good tree bears bad fruit, nor does a bad tree bear good fruit. [44] Each tree is recognized by its own fruit. People do not pick figs from thornbushes, or grapes from briars. [45] The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks. [NIV]

Philippians 2:12-13

Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed--not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence--continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, [13] for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose. [NIV]

2 Peter 1:3-9

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. [4] Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

[5] For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; [6] and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; [7] and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. [8] For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. [9] But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. [NIV]

TAKING IT HOME

Chris encouraged us to be strategic and intentional about our growth. Can you think of an area in your life that you'd like to be more strategic and intentional about in terms of growth?

Does anything come to mind in terms of a step you could take to become more strategic and intentional in that area?

THE PURPOSE OF GROWTH GROUPS

Growth Groups exist to promote spiritual maturity and personal growth through meaningful Christian relationships and study of God's Word. (Romans 8:29 & Hebrews 10:24-25). Here's how it will happen.

SHARE

Each week we'll take time to share what is happening in our lives. At first this sharing will include planned "sharing questions." But after the first few weeks, it will become more informal and personal as we feel more comfortable.

STUDY

Each week we'll study a section from God's Word that relates to the previous weekend's sermon or an appropriate personal growth topic. Our goal is to learn how to live out our Christianity in everyday life.

SUPPORT

Each week we'll learn how to take care of one another as Christ commanded (John 15:9-13). This care can take many forms, such as prayer, encouragement, listening, challenging one another and meeting real needs.

SERVE

Spiritual growth is fostered not only by what we gain through the support and input of others, but also through service to others. The role each of us fills is important to the health of the church and for us to be the hands and feet of Jesus to the community in which we live (Ephesians 4:11-16). Throughout the quarter it is our hope that you can find and/or be affirmed in the ways God has

designed you to serve and make a difference in God's Kingdom.