

LET'S GO - Empowerment

January 22, 2023 - Pastor Rafael Aristy

OUR WORDS FOR 2023: *Let's Go.*

This is a season where Jesus wants us to be **aware** of the invitation to follow where He's leading, an invitation to **trust** Him as a church, to **trust** Him in this journey of life, and an invitation to discover the exceeding **greatness** of His power.

VISION STATEMENT:

We live to see lives transformed through Jesus.

MISSION STATEMENT:

We are a family committed to seeing lives changed. We connect people to God and others, make disciples of Jesus, and are Spirit-empowered people who live out the Good News in our world. And we are each determined to fulfill our unique purpose in God's mission to everyone, everywhere, every day.

PILLARS:

Connect, Disciple, Empower.

In our mission statement we say we are **Spirit-empowered people who live out the Good News in our world.**

EMPOWER

verb.

- to give official authority or legal power to; to enable;
- to provide with the means or opportunity

We are a **SPIRIT-EMPOWERED** people. The Spirit of the living God gives us official authority. He enables us and provides the means for us to accomplish the mission the Father has for us.

Acts 1:4 "Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which", He said, "you heard of from Me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

We CAN'T be about the MISSION of God without the Spirit of God!

Acts 6:1-8 "Now at this time, as the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint developed 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. Instead, brothers and sisters, 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 announcement 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 they brought these men before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them. The word of God kept 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.”

The disciples were increasing in number. Up to this point, the original 12 only had to worry about prayer and preaching the gospel. Now there are issues in the distribution of food to the widows. Complaints were made and people were upset.

- Growth is a good thing but also brings its own issues.
- The more you grow the more organized and structured you must be.
- Whenever people come together, especially from different backgrounds, experiences and cultures, there will be issues.

There were two groups of Jews in the church in Jerusalem:

The Hellenistic Jews were those who spoke mainly Greek and formerly lived outside of Judea and Galilee.

The native Hebrews (Hebraic Jews) were those who spoke mainly Aramaic and were born in Jerusalem or Judea.

The Hellenistic Jews felt their widows were not getting a fair treatment when it came to the distribution of food.

- Here we see how even in the church, unfair treatment existed. There were biases and inequality.
- In their culture, it was the duty of the blood-family to take care of their widows.
- These women did not have the support of their blood family. The church had become their family and should provide for them.

When you SEE a need, MEET a need!

Acts 6:2 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.”

This statement may seem like the 12 didn’t want to serve, but that wasn’t it. They were serving in a different capacity. They knew their assignment and they did not want to neglect it. Serving the widows was a good thing that needed to be done but was not meant for them as their assignment.

Don’t forsake your assignment for something that is good. Instead, ***empower others*** to accomplish what God might have for them.

Don’t get preoccupied with what isn’t meant for you to do. This mindset doesn’t only move you from your assignment, it also hinders your ability to empower others to grow as they use their gifting, skills, and abilities towards God’s mission. **Do not forsake your assignment for something that is good. Instead, take the opportunity to empower others.**

- What are you neglecting that is your responsibility?
- What should you be saying yes to in obedience to the tug of the Holy Spirit?
- What is good that you are saying yes to rather than what your assignment is?

Acts 6:3 Instead, brothers and sisters, 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.

This is **NOT** the world's standards, but rather the standard for Christian living! We should be full of the Holy Spirit and full of wisdom to carry out whatever God has assigned to us, whether that be waiting tables, serving food, performing surgery, or raising children.

From the beginning of church history, we have been known for empowerment.
 "Select from among you seven men...whom **we may put in charge** of this task."
Select the seven, **bring** them here, and **put them in charge**.
This is what EMPOWERMENT looks like!

Empowerment is so important in a multitude of levels.

Moses had to learn to EMPOWER.

Moses needed Jethro, his father-in-law, to help him see what he was not seeing.

Exodus 18:21 Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. Let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that they will bring to you every major matter, but they will judge every minor matter themselves. So, it will be easier for you, and they will carry the burden with you. If you do this thing and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their places in peace."

In this scripture, Jethro is asking Moses, "What are you doing?". Moses tells him, "The people come to me because of a dispute, and they need a ruling from God." Jethro tells Moses, "You can't do this alone, NOT ONLY for his sake but also for the sake of the people. You will burn out and the people too." (paraphrased)

There was a standard for those who were to serve in this capacity.

- Not only was there a standard, but verse 22 says "Let them judge the people at all times."
- In other words, **EMPOWER** them - enable them, provide them with the means and opportunity to judge the people.
- Not all were empowered the same because we all have different assignments.
- Empowerment was going to help Moses endure as a leader and the people to go home in peace.

Some of us need to relinquish control!

- Is there something you need to let go of in order to complete your assignment?

6 And they brought these men before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.

This is something that happened often in the first century church. The laying on of hands communicated something of spiritual significance.

Healing

Mark 16:18 Jesus declared “and they will lay hands on the sick and they will be healed”

Acts 28:8

Luke 4:40

Luke 13:13

To receive the Holy Spirit

Acts 8:17

Acts 9:17-18 - Ananias laid hands on Paul to receive sight and the Holy Spirit (healing and Holy Spirit)

Acts 19:1-6 - Paul laid hands on disciples in Ephesus (and prophesied)

Commissioning

Acts 6:6 - The seven released to new ministry

Acts 13:2-3 - Laid hands on Paul and Barnabas and send them on first missionary journey

To receive a gift from God

1 Timothy 4:14

2 Timothy 1:6

To bless

Mark 10:16

This is something Jesus did regularly in His ministry. We should be more intentional about the laying on of hands this year.

Hebrews 6:1-2 calls this practice part of the “elementary teaching about the Christ”.

- What experiences have you had when someone laid hands on you to pray?
- How can you embrace the practice of laying on of hands?

Stephen was one of the disciples being empowered to take care of the widows.

- He was called upon to be part of meeting their basic need
- That’s what it may have seemed like, but it was much more than that
- It was not only serving people but providing **EQUALITY!**

Stephen was being EMPOWERED to bring equality to the vulnerable and to bring about the justice and fairness of God!

We should pray to have the perspective of heaven. May we, as a family, not forsake the day of small beginnings.

- It may not have seemed like much for Stephen to make certain the widows were fed, but it was part of his assignment and part of God's provision for the women. *He had been EMPOWERED to bring God's justice and equality to the vulnerable!*
- There's a supernatural blessing in being faithful where God has you.

8 "And Stephen, full of grace and power, was performing great wonders and signs among the people."

We want to see God move in power, we want Him to use us with signs & wonders, but He says, "Finish this assignment first".

- What opportunities have you rejected because it seems too insignificant?

"Brethren, do something; do something; DO SOMETHING.

While committees waste their time over resolutions, do something.

While societies and unions are making constitutions, let us win souls.

Too often we discuss, and discuss, and discuss, while Satan only laughs in his sleeve.

It is time we had done planning and sought something to plan.

I pray you, be men of action all of you. Get to work and quit yourselves like men."

- Charles H. Spurgeon

Stephen was willing to do something. Many of us want the upgrade for free, but it will there is a cost involved.

- Are you willing to pay the cost to finish your assignment?

Good News family, we've been empowered by Holy Spirit. Let's GO!