

You have just been through the lot, and the lot fell on another. Responses to this experience are varied. Some men feel relieved. Some feel emotionally drained. Some feel rejected. In some cases, the wife struggles more deeply than the husband. In other cases, the husband struggles and the wife is strong.

The lot is used to choose. The man on whom it falls is singled out for a specific task—to preach, to oversee, or to “serve tables,” as the case may be. To him the charge is given. For him the prayers are said.

This is right. But this focus often leaves those not chosen with doubts or questions. For them the preparation has been just as intense. The surrender, the attempt to discern the call of God, the preparation, have been just as real for them as for the one chosen. In one moment, with the revelation of the lot, the picture is cleared—one man is chosen. The others also were prepared, but they were not chosen.

What are the proper responses to such an experience? Following are seven responses.

1. Accept the decision of the lot as the work of God.

“The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the Lord” (Proverbs 16:33)—“Its every decision is from the Lord” (NIV). “They prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen . . . And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:24, 26).

When we view the lot as the work of the Lord, we have no need to fret about it further. He has made plain His will. We can rest in the security of His perfect understanding, certain that He is doing what is best for the church, for the one chosen, and for the one(s) not chosen.

Some people have questioned the use of the lot in Acts 1 because it was before Pentecost. Note, however, that many years after Pentecost, Luke wrote that Matthias “was numbered with the eleven apostles.”

2. Be true to your congregation's trust in you.

“They appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias” (Acts 1:23). Joseph clearly met the qualifications for the work just as well as Matthias. That the lot did not fall on Joseph did not mean he was unfit or unprepared, but that the church needed only one man at this time, and God chose Matthias.

Those in the lot are men trusted by the congregation as eligible for the office. They must be as faithful in accepting the will of God one way as another. The man who is ready to accept God's call to a new position must be just as ready to accept God's call to stay where he is. His readiness to serve and his qualifications led members of the congregation to nominate him. He must honor that trust, no matter what the decision of the Lord through the lot.

After not being chosen, some men or their wives are sorely tempted to find ways of affirming their qualifications. For them, church life becomes a mental measuring exercise as they compare themselves with the couple who

was chosen. Such a focus is detrimental to ourselves and to brotherhood (we usually don't have a very clear perspective of ourselves anyway). We should rather focus on trusting the Lord and the voice of the brotherhood.

3. Honor the work of church leaders.

“For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee” (Titus 1:5). Paul gave to Titus a charge to arrange for ordinations. Not only was Titus responsible to carry out this charge faithfully, but the church also was responsible to honor Titus's work.

To rise up against the work of church leaders who are faithfully carrying out their charge is to rebel against the One who gave them the charge.

4. Refuse to seek position for yourself.

Regarding the work of the priesthood in the Old Testament, the writer to the Hebrews said, “No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron” (Hebrews 5:4). The work of the ministry in the church must be born of God's calling, not of man's striving. Diotrephes created trouble for leaders and for the church because he loved “to have the preeminence among them” (3 John 9).

A man who focuses on serving God with all his heart can trust the Lord to arrange for the scope of his service.