

Who and How are we willing to serve?

Acts 6:1-7

January 12, 2020

Acts Series: Taking the Message of Jesus' Kingdom Everywhere

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ² So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³ Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

⁵ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism.

⁶ They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

⁷ So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. ¹

¹ *The New International Version*. (2011): Zondervan.

1. Thinking from old patterns

Acts 6:1

the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews Acts 6:1

A. Jerusalem – insiders and outsiders

Jerusalem is the capital city of Judaism

Jewish people were scattered through out the Roman Empire

Hellenistic = Greek Speaking – born and raised in the Roman Empire

Hebraic = Hebrew Speaking – born and raised in Jerusalem

B. Disproportionate Numbers

Jerusalem may have had an above average amount of seniors

The family and faith community provided social supports

The early church worked to respond adequately

Complaint γογγυσμός (*gongysmos*) A Greek noun used rarely in the NT only 4 times (Jn 7:12; Ac 6:1; Pp 2:14; 1Pe 4:9) It means to whisper most often as a complaint or grumbling. Translated: NIV, ESV, NASB, NKJV, Complain(t); NLT, Rumbblings; KJV, Murmurings

2. Working from new priorities

Acts 6:2-4

"We will give them this responsibility." Verse 3

A. Apostle's priority

Fulfilling their ministry calling

Making disciples and Teaching

διακονία (*diakonia*) noun, ministry, service, contribution toward. It is used 34 times in the NT and 8 times in Acts, 3 of which are in this passage. We get the word **deacon** and **deacons** from this root. In this passage it is used in verse 1 to describe the administration/distribution of the food program, verse 2 as waiting or serving tables, verse 4 as the ministry of prayer and the word. It is not used to describe the seven men, a name or as a title for their service. It simply describes a person who serves. It can be a title for a person identified and approved for some kind of service. Paul uses it as a title in 1 Timothy 3.12. Note: the food distribution, serving and ministry are synonyms.

There is no prioritizing of types of service/ministry

B. Current needs

The Apostles lead by listening, recommending and empowering

The issue is one that the entire church accepts and solves

It seems common today that someone gets an idea from reading it or hearing about it. Then they attempt to implement it in their own context. There can be merit in this approach. The needs and solutions for ministry must be specific to the needs and resources of a church. They must be engaged by the church working together.

C. Ministry Qualifications

1. Full of the Spirit – a follower of Jesus Christ.

 Gifting – 1 Corinthians 12 Fruit – Galatians 5:21, 22

2. Wisdom – Luke uses wisdom in a non-theological sense natural or innate skills suitable for the task at hand

3. Selection/Affirmation Process

 Both the leadership and the entire church are in agreement

3. Engaging a New Direction

Acts 6:5-7

“So God’s message continued to spread.” Verse 7

A. The Seven

 All appear to be Greek names

B. Two New People

 How do Stephen and Philip distinguish themselves?

B. The measure of Success

 Not a food program, Apostolic leadership, church unity

 Believers increased and Jewish Priests converted

Who and How do we serve?

 The number one outcome should be toward making new believers

 The foundation for ministry is the Holy Spirit working through
 maturing, gifted, and skilled people

 The church works well together under the leading of the Holy Spirit

 There are new things being done as well as existing things

 We Serve The Lord by his Leading and His Empowerment

Study Questions

For your personal study or with family, a friend, mentor or Life Group

Beginning:

1. What insight, idea, question or principle from Sunday's message did you find most helpful, eye opening or troubling?
2. What are types of service people are often unwilling to perform?

Learning:

3. Notice that even in what seems like the 'perfect' church as it is in its infancy starts to show that not all is well. How would you characterize the problem without needing to be gentle or kind?
4. Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26. What does this passage tell us about differences, diversity and unity? How would you use this to speak into this situation in Acts 6?
5. What would they have done if there were no qualified people? What would they have done if they could not agree?
6. What happens to the table ministry later in Acts? What happens to Stephen and Philip later in Acts? Which is the more important consideration?

Applying:

7. Look at the description for those needed in Acts 6:3. If Luke was to describe you, what two or three attributes would he use for you?
8. Look how people become involved in Ministry. There was a need. It was understood. God moves the hearts of people. God moves the hearts of some to encourage/mentor others. God even keeps some people out of certain things. Where do you see your part in this?

Three observations²

- 1) There is little if any distinction between spiritual or physical ministry.
- 2) The church is perfectly willing to adjust its procedures in response to specific needs as they occur.
- 3) Decision making tends to appreciate and empower others. It does not assign blame or take a paternalistic stance.

Praying:

10. Pray that you might understand where and how God wants you to serve.

Mentoring: As a mentor where do you need to grow in encouraging others to serve and then getting out of their way? As one who may be learning what kind of encouragement and support do you most need to learn and succeed? Where are you most frustrated? Consider that even in Acts 6 there was a new kind of ministry being done in a new kind of way. It allowed both for new things to be done and for existing things to continue. How do you maintain that balance? Look for Stephen and Philip later in Acts. Where did they get their start? What is the significance of this start?

² Thanks to Richard Longnecker in his Acts Commentary in the Expositor's Bible Commentary Series, 1995. Page 127.