

ACTS: THE STORY CONTINUES

ACTS 6:1–7

FROM APOSTLES TO ELDERS AND DEACONS: HOW CHRIST MULTIPLIES MINISTRY

OPENING THOUGHT

Last week we focused on spiritual maturity, discipleship, and participation in the life of the body.

- This week we want to explore a different question:
 - How did Christ intend His church to function?

Acts 6 marks an important transition in the life of the church.

- Up until this point, nearly all ministry was being carried out by the apostles themselves.
- But as the church grew, Christ began multiplying leadership and responsibility throughout the body.
- This pattern would eventually shape the leadership structure we see throughout the New Testament church.

READ ACTS 6:1–7

***NOW IN THESE DAYS WHEN THE DISCIPLES WERE INCREASING IN NUMBER, A COMPLAINT BY THE HELLENISTS AROSE AGAINST THE HEBREWS BECAUSE THEIR WIDOWS WERE BEING NEGLECTED IN THE DAILY DISTRIBUTION. AND THE TWELVE SUMMONED THE FULL NUMBER OF THE DISCIPLES AND SAID, 'IT IS NOT RIGHT THAT WE SHOULD GIVE UP PREACHING THE WORD OF GOD TO SERVE TABLES. THEREFORE, BROTHERS, PICK OUT FROM AMONG YOU SEVEN MEN OF GOOD REPUTE, FULL OF THE SPIRIT AND OF WISDOM, WHOM WE WILL APPOINT TO THIS DUTY. BUT WE WILL DEVOTE OURSELVES TO PRAYER AND TO THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD.'* AND WHAT THEY SAID PLEASED THE WHOLE GATHERING, AND**

THEY CHOSE STEPHEN, A MAN FULL OF FAITH OF THE HOLY SPIRIT, AND PHILIP, AND PROCHORUS, AND NICANOR, AND TIMON, AND PARMENAS, AND NICOLAUS, A PROSELYTE OF ANTIOCH. AND THESE THEY SET BEFORE THE APOSTLES, AND THEY PRAYED AND LAID THEIR HANDS ON THEM. AND THE WORD OF GOD CONTINUED TO INCREASE, AND THE NUMBER OF THE DISCIPLES MULTIPLIED GREATLY IN JERUSALEM, AND A GREAT MANY OF THE PRIESTS BECAME OBEDIENT TO THE FAITH."

PART 1: A CHURCH IN TRANSITION

Question:

- Before Acts 6, who appears to be carrying most of the responsibility for leadership and ministry in the church?

Question:

- What kinds of ministry do we see the apostles performing in the early chapters of Acts?

Question:

- What seems to be changing in Acts 6?

Discussion Thought:

Acts 6 represents a significant transition.

The ministry that had largely been concentrated in the apostles begins spreading outward to other qualified disciples.

PART 2: THE FIRST STEP TOWARD MULTIPLYING MINISTRY

READ ACTS 6:3–4

“THEREFORE, BROTHERS, PICK OUT FROM AMONG YOU SEVEN MEN OF GOOD REPUTE, FULL OF THE SPIRIT AND OF WISDOM, WHOM WE WILL APPOINT TO THIS DUTY. BUT WE WILL DEVOTE OURSELVES TO PRAYER AND TO THE MINISTRY OF THE WORD.”

Question:

- What specific instructions do the apostles give the congregation?

Question:

- What responsibilities do the apostles intend to remain devoted to?

Question:

- What responsibilities are being entrusted to others?

Question:

- Why do you think this distinction matters?

Discussion Thought:

The apostles are not abandoning ministry. They are multiplying ministry. Rather than doing everything themselves, they are raising up others to share in the work.

PART 3: WHY WERE THESE MEN SPIRITUALLY QUALIFIED?

READ ACTS 6:3

“THEREFORE, BROTHERS, PICK OUT FROM AMONG YOU SEVEN MEN OF GOOD REPUTE, FULL OF THE SPIRIT AND OF WISDOM, WHOM WE WILL APPOINT TO THIS DUTY.”

Question:

- What qualifications were required of the seven?

Question:

- Which qualification surprises you most?

Question:

- Why do you think spiritual maturity was required for what appears to be a practical ministry?

Question:

- What does this teach us about the nature of service within the church?

Discussion Thought:

The church does not separate ministry into "important spiritual work" and "less important practical work."

All ministry belongs to Christ.

Different people simply fulfill different functions within the body.

PART 4: THE PATTERN REPEATS

READ ACTS 14:21–23

“WHEN THEY HAD PREACHED THE GOSPEL TO THAT CITY AND HAD MADE MANY DISCIPLES, THEY RETURNED TO LYSTRA AND TO ICONIUM AND TO ANTIOCH, STRENGTHENING THE SOULS OF THE DISCIPLES, ENCOURAGING THEM TO CONTINUE IN THE FAITH, AND SAYING THAT THROUGH MANY TRIBULATIONS WE MUST ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD. AND WHEN THEY HAD APPOINTED ELDERES FOR THEM IN EVERY CHURCH, WITH PRAYER AND FASTING THEY COMMITTED THEM TO THE LORD IN WHOM THEY HAD BELIEVED.”

Question:

- What did Paul and Barnabas do in the churches they planted?

Question:

- What leadership role did they establish in each church?

Question:

- Why do you think they appointed elders before moving on?

Question:

- What does this tell us about Christ's design for the local church?

Discussion Thought:

The apostles could not remain everywhere.

Instead, they established local leadership so that churches could continue growing after the apostles departed.

PART 5: ELDERS, PASTORS, AND TEACHERS

READ TITUS 1:5–9

“THIS IS WHY I LEFT YOU IN CRETE, SO THAT YOU MIGHT PUT WHAT REMAINED INTO ORDER, AND APPOINT ELDERS IN EVERY TOWN AS I DIRECTED YOU— IF ANYONE IS ABOVE REPROACH, THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE, AND HIS CHILDREN ARE BELIEVERS AND NOT OPEN TO THE CHARGE OF DEBAUCHERY OR INSUBORDINATION. FOR AN OVERSEER, AS GOD’S STEWARD, MUST BE ABOVE REPROACH. HE MUST NOT BE ARROGANT OR QUICK-TEMPERED OR A DRUNKARD OR VIOLENT OR GREEDY FOR GAIN, BUT HOSPITABLE, A LOVER OF GOOD, SELF-CONTROLLED, UPRIGHT, HOLY, AND DISCIPLINED. HE MUST HOLD FIRM TO THE TRUSTWORTHY WORD AS TAUGHT, SO THAT HE MAY BE ABLE TO GIVE INSTRUCTION IN SOUND DOCTRINE AND ALSO TO REBUKE THOSE WHO CONTRADICT IT.”

Question:

- Why did Paul leave Titus in Crete?

Question:

- What task was Titus instructed to complete?

Question:

- What responsibilities seem to belong to elders?

Question:

- How do elders contribute to the spiritual health of a church?

Discussion Thought:

As the church matured, elders became responsible for:

- Spiritual oversight
- Shepherding
- Discipleship
- Guarding sound doctrine
- Caring for the flock

Pastors and teachers function within this ministry of shepherding and teaching.

PART 6: DEACONS AND PRACTICAL MINISTRY

READ 1 TIMOTHY 3:8–13

“DEACONS LIKEWISE MUST BE DIGNIFIED, NOT DOUBLE-TONGUED, NOT ADDICTED TO MUCH WINE, NOT GREEDY FOR DISHONEST GAIN. THEY MUST HOLD THE MYSTERY OF THE

FAITH WITH A CLEAR CONSCIENCE. AND LET THEM ALSO BE TESTED FIRST; THEN LET THEM SERVE AS DEACONS IF THEY PROVE THEMSELVES BLAMELESS. THEIR WIVES LIKEWISE MUST BE DIGNIFIED, NOT SLANDERERS, BUT SOBER-MINDED, FAITHFUL IN ALL THINGS. LET DEACONS EACH BE THE HUSBAND OF ONE WIFE, MANAGING THEIR CHILDREN AND THEIR OWN HOUSEHOLDS WELL. FOR THOSE WHO SERVE WELL AS DEACONS GAIN A GOOD STANDING FOR THEMSELVES AND ALSO GREAT CONFIDENCE IN THE FAITH THAT IS IN CHRIST JESUS.”

Question:

- What qualifications stand out to you for deacons?

Question:

- Why are these qualifications so similar to those required of elders?

Question:

- What kinds of practical ministry might deacons oversee?

Question:

- Why is practical ministry essential to the health of the church?

Discussion Thought:

Deacons help ensure that the practical needs of the body are cared for so that the church can function effectively and remain healthy.

PART 7: WHY DID CHRIST DESIGN THE CHURCH THIS WAY?

Question:

- Why didn't Christ intend for the apostles to do everything themselves?

Question:

- What happens when all responsibility is concentrated in one or two people?

Question:

- What happens when mature disciples are developed and entrusted with leadership?

Question:

- How does this leadership structure help the church continue from generation to generation?

Discussion Thought:

The goal is not hierarchy.

The goal is health.

Christ multiplies ministry through mature disciples who are equipped to serve according to their calling.

PART 8: THE RESULT

READ ACTS 6:7

"And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly..." ~ Acts 6:7

Question:

- What was the result of this leadership transition?

Question:

- Why do you think Luke includes this verse?

Question:

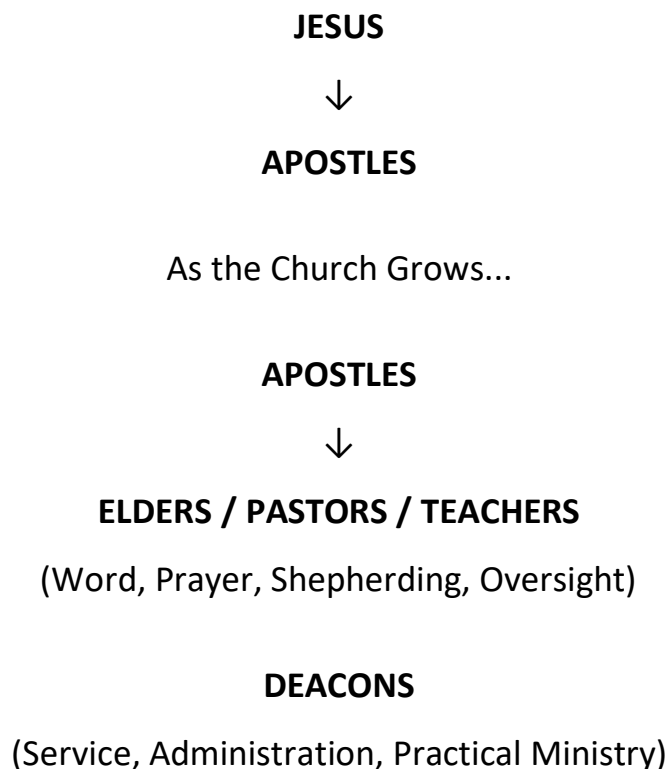
- How does healthy leadership contribute to gospel growth?

Discussion Thought:

When Christ's church functions according to His design:

- Leaders can focus on their primary calling.
- Ministry is multiplied.
- Disciples mature.
- The church remains healthy.
- The gospel advances.

VISUAL SUMMARY



THE BODY

(Discipleship, Service, Witness, Growth)

RESULT:

- *"And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly..." ~ Acts 6:7*

CLOSING REFLECTION

Acts 6 isn't just about solving a practical problem. It shows us Christ preparing His church for the future.

The ministry that was once concentrated in the apostles would be multiplied through **elders, pastors, teachers, deacons, and mature disciples** throughout the church.

This is how Christ designed His church to function. This is how disciples are formed.

And this is how the mission continues from one generation to the next.