

Introduction

Last week, we had a man come for his well control certification. As soon as he started the test, he notified our instructor that the material he was being tested over was not the subject matter of the certification he had come in for. The instructor came to my office and I looked up the online test being given. Sure enough, the man was being given the wrong test. This is only our second week of giving the online tests; we have always given paper tests in the past. In this new program, the certifying organization is giving everything online with a hired proctor in the exam room. I made several calls before I was able to reach someone that could help us with the problem. But, we were able to correct the problem. We stopped the candidate from taking the wrong test, and had him log in again. This time, the correct test was downloaded and administered. The man made a 90 on his test and passed. The following week I followed up with our administrators about how the class was scheduled. We found the root problem, and made some procedural changes so that we would not repeat this mistake.

We are going to have problems in life. There will be problems in the workplace. There will be problems in our families. And, there will be problems in the church. The test of effective leadership is not if they have problems, but how they handle the problems that they are given. We will see in our text today that the church was doing great. In Acts 2 at Pentecost, three thousand souls were added to the church. In Acts 4, after the lame man was healed, there were five thousand men added to the church. In Acts 5, “multitudes of men and women were constantly added to their number.”

(Acts 5:14) “And all the more believers in the Lord, multitudes of men and women, were constantly added to their number,”

We have seen over the past few weeks that there were both external and internal attacks on the church. The church was threatened not to speak in the name of Jesus any more. Last week we saw that the apostles were imprisoned, flogged, and warned again not to preach about Jesus. But, “they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”

(Acts 5:42) “And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.”

Our passage today begins by saying, “now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number...” It was increasing for lots of reasons. There was great unity in the church. The grace of God was abundant on them, and the needs of all the people were being met. They had great fellowship and were taking their meals together. The church was devoted to the apostles teaching. They had sound doctrine, and they were of one heart and mind. The church was also devoted to prayer. They prayed for signs and wonders and for boldness, and God answered their prayers. They were constantly being filled with the Holy Spirit, and were preaching the gospel with boldness. I don’t think that you can just pinpoint one single activity and attribute all the growth to that one thing. The church was firing on all cylinders, and it was growing.

That brings us up to our passage today. The church was growing, but a problem arose in the church. The apostles looked into the problem and came up with a solution that found approval with the whole congregation. Our passage ends by saying that the number of disciples continued to increase. The apostles had obviously dealt with the problem in an effective manner.

11 Three Keys To Leading Effectively (Acts 6:1-7)

This morning, we are going to look at how the apostles handled the problem. We will find three keys to leading effectively. First, effective leaders deal with the problems that come up. Second, effective leaders understand their priorities and do not get sidetracked from their priorities. Third, effective leaders release others to do the work of ministry. Let's read our passage together.

Three Keys To Leading Effectively

1. Effective Leaders deal with their problems.
2. Effective Leaders stay true to their priorities.
3. Effective Leaders involve others in the work of ministry.

(Acts 6:1-7) "Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. {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. {3} "Therefore, brethren, 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. {4} "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." {5} The statement 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. {6} And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them. {7} The word of God kept on 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."

1. Effective Leaders deal with their problems.

There are going to be problems in any business, organization, or church. **One of the roles of leaders is to handle problems.** If we go back to Exodus 18, we find that Moses was a one-man show. He was doing all the work himself. From sunup to sundown he was standing before the people handling all the disputes and problems. His father-in-law, Jethro, came and observed what he was doing, and asked him why he was doing all of this alone? There were a couple of problems in this scene. First, there were problems that people had with one another. There were a lot of disputes between the people, and Moses was trying to help all of these people resolve their disputes. Whenever you have people, there will be some problems. The church is no different.

(Ex 18:13-14) "It came about the next day that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood about Moses from the morning until the evening. {14} Now when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?"

The second problem in this scene is one that Moses did not appear to be aware of. He was doing all the work by himself. He was a one-man show. But Jethro saw the problem and addressed it. He asked Moses, "why do you alone sit as judge and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?" After Moses gives his response, Jethro helps him see his problem more clearly. He said, "The thing that you are doing is not good. You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone." Jethro warned Moses of future consequences if he continued to do what he was doing.

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(Ex 18:17-18) “Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you are doing is not good. {18} "You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone.”

Jethro was a wise leader. He saw the obvious problem, but he also saw a greater problem that Moses was not even aware of. It is difficult to fix a problem that you are not aware of. We must first see the problem. Then, we must deal with it. Jethro gave wise counsel to Moses, which resolved both problems. **Effective leaders recognize problems and deal with them.**

Then, Jethro gave his advice to Moses. He told him to appoint leaders over thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. He told Moses to appoint these different levels of leaders to judge the people at all times, but only to bring the major disputes for Moses to handle.

(Ex 18:21-22) “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. {22} Let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will judge. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you.”

In our text today, a problem arose. It came in the form of a complaint. The Greek literally reads that a muttering came into being. Some of the Greek widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food, while the Jewish widows were getting their fair share. It did not take long for these widows to begin muttering their displeasure and complaints about what was happening. The mutterings spread and reached the ears of the apostles. Good leaders have their eyes open. Good leaders have their ears attentive to what is happening. One of the three Greek words used for the office of pastor is episkopos, which means overseer. Leaders have to oversee the church. It is not just the finances and ministries that they oversee. It is people that leaders oversee.

(Acts 6:1) “Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food.”

Once the apostles became aware of the situation, they came up with a plan to resolve it. That is what effective leaders do; they deal with problems. **Effective leaders are identified by how well they handle problems.** When a problem arises, here are a few steps that must be taken. First, the facts need to be established. Proverbs tells us that “it is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.” God charges leaders to search out matters and to solve problems.

(Pr 25:2) “It is the glory of God to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.”

Sometimes, some mutterings emerge that have no factual basis. There is a misunderstanding or something else that needs to be clarified. That misunderstanding still needs to be cleared up, but the “problem” that was voiced is not the real issue. The facts first need to be established. The apostles probably brought in several people and listened to what they had to say. Solomon said, the first to plead his case seems right, until another comes and examines him.” We have to hear from all sides if we want to establish the facts.

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(Pr 18:17) “The first to plead his case seems right, until another comes and examines him.”

Once we have established the facts, we need to identify the root problem. If the root problem is not clearly identified, we will be treating symptoms rather than the underlying problem. We will give wrong solutions because we are treating the wrong problem. In order to properly handle problems, we have to clearly identify the root problem. Sometimes it takes some work to get down to the root issues. **The root of the problem must be determined.**

Once the root problem is established, multiple solutions need to be considered. Then, the best solution needs to be selected and implemented. There were at least two options that the apostles considered in this case. Option one was for the apostles to do what Moses was doing. They could have done it themselves. They could have tried to feed the Greek widows themselves, to make sure they did not get overlooked. Second, they could appoint some other people to faithfully take care of the problem. There are always different ways to handle problems. Leaders have to look at the ramifications of each approach. They have to follow each solution to its logical end, and look at the liabilities and risks, as well as the potential gains. Then, they have to weigh those risks and gains and determine the best solution.

In our text today, the apostles decided that there was tremendous downside to them serving the widows themselves. They realized that their time and energy was limited, so they would have to neglect some of their other responsibilities in order to handle this need themselves. Therefore, they chose the second option, which was to appoint others in the congregation to handle the matter.

(Acts 6:2-3) “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. {3} "Therefore, brethren, 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.”

The apostles came to an agreement about the problem and the solution. The text says that the twelve summoned the congregation. The twelve of them had agreed upon the solution before they went to the congregation. Then, they said, “it is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God.” Notice the use of the word “us.” They had discussed the problem, the possible solutions, and had come to one mind about the best solution.

Husbands and wives, when there are problems, work things out and come up with a solution before going to your children. If the leaders in the home are not on the same page, the children will be insecure. If the leaders in the church are not of one mind, the congregation will be unsettled. The apostles looked into the problem and were of one mind about what to do before they summoned the congregation.

Next, good leaders communicate properly with the church. The communication of the problem and the solution is extremely important. No communication or miscommunication would only exacerbate the problem. The apostles presented the options, and why they chose the particular solution. They did an effective job selling their idea to the congregation. Luke tells us that the statement found approval with the whole congregation. The apostles did an excellent job communicating with the congregation. **Effective leaders are good communicators.**

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(Acts 6:5a) “The statement found approval with the whole congregation;”

We work hard at communicating with the congregation. There is a reason that we spend the money to write and print up bulletins every week. They are expensive. Some churches have gone high tech and eliminated paper bulletins. They post the bulletin on the church website for those who are interested. That would be easy to do, but there are some who do not have internet, and we still want to communicate properly with those people.

We take time in our services to give announcements. Even though some people come in late and miss the announcements, we still give the announcements. We want to properly communicate what is going on in the upcoming week and month. We also post upcoming events on our website, so that those who do want to know what is coming up can go to the website and see those events.

Our Leadership Team works hard at communication. We take meeting notes of our meetings. We distribute those notes. Those notes help Greg create the weekly bulletins. When we forget what decisions have been made about something, we can go back to the meeting notes and see what decision was made.

The Media Team works hard at communication. He works with the team members to find out when each of them can serve. He puts out monthly schedules so people know when they are supposed to work. The Greeters have a schedule. The Sunday School workers have a schedule. The Worship Team puts out an email with the list of songs for the upcoming week. Song sheets with the chords are attached to the email. That list is also sent to the Media Team so they can get the overheads ready. In every area of ministry, good communication is vital. The apostles communicated properly with the congregation.

The apostles also communicated the options that they had worked through, and the decision that they had come up with. If the apostles had simply told the congregation to chose men to do this ministry, and had not given them any background information, their solution may not have found approval with the whole congregation.

2. Effective Leaders stay true to their priorities.

When the apostles looked at the possible solutions, they weighed in the priorities that God had given them. A priority is something you should do prior to doing anything else. The apostles knew what they were called to do. They had been called, equipped, and sent out to preach the gospel and heal the sick. That was their priority. **It is very important for leaders to know what they have been called to do.** These specific tasks become our priorities.

I am thankful that very early in my Christian life, the Lord gave me some life verses. One of those life verses is Ezra 7:10. Ezra set his heart to study the law of the Lord, and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.” I have devoted my life to doing these three things: studying the word of God, applying God’s principles in my life, and to teach God’s word to others. God told me that I was to be a teacher of His word before I knew I had the gift of teaching. My teaching gift got developed many years later. God communicated these priorities to me, and I have tried to be faithful to what He has called me to do. It is very helpful to know what gifts you have been entrusted with in order to carry out your calling. Knowing your gifts will help you set your priorities.

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(Ezra 7:10) “For Ezra had set his heart to study the law of the LORD and to practice it, and to teach His statutes and ordinances in Israel.”

Effective leaders do not get distracted from their priorities. They know what they have been called to do, and they stay focused on those priorities. That is what the apostles did. They knew that they were to do two things; they were to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” They were not going to allow themselves to be distracted by serving the food to widows. There is nothing wrong with serving food to the widows. It was a very good thing to do. But, it was not what God called them to do. God had given them very different priorities, and they needed to stay true to these priorities.

(Acts 6:4) “But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

What about you? Do you know your spiritual gifts? Do you know what God has called you to do? There are many opportunities that are going to come up. Like the apostles, you could be tempted to meet a need here, or a need over there. There are lots of needs in the church that need to be met. The question you must ask yourself is the same question the apostles had to ask themselves. “What has God called me to do?” If you know the answer to that question, that becomes a priority in your life.

There is a balance to this. I have always maintained that all of us are called to serve. In my house, everyone does dishes. When we had young children in diapers, all of us changed diapers. You did not have to have the gift of diaper changing to get involved in that ministry. Everyone served in these duties. There are lots of similar duties in the church that need to be carried out. We all have to help out when the needs arise. But, there is a second level of serving that is needed. If all we do is serve in areas that do not bring joy and fulfillment to us, we will not be very enthusiastic, joyful, or motivated. Are you a teacher? Look for opportunities to teach. Volunteer to teach a ladies study. Volunteer to teach a men’s study. Volunteer in your life group. Volunteer to lead in communion. Work hard at your teaching, and look for opportunities to use your gift. That is a priority for you.

Do you have the gift of mercy? Send cards to people. Go visit people when they are hurting or sick. Arrange for meals for people. Call people. Find ways and opportunities to comfort others. That is a priority for you.

Before moving on, I want to address one more point about priorities. The apostles said it is not good for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. If we are not careful to maintain our priorities, we will neglect the very things that God has called us to do. There is a lot of discussion today about recognizing signs of abuse and neglect. Children manifest certain signs and symptoms. They have poor self esteem. They have poor social skills, and are withdrawn. They are fearful and often do not want to go home. When parents neglect their children, which are priorities for parents, there are consequences for that neglect.

(Acts 6:2b) “...It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.”

If the apostles had neglected the word of God, there would have been negative consequences on the church. The church would not have been well nourished. The church would not be healthy. The church would suffer. It is not just about the apostles and their priorities. Other lives are affected by our neglect.

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The same is true for all of us. If you have the gift of hospitality, and are not exercising that gift, others in the body are not benefitting from your ministry. If you have the gift of service, and are not serving in the body, there are others who are having to carry that load. The body is affected by the neglect of our ministries.

Another sign of neglect is the lack of excellence in our ministry. If the apostles had started serving food to the widows, they would not have had the time to properly study. They would not have taught with excellence. When we get over-committed, we end up not doing anything well. The quality of our ministry deteriorates. Things start slipping through the cracks. Our garden starts looking pretty weedy because we have neglected it. God wants us to do things with a spirit of excellence. It is imperative that we find out what God has called each of us to do, and we must be careful to maintain those priorities.

3. Effective leaders involve others in the work of ministry.

We have seen how the apostles became aware of the problem and found a solution. The apostles also stayed true to their priorities. They were going to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word. The third key for effective leaders is to involve others in the work of ministry. The apostles told the congregation to select seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom they could put in charge of serving the widows. A few weeks ago I told that the Greek word for congregation was *plethos*, which means a great multitude. The KJV says that “it pleased the whole multitude,” which is a better translation. For there to be a need for seven men to feed the widows, there had to be a lot of widows. For there to be that many widows, there had to be a great multitude. There may have been thirty to fifty thousand people in the church at Jerusalem at this time. That is why they needed seven men just to carry out this task. The important thing is that the apostles wisely got others involved in the ministry, rather than trying to do it themselves.

(Acts 6:3) “Therefore, brethren, 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.”

The leaders did not just choose anybody that was willing to serve the widows. The apostles understood the importance of character. They told the congregation to pick seven men of good reputation. These men needed to be of good character. **Effective leaders put a high priority on character.** Often, we raise up whoever is willing to volunteer. We are hurting for volunteers. The apostles did not just want willing bodies; they wanted seven men of good reputation to meet this need.

Oftentimes, we pick people who are popular. Many deacon and elder boards are simply popularity contests. In some denominations, the elders are voted on every year, and each current elder must receive a 75% approval from the congregation to remain on the elder board. There is a lot of politicking going on. It is not always about the character, but about popularity.

Our federal elections are no different. Bill Clinton is one of the most popular presidents ever. He is also one of the most shameful presidents in history. His immoral relationships and devious behavior were outright shameful. But, he was and is very popular. Character is not something highly valued in America today. If it was, we would give far more emphasis to godly character.

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A number of years ago there was a Life Group leader who was doing illegal drugs. He even offered my daughter drugs. When I found out about what was going on, I told the Lead Pastor that this man needed to be removed from being a LG leader. The pastor would not do it. The man was a generous giver, and he volunteered a lot of his time for the pastor. Unfortunately, this pastor valued other things more than character. The apostles understood the importance of raising up people with character.

We also pick people today who are generous givers. On one hand, God says that we are not to entrust people with true treasures if they are not faithful with unrighteous mammon. You can tell a lot about a man by how he handles his money. I believe that good stewardship is one of the qualities that God's servants need to have. But, on the other hand, James tells us not to have the poor man sit over here, and the rich man to sit over there. We are not to have personal favoritism based on how much or little a person has. Many times people are chosen for committees and boards because of their financial contributions. The apostles were not interested in popularity or financial position; they were interested in selecting seven men of good reputation.

They were also interested in finding men who were full of the Holy Spirit. They wanted men who were going to bear the fruit of the Holy Spirit. They needed to be men who were full of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control. They also needed to be men who were led by the Spirit, not the flesh.

(Acts 6:3) "Therefore, brethren, 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."

Finally, they asked for seven men who were full of wisdom. These men were not just going to serve the women; they were going to be put in charge of the task. Leaders need wisdom in order to lead effectively. Solomon recognized the importance of wisdom in leading. After he was anointed as king, he asked God for wisdom. Because he did not ask for riches, God gave him both wisdom and riches. We all need wisdom, but those who are put in charge of tasks or ministries need even more wisdom. The apostles asked the congregation to select men of good character, full of the Spirit, and of wisdom that they could put in charge of this task.

There is a new book out on the market written by Leif Babin, a former Navy Seal. The book is called *Extreme Ownership: How US Navy SEALs Lead and Win*. In it, he gives eleven checkpoints used by Seal commanders. Half of the points relate to involving other people in the mission. The Seals do more than just involve others. In two different points he says that they were to empower key leaders. That is what the apostles did. They involved others in the ministry. The apostles did not just want people to serve the widows. They did not want to be in charge of that task. They wanted these seven men to be over that ministry. They wanted to empower these seven to run the ministry. **Effective leaders empower others to lead, not just to serve.** That is what the apostles did.

1. Analyze the mission. Understand higher headquarters' mission, Commander's Intent, and endstate (the goal). Identify and state your own Commander's Intent and endstate for the specific mission.
2. **Identify personnel**, assets, resources, and time available.
3. Decentralize the planning process. **Empower key leaders** within the team to analyze possible courses of action.
4. Determine a specific course of action. Lean toward selecting the simplest course of action.

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5. **Empower key leaders** to develop the plan for the selected course of action.
6. Plan for likely contingencies through each phase of the operation.
7. Mitigate risks that can be controlled as much as possible.
8. **Delegate portions of the plan and brief to key junior leaders.** Stand back and be the tactical genius.
9. Continually check and question the plan against emerging information to ensure it still fits the situation.
10. **Brief the plan to all participants** and supporting assets. Emphasize Commander's Intent. Ask questions and engage in discussion and interaction with the team to ensure they understand.
11. Conduct post-operational debrief after execution. Analyze lessons learned and implement them in future planning.

Too often today, the congregation is not involved. We have the stadium Christianity model. In football games, sixty thousand people show up to watch fifty people play the game. In the Vineyard there is a statement that “everyone plays.” The leaders are not supposed to do everything. Ephesians 4:16 says that every joint is to supply. It is when each individual part is properly working, the body will grow. It was never meant to be a one-man show, or just a few people doing everything. The body must be involved, and they want to be involved. They want ownership, and too often they feel like the church is not theirs.

(Eph 4:16) “from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.”

In fact, the main job of leadership is to equip the body for the work of service. The congregation is to do the work of service. Leaders are charged with equipping the saints, not doing all the work themselves. **Effective leaders equip the saints to do the work of service.**

(Eph 4:11-12) “And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, {12} for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ;”

Why is it that some leaders do the work themselves? You could go back to Jethro’s counsel for that answer. There are captains of tens, fifties, hundreds, and thousands. Captains of ten like to do all the work themselves. They want to be personally involved in everything. They do not like to delegate anything. They are not visionary leaders. They have limited organizational skills. They are not good at strategizing. They run a church like a small group. Moses was running the show like a captain of ten. Jethro helped Moses become the leader he was called to be.

Captains of fifties have some organizational skills. They like for people to help them, but they do not delegate. They like people to come to them for decisions. They have limited vision. They do not know how to identify and develop other leaders.

Captains of hundreds have a clear ability to lead. They have organizational skills. They like people to serve, but not to lead. They delegate tasks, but do not delegate authority. They want to make all the decisions. They want every decision to come across their desk. They are not able to develop leaders.

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Captains of thousands have effective public ministries. They do not try to do the work themselves. They cast vision. They plan and strategize. They train and empower others to do the work. They are good at releasing people into ministry. They delegate authority, not just tasks. Like Leif Babin and the Navy Seals, they empower others to lead, not just to serve. Captains of thousands are able to bring correction to other leaders when needed. They focus their ministry on leaders, not on the multitudes.

The apostles were captains of thousands. They laid hands on the seven men, and gave them authority and responsibility to get the job done. They knew that their work was to equip the body for the work of service, not to do all the work themselves. In the church today, we need more captains of thousands because God wants the body to do the work of ministry, not just the pastors. God wants every joint to supply. God wants His body equipped and released to do the work of ministry.

(Acts 6:4-7) "But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." {5} The statement 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. {6} And these they brought before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them. {7} The word of God kept on 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."

The congregation chose seven men and brought them before the apostles. After the apostles had prayed, they laid hands on them. These seven men were not just helping, they were put in a position of authority. They were empowered. The use of the word hand implies several things. First, **hands represent power**. In Exodus 14:31, "Israel saw the great power (yad) which the Lord used against the Egyptians. Yad is the Hebrew word for hand, but it is translated as power. Yad is also translated as power in Deuteronomy 34:12, "and for all the mighty power (yad) and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of Israel. Hands signify power.

(Ex 14:31) "And when Israel saw the great power (yad) which the LORD had used against the Egyptians, the people feared the LORD, and they believed in the LORD and in His servant Moses."

(Deut 34:12) "and for all the mighty power (yad) and for all the great terror which Moses performed in the sight of all Israel."

Hands represent rule. In 1 Chronicles 18:3 David defeated Hadadezer, king of Zobah and went to establish his rule (hand) to the Euphrates River. David was establishing his authority or rule all the way to the Euphrates River. You could also say he was establishing his reign or his sphere of authority all the way to the Euphrates. This is all within the concept and use of the word hand.

(1 Chron 18:3) "David also defeated Hadadezer king of Zobah as far as Hamath, as he went to establish his rule (yad) to the Euphrates River."

In 2 Chronicles 21:8, Edom revolted against the rule (yad) of Judah and set up a king over themselves. They rebelled and revolted against the authority they were under and set another king to rule over them.

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(2 Chron 21:8) "In his days Edom revolted against the rule (yad) of Judah, and set up a king over themselves."

Hands represent ministry. In 1 Chronicles 6:31, David set some men over the service (yad) of song. Again, the word used is yad.

(1 Chron 6:31) "Now these are those whom David appointed over the service (yad) of song in the house of the LORD, after the ark rested there."

So, when the apostles laid hands on these seven men, they were giving power and authority to them. They were empowering them. They were also placing them into a ministry. Those are some of the ways that hands are used.

The laying on of hands has three significant functions. **The first significance of laying on of hands is impartation.** The priests would anoint kings and impart an anointing on them to rule. Fathers would lay hands on their first born son and impart a blessing on them. Jesus laid hands on children in Matthew 19:15 and blessed them. There was also an impartation of healing through the laying on of hands. There are lots of verses where Jesus or the apostles laid hands on people and they were healed. There were also other signs and wonders imparted by the laying on of hands. In Acts 5:12, "at the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were taking place." In Acts 19:11, "God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul." There was also an impartation of spiritual gifts through the laying on of hands. Paul told Timothy to "kindle afresh the gift which is in you through the laying on of my hands." (2 Timothy 1:6) These are all examples of impartation.

The second significance of laying on of hands is identification. The priests would lay hands on the animal sacrifices. Their sins and the sins of the people were identified with the animal that was being sacrificed. In judicial matters, the judges would lay hands on both parties to reconcile them. In ordaining ministers, we lay hands on them. Paul told Timothy not to "lay hands on anyone hastily and share the responsibility for the sins of others." (1 Tim 5:22) When we lay hands on someone, we are identifying with that person.

The third significance of laying on of hands is confirmation. When someone in the Old Testament had been found guilty and the crime was punishable by death, the people who had witnessed the crime would lay hands on the person before the person was stoned to death. It was to confirm that this is the guilty person before they put him to death. When we lay hands on someone as part of an ordination service, we are confirming that this person has been called by God. We are confirming that this person is qualified to serve in this capacity. And, we are placing on that person the power and authority to carry out the duties of that position. The apostles laid hands on these seven men. They confirmed that these seven men were of good character and reputation. They confirmed that these men were full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. They empowered them to lead this ministry to the widows.

I have preached on this passage in the past, but with a totally different message. This is the first example of deacons in the church. Deacon is a transliterated word. It comes from diakonos, which means a servant or minister. The root word is diako, which means to run on errands, as an attendant or waiter. In our passage today, the widows were being overlooked in the daily serving (diakonia) of food. The apostles did not want to neglect the word of God to serve (diakoneo) tables. Therefore,

11 Three Keys To Leading Effectively (Acts 6:1-7)

they raised up a new office in the church, the office of deacon or servant. **The office of deacon was established to meet needs.**

Ministers of the gospel are also called servants. Leaders in the New Testament are called to serve their flocks. If someone does not have the heart of a servant, that person is not ready for leadership. In our passage, the apostles were going to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry (diakonia) of the word.

In 1 Timothy 3, we are given the qualifications of elders and deacons. Both deacons and elders are required to be above reproach in their character. Both positions require good management skills. The primary difference in the two offices is the ability to teach. Deacons are not charged with the ministry of the word, but this is a very important aspect of a pastor. Therefore, in our passage today, these seven men are being set in the office of deacon, not as the pastors of the church.

Conclusion

The apostles became aware of the problem and dealt with it. They stayed true to their priorities, which were to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word. Third, they involved and empowered others to run that particular ministry. They were very effective leaders.

There are three results from their handling of this problem. First, the word of God kept on spreading. It spread because the apostles were not neglecting it. They spent time praying, studying, preparing, and teaching the word of God. These are priorities for pastors in a church.

(Acts 6:7) “The word of God kept on 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.”

Second, the number of disciples continued to increase. I like the fact that it was not just converts, but it was disciples. We are charged with making disciples. Disciples need to be taught. The word ministry of the apostles was part of the disciple-making. They did not just increase, but the number of disciples increased greatly. The model is very different from many of the modern church growth manuals. They focused on prayer and the ministry of the word. If we want to see lives changed, we must focus on these two priorities.

Third, Luke tells us that a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith. Not all the religious leaders rejected the gospel. There were a great many of the priests who received Christ as the Messiah and were becoming obedient to the faith.

Let's pray.

Introduction (Acts 5:14, 5:42, 6:1-7)

1. Effective Leaders deal with their problems.

- One of the roles of leaders is to handle _____. (Ex 18:13-14, 18:17-18)
- Effective leaders _____ problems and deal with them. (Ex 18:21-22, Acts 6:1)
- Effective leaders are identified by how well they _____ problems. (Pr 25:2, Pr 18:17)
- The _____ of the problem must be determined.
- Multiple _____ should to be considered.
- The best _____ should be selected and implemented. (Acts 6:2-3)
- Effective leaders are good _____. (Acts 6:5a)

2. Effective Leaders stay true to their priorities.

- It is very important for leaders to _____ what they have been called to do. (Ezra 7:10)
- Effective leaders do not get distracted from their _____. (Acts 6:4, 6:2b)

3. Effective leaders involve others in the work of ministry. (Acts 6:3)

- Effective leaders put a high priority on _____. (Acts 6:3)
- Effective leaders _____ others to lead, not just to serve. (Eph 4:16)
- Effective leaders equip the _____ to do the work of service. (Eph 4:11-12)
- Hands (yad) represent _____. (Ex 14:31, Deut 34:12)
- Hands represent _____. (1 Chron 18:3, 2 Chron 21:8)
- Hands represent _____. (1 Chron 6:31)
- The first significance of laying on of hands is _____. (Matt 19:15, Acts 5:12, 19:11, 2 Tim 1:6)
- The second significance of laying on of hands is _____. (1 Tim 5:22)
- The third significance of laying on of hands is _____.
- The office of deacon was established to meet _____.

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