

Church Problems

Acts 6

Introduction: The opening story in Acts 6 presents us with the question of Church polity; how should the Church be organized?

A Definite Need - Acts 6:1-4

Prayer and to the ministry of the Word - The apostles were saying, your first job is prayer and ministry of the word but the smaller your church is, the more you will need to be involved in different aspects of your ministry and as it grows you will need to identify dedicated servants to organize and oversee those ministries. (Romans 12:6-8; Ephesians 4:11-12)

Selecting and Commissioning Wise Servants - Acts 6:5-7

There were four requirements for this service: first, they had to be men, second, they had to have good reputations, third, they had to be full of the Holy Spirit and fourth, they had to have the wisdom of experience as they dealt with those in need.

Summary: These seven men were the first servant organizers in the New Testament Church, but were they the first "deacons"?

Precept: Leading is serving, but serving is not leadership—there is an important distinction. Leading is knowing the way forward; serving is doing a job well so that a need is met.

Conclusion: After Peter and John's first encounter with the Sanhedrin they left emboldened to preach Christ (Acts 4:19-20); after their second encounter they were beaten and returned blessed to suffer for Jesus Christ, their Lord (Acts 5:41-42). What comes next is a problem that in the end identifies seven men who were very helpful as the Church grew; they were emboldened to make a difference and one of them is so emboldened that he was killed for his stand—Stephen (Acts 6:8-7:60).

I learn that service and leadership is always first about integrity and wisdom from the Word of God. How the Church solves problems matters. When the Church majors on what God has called it to major on its real influence increases.

We have no control over external issues, but we do have the Holy Spirit to assist us in resolving internal issues and when we hear and obey the Holy Spirit God moves and the world notices. Leadership prays and ministers the Word of God; leadership is responsive to the needs of people; and leadership that seeks and shares the decisions about needs and empowers others to serve the Church body all point to the Holy Spirit's activity in the Church Body.

There is no coincidence that the work of the twelve apostles and the work of these seven men both serve the Body of Christ—qualified men who are called to meet specific needs in the local Church so that Satan is rebuffed and the Word of God spreads. If a Church is going to be viable long term it must effectively deal with the issue of future leadership or face a slow decline into spiritual death.