

Midweek Study



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Ministry Without Limits

Breaking Through Growth Barriers in God's Church

Acts 6:1-7

I. THE **PROGRESS** THAT DRIVES MINISTRY (*Acts 6:1a*)

*"Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was **multiplying**..."*

A. The Church Was Multiplying - Notice the language Luke uses – not just "growing" but "multiplying." This wasn't an incremental addition; this was an exponential expansion! From the 12 disciples to 120 in the upper room, to 3,000 on Pentecost, to 5,000 men in Acts 4, and now potentially 15,000-20,000 believers when you count women and children.

God is concerned about numbers! Why? Because numbers represent people, and people matter to God. Every number has a name, a face, a story, and an eternal destiny.

B. The Challenges Were Multiplying - There's an old saying: "No mess, no ministry." *Proverbs 14:4* puts it this way: *"Where no oxen are, the trough is clean; but much increase comes by the strength of an ox."* If you want a perfectly clean, organized, controllable church, keep it small. But if you want the kind of increase that honors God and impacts your community, prepare for some messiness that comes with growth!

The question isn't whether you'll have problems – it's whether you'll have the problems of growth or the problems of stagnation.

II. THE **PRESSURES** THAT DISTRACT MINISTRY (*Acts 6:1b*)

"...there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution."

A. Members Were Murmuring - Growth brought tension between two groups in the early church:

- The Hebrews – traditional Jewish Christians who had remained in Jerusalem
- The Hellenists – Greek-speaking Jewish Christians who had lived abroad and returned

B. Members Were Mistreated – the distribution of food was not shared as they should have been.

DEFINING DEACON: "Deacon," is [diakonia]. It means "one who serves." A deacon is, most literally, a "servant."

That word occurs 3 times in the first 4 verses of Acts 6.

a) It is the last word of verse one: *"their widows are being neglected in the daily **diakonia**."*

b) Then in verse 2, the verb: *"we should not give up preaching the word of God to **diakonia** tables."*

c) Now verse 4: *"We will devote ourselves to prayer and the diakonia of the word."*

EXTRA: The word literally meant *"Through Dust."* Although the origin of the word is unknown, the concept of raising dust suggests a servant hastening to serve or wait on his master.

III. THE PRIORITIES THAT DEFINE MINISTRY (*Acts 6:2-6*)

"Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, 'It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.'"

In life, you will be guided either by priorities or pressures. Priorities are what God wants you to do, and pressures are what everyone else wants you to do.

A. Pastors

1. Pastors Lead the Church

6:2 – the twelve summoned the multitude.

6:3 – they said, "Brethren, seek out from among you..."

6:3 – we may appoint over...

6:6 – they laid hands on them...

2. Pastors Intercede for the Church and Its Ministries

6:4 – give ourselves continually to prayer.

6:6 – when they had prayed...

3. Pastors Feed the Church

6:2 – it is not desirable that we should leave the word of God

6:4 – we will give ourselves continually to the ministry of the word

6:7 – THEN the word of God spread

B. Deacons Serve the Members (*6:2 – serve tables*)

IV. THE POWER OF DELEGATED MINISTRY (*Acts 6:7*)

"Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith."

A. The Church Grew in Unity

B. The Church Grew in Numbers

- *"The word of God spread"* – the apostles could focus on their calling
- *"The number of disciples multiplied greatly"* – not just added, but multiplied!
- *"A great many of the priests were obedient to the faith"* – even religious leaders were converted

CONCLUSION: GOD DOES NOT FORGET YOUR WORK

"For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister." – Hebrews 6:10