

Deacons and getting the job done. Acts 6:1-7

Sorry that you get me today and on video as Andrew Parkinson is in isolation as one of his kids has the covid thing. We have rescheduled and we look forward to what Andrew will share with us in a month or so.

Now, there has been some discussion about my preaching, the passages and my conclusions. Please remember that I have never been asked to preach about "How God leads me through His word." So, I have done that and some have reacted to my application, and my expressions of where God has led me. I have tried to be transparent, some have said I have been blunt, well yes. That is because I have tried to answer honestly how God has impacted me. If that offends, sorry, if you disagree, I am totally content with God speaking to you differently. After all, as Baptists "we believe that each person can read Scripture to glean God's will for our lives." This passage may also bring things up you are not comfortable with, my application may also grate on you. It is what I believe God wants me to share with you today through strange circumstances.

Blessings to you. And let's have a look.

1. The issue is the logistics of care. V1

1. 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. The 12 called a meeting of disciples (church) v2

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."

Note: the word translated wait or serve is diaconos which is where we get the concept and title of our deacons. They are servants. They serve by doing their roles of logistically running the church.

A couple of things here:

- A. 12 or the apostles called the meeting - set the direction
- B. The 12 needed to stay focused in what was their ministry. Teaching God's word.
- C. This is not a put down to those in the hospitality industry but a focusing of roles.

3. The leadership offered a solution. V3

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

That's what we do! We choose people to do a certain job and we turn the responsibility over to them. One thing we ain't great at is letting them have the authority to do the job as well as the responsibility. But notice the requirements - "known to be full of the Spirit". What we have tended to do is choose because of experience in a certain area. An expertise. That isn't God's criteria. I hope and pray we have chosen our leadership based on their spirituality. It is interesting that very few people called by God in scripture had the qualifications to do the job. But God used the people He called.

4. This concept of service released the 12, the apostles, to do their thing.

4. and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word."

That's what happens, the deacons do their thing so I can do mine. Yep

But

They also do their thing so you can do yours.

Just as these early deacons released the apostle for their ministry, our deacons release you to yours. You don't have to worry about the logistic side of it, just get on with your ministry. Let them do theirs. It is a great system.

As an aside, a couple of years ago someone tried to argue that the Presbyterian system was more biblical than the baptist system of church governance. They picked the wrong person to attack on that on. After all a baptist pastor should be able to defend his belief structure. On top of that, I understand their view point, I know their arguments, I learnt all of that in church history at college, I just feel they highlight a different set of theological points. Anyway, I made the comment that not only is the baptist viewpoint true to scripture but it is also the most culturally appropriate form of church governance. Briefly I outlined

These things:

- A. A voice for all members, both in voting and say after all we have a democratic understanding.
- B. All members are expected to participate in ministry.
- C. Our leaders come from within, we vote for our people to lead us.
- D. Any member can lead the non legal aspects of our worship. Preach, lead communion, take a funeral - just can't do weddings, that is a state gov, required thing.

Now there are other concepts as well, but we are biblical, we are culturally appropriate but we also set people apart to do what God has called them to.

5. They followed the leaders (apostles) plan. V5-6

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.

That's it. They followed the plan.

Too often in churches I have seen that the leadership gets voted in then told what to do. I have felt that lately, that people are more interested in telling me my job than helping me achieve it. The modern church needs to take responsibility for its voting and for itself. Let them who are called to a job do the job God has called them to. If you think you know better, stand for leadership next meeting.

Now one thing that hits me is we pray and lay hands on them and this has been perplexing me over the past few weeks. Leadership get this commissioning concept, the Pastor certainly did, but who else gets it. Congregational care team, playtime team, Youth team, those who make coffee, those who do the garden, those who welcome – who is prayed for and set aside for their ministry. Here it is the deacons, why because it is all new. Later on Paul and Barnabus are set aside for mission. Shouldn't we be setting each person aside for their ministry what ever it is? Now, some will have some opinions on this, that's ok. I feel if we commission one lot we commission all. So the conclusion there is we have a day or a service to specifically set people aside for what they do – all of us.

6. Doing things Gods way has results. V7

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.

Notice the results:

- A. Word of God spread
- B. Number of disciples increased
- C. Priests became obedient.

What has happened here?

They struggled with an issue, worked it through with the guidance of the Holy Spirit then put in place a solution to move forward then they grew.

There is our template for dealing with issues.
There is our template for moving forward.

This IS part of our future.