

ACTS: ALIGNING WITH GOD'S SOVEREIGN WORK OF DISCIPLING

XIII. Adjusting Ministries To Fit Priorities And Needs

(Acts 6:1-7)

I. Introduction

- A. The book of Acts explains "the orderly and sovereignly directed progress of the kingdom message from Jews to Gentiles, and from Jerusalem to Rome," Bible Knowledge Commentary, New Testament, p. 351.
- B. Accordingly, we can learn much about aligning our ministry efforts with God's sovereign work from studying the Early Church era as it is presented in the book of Acts.
- C. Acts 6:1-7 reveals the need to adjust our ministries in the local church to fit Biblical priorities while also meeting spiritual needs, a big issue in today's churches. We view the passage for our insight and application:

II. Adjusting Ministries To Fit Priorities And Needs, Acts 6:1-7.

- A. Due to human weakness, a great need arose in the Early Church on the support of "Grecian" widows, Acts 6:1:
 1. The word "Grecians" refers to "Grecian Jews" who "could not speak Aramaic, the native tongue of Jews living in Israel," who were raised "outside the land and" spoke "both Greek and their native tongues (cf. 2:5-11). (Ibid., p. 367) In contrast, the "native Jews . . . spoke Aramaic and Greek (cf. 21:40)," and in "the Jewish world tensions existed between the Grecian Jews and the Aramaic-speaking Jews." (Ibid.)
 2. The Aramaic-speaking apostles who were dispersing the material goods from the gifts that were laid at their feet (Acts 4:34-35) knew the native Jewish widows but they were ignorant of who were the "Grecian" Jewish widows, so the apostles were dispersing goods to the former but neglecting the latter, Acts 6:1c.
 3. Consequently, this situation led to "displeasure, complaints" (*goggusmos*, Arndt & Gingrich, A Grk.-Eng. Lex. of the N. T., 1967, p. 163) by the "Grecian Jews" against the native Jews in the Church, Acts 6:1b.
- B. The apostles then wisely addressed this problem, Acts 6:2-6:
 1. First, they called the entire congregation together to produce a unifying solution to the problem, Acts 6:2a.
 - a. In this meeting, the apostles announced that though the need of meeting the widows' livelihood needs was important, they themselves had a higher calling, that of feeding the Church God's Word, Acts 6:2b. The word "reason" in the Acts 6:2 KJV phrase, "It is not reason that . . ." translates the adjective *arestos*, "pleasing, desirable" (Ibid., p. 105) that suggests what is pleasing to both man and God.
 - b. They then made a proposal that addressed both the spiritual priority and the material needs, Acts 6:3-4:
 - i. First, the apostles addressed the need of the neglected widows, Acts 6:3: (1) They urged the congregation to select seven men from their midst, a Jewish tradition in which "seven respected men managed the public business in an official council," Acts 6:3a; Ibid., B. K. C., N. T. (2) Such men were to be controlled by the Holy Spirit, be wise and be known for these qualities, Acts 6:3b. (3) The apostles would then commission these seven to oversee the distribution ministry, Acts 6:3c.
 - ii. Second, the apostles addressed the priority of ministering the Word: they would give themselves continually and **now exclusively** to prayer and to the ministry of God's Word, Acts 6:4; 2:42a.
 2. Second, the whole congregation accepted the apostles' proposal, and selected seven men who all had Grecian names, for the Early Church felt they would certainly know the "Grecian" Hebrews and ensure that they and none of the native Hebrew widows would be neglected in the distributions, Acts 6:5; Ibid.
 3. Third, the congregation placed these seven men before the apostles, and when the apostles had prayed about the matter, they laid their hands on the seven, giving them authority for their ministry, Acts 6:6; Ibid.
- C. As a result, the Word of God increased because this decision enabled the apostles to focus entirely on the ministry of the Word and prayer instead of spending some of their time distributing goods (Acts 6:7a), and the number of the disciples greatly increased, Acts 6:7b. In fact, many of the priests believed in Christ, Acts 6:7c.

Lesson: When confronted with their human limitations of cultural differences with "Grecian" Hebrews and the time and energy constraints on their ministry of the Word created by having to distribute gifts to needy believers, the apostles rightly realized the need to meet their own priority of the ministry of the Word while also seeing that the "Grecian" widows not be neglected by delegating the distribution ministry out to other qualified men. The result was an even greater expansion of the ministry of the Word and a greater numerical growth of the Church.

Application: (1) May we recognize the important priority of the ministry of the Word in the Church (2) while also seeing the importance of meeting pressing human needs in the body by the delegation of responsibilities. (3) These differing ministries are not to be competitive against one another, but complimentary parts of the whole church.