

Full of the Spirit and Wisdom

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Acts 6

Last week we saw how the apostles faced opposition one more time.

-They jailed the apostles; but with God nothing is impossible; God opened the doors of the jail.

-They said, “You should stay silent and not talk about Jesus the Messiah”; they obeyed God rather than men and kept preaching. Even after the jail, they went back and continued preaching at the court of the Temple.

-They were flogged, beaten because of their faith in Jesus. They came back rejoicing because they were counted worthy of suffering disgrace for Jesus.

So as you see the devil is attacking, **but God** will not allow devil to win.

In chapter 6, we will face a **new issue**, something called **distraction**.

The ministry is growing. They started with 3000, yet God added their numbers day by day. The apostles were occupied with practical issues, serving the community.

John Stott says:

“If he (the devil) could preoccupy the apostles with social administration, which though essential was not their calling, they would neglect their God-given responsibilities to pray and to preach, and so leave the church without any defense against false doctrine”.¹

Distraction, overbusyness, those are the issues the church faces until today.

When I meet with you guys, (especially the youth) the number one issue we face is **overbusyness**. And that distracts us from the ministry. Overbusyness will hinder us from dedicating our time to God.

Here is the problem, there is no time for prayer and daily quiet time with the LORD.

Let us go to our passage:

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. (Acts 6:1 NIV11)

We find that the ministry got bigger, more and more people coming, and that means more needs of people were to be dealt with and solved.

The Problem:

-There was a complaint, the same word as **murmuring and grumbling**. You know this does not help the unity of the church. In the LXX Septuagint OT translation to Greek same word used when the Israelites complained (grumbled) against Moses and Aaron.

I wish instead of grumbling; they brought the issue to the attention of the apostles.

-If you recall (chapters 2,4,5), people sold their land and brought the money to the apostles. They were in charge how to distribute the money. "Who had needs; where are the needs, and so on" ...

These large numbers overwhelmed the disciples and they got distracted from their main calling.

What was the issue?

Issue #1

The widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

Taking care of widows and children is an important command in the Old Testament.

James in the NT says:

²⁷ Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world. (James 1:27 NIV11)

Please notice, there were no social services in those days.

It was difficult to lose a husband. Life would be changed. They did not have any financial income anymore. The issue got complicated when they had kids. On top of it, they faced loneliness.

By the way, this is true until now. We have many widows in our church. As their pastor, I am aware of their needs. Sometimes it is not financial, but they need support, prayer, visitation, and caring. Our church has ministry called Journey to Resilience, a support group for anyone who suffers loss.

"Normally widows will be taken care of among their own blood-relations but those family ties appear to have been cut when people joined the new movement."²

They became Christ's disciples and followers. This means their blood family expelled them from their family. They had no one....

Issue #2

the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews

The second issue was the complaint between **Jewish-Christians** (Hebraic Jews) and **Hellenistic Jewish Christians**.

There were the **Hebrew-speaking Palestinian Jews**, they spoke **Hebrew and Aramaic** languages, who lived in Jerusalem and around it.

And there were the **diaspora Jewish** people who spoke **Greek**, who came back into Jerusalem and became part of the New Testament community."³

Well, you can find **cultural clashes** between them: one coming from the Greek society, and the other who lived in Jerusalem.

-Does this remind us of something? Some of us were born in the US, some of came from Armenia and Some of came from the Middle East...

If you think early church was perfect...

Issue #3

Distractions drifted the apostles from their main calling.

²So 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. (Acts 6:2 NIV11)

Let me make one thing clear.

Serving the Lord (*diakonia*), servanthood is as important as preaching and teaching the gospel.

How did they solve it?

They came together and laid out the issue amongst themselves. Then they decided to delegate the **ministry of the servanthood**. (*diakonia*)

Let me clarify:

1. They are **not saying** "**serving the tables**" is a secondary service, and that they have more important things to do than this "secondary job." As if one can say: "this secondary job anyone can do." NO, they are not saying this.
2. They **are saying** that "**serving the tables**" ministry became so big that they neglected their prayer and teaching life.

Solution:

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 ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word. (Acts 6:3,4 NIV11)

So, they **delegated** the ministry of servanthood so that they can have more time for their main calling, which was the **preaching-teaching the WORD and praying.**

They chose not any man; what are the qualities of the deacons?

Full of Spirit

Full of wisdom,

who are known, they have good standing. (men of good repute) (ESV)

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Full of Faith

They are wise **men of character** and **full of the Spirit.**

Both groups, **those with Speaking gifts** (the apostles) and **Serving gifts** (the deacons) need to be filled with God's Spirit.

It is a matter of how God created you. What is your spiritual gift?

Who are those elected men?

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. ⁶They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:5,6 NIV11)

They chose **seven** men. All names are Greek names and **even one** of them is a convert to Judaism. Why all Greek names? I don't know why; maybe they are trying to serve the **Hellenistic Jews**. The Bible does not tell us.

Yet, they chose seven men. Those were the first deacons, men who were chosen to **serve the table, the ministry of servanthood.**

The Result:

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. (Acts 6:7 NIV11)

We already see the outcomes of delegating the ministry. God increased the number of the disciples. God also brought Jewish priests to become Christians. Please notice, the number of disciples, which means the apostles are obeying Jesus: **“Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”** (Matt 28:19-20)

Observation (Application)

1. All ministers of the church should be filled with the Spirit of the LORD.

If we are cooking or preaching;

if we are teaching or changing diaper of an elderly person;

if we are evangelizing or raising money so that the needy person will have food on their table.

All need to be filled with the Spirit and the wisdom of our Lord.

Speaking ministries and Serving ministries should be centered on Christ.

Warning:

-If **we preach without Jesus**, we become self-centered preachers who draw people to themselves and not to Jesus.

-If **we serve without Jesus**, we become institutions of social action where Christ is not the center. There is the temptation of having money and giving to the needy without Jesus. The giver becomes above the receiver. Do you know how difficult and humiliating it is for people to receive aid?

The Spirit will remind us who we are. *We are the sinners, who were saved by the Mega Grace of Jesus. Because we experienced the redemption of the Lord, we can serve, and give generously, humbly knowing who we are.*

*Thus, we need **servers and preachers** who are filled with the spirit of the LORD, so we stay humble and Christ-centered.*

2. We Need Prayer.

“We will turn this responsibility over to them⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.” (Acts 6:3,4 NIV11)

Apostles needed time for preaching and prayer.

Does this mean the deacons don't need prayer?

-This does not mean the Serving gift individuals should not spend time in prayer.
Without prayer nothing we can do, NOTHING.

Illustration: My mom was woman of serving. She was not a preacher, or pastor. Yet, she had daily three times for prayer. She had her corner. We as her kids knew that when she was in prayer and reading the Bible, we should not interrupt her. All ministries need prayer...all
Whatever your spiritual gift is.

3. Serving Ministers can talk as well

One of the seven elected servants was **Stephen**.

Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people. (Acts 6:8)

Opposition did not like this man; they created false news about this man (please read the rest of the chapter),

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they could not stop him from talking and serving.

¹⁰ But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke. (Acts 6:10 NIV11)

Next week we will see about his sermon. God used him in different capacities. I will end to describe the face of Stephen in the High Court of Sanhedrin:

¹⁵ All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel. (Acts 6:15 NIV11)

Prayer:

Lord, I bring my church to you this morning.

All of us called to your disciples. All of us have spiritual gifts. May I commit everyone to be filled with YOUR SPIRIT and WISDOM.

Instead of murmuring and grumbling, let us uplift each other and talk about issues and face them and find solutions for your Kingdom.

Teach us to be humble and teachable; teach us to focus on our gifts as well and not to do everything; teach us to delegate and find "seven" men and women who can serve you.

I pray this morning for the ministry of the AMAA. They equip pastors, lay leaders; they serve as deacons in providing the needs of the people.

May their leadership focus on you everyday. May they learn that without you they cannot do anything. Fill them with you Spirit. Send them all over the world to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ.

1. John Stott, *The Spirit, the Church and the World*, p 120
2. N.T. Wright *Acts for Everyone (book1)*, P 98
3. R.C. Sproul, *You Will be My Witnesses to the End of the Earth*, Acts. P 98