

Challenges in ministry. Acts 6:1-7

“Ministry is messy” those were the words of my professor and adviser Dr. J.K. Jones during my ordination sermon. He wanted me to remember that serving God has its challenges. It’s messy. It doesn’t matter the ministry or service you may be involved in, you will face big challenges. One of the reasons I didn’t want to become a preacher like my father was because I saw firsthand what he went through. If you start working for God and expect it to be a walk in the park, you are in for a big surprise. Every service or ministry has its challenges but the Bible gives us guidance in how we can overcome such challenges.

In the first century when the church began, the gospel of Jesus began to spread throughout the Roman Empire. It began with the Jews but it didn’t take long for Christ’s message to reach non-jewish territory. Gentile. The church began and it was thriving as many more people turned to Christ and committed themselves to live as his disciples. **Satan began to attack the church through severe persecution.** Satan attacked the church from the outside, the religious leaders who didn’t want the preaching of Jesus began to arrest and mistreat the Christians. However this didn’t stop the advancement of the gospel of Jesus, the believers continued to be strong in their faith and their number continued to increase. Satan could not stop the growth of the church through outside influence. **Then Satan’s strategy changed; he began to attack the church from the inside.** This is really Satan’s most effective technic to stop the growth of a church. In chapter 6 Satan tried to distract the apostles from their main mission.

Acts 6:1-7

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing. This is telling us about the growth that was taking place.

When there is growth, there will be problems.

The problem or main issue was a complaint from the Grecian Jews (Hellenistic Jews or Greek speaking Jews). Their widows were being overlooked or neglected in the daily distribution of food. Picture this scenario: people complaining that others were being shown special favor in distribution of food. This issue needed the attention of the apostles or else it could have divided the church.

When you deal with lots of people, with different personalities and expectations, complaints will occur.

Handling the problem. The apostles sprung into action!

The apostles called the church together to deal with this issue. Whatever problems or complaints someone may have, they need to be brought to the leadership of the church to deal with it accordingly. Otherwise it becomes gossips and this is not productive for the growth of the kingdom of God.

“The apostles’ reply: “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.

So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, “We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program. (NLT)

And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. (ESV)

First, the apostles identified their main priority. The preaching of God’s word. They told the church they had no desire to abandon the preaching in order to take on another ministry.

In some churches in America and other parts of the world the people expect the preacher to do everything, to be involved in every ministry or every program in the church. This is a recipe for disaster. When this happens, the church will not grow.

The apostles told the congregation what their main priority was; they already had their ministry and they were not going to neglect it in order to do another one.

The suggestion: (v.3)

Choose seven men from among you: men of good reputation (known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. *Being full of the Spirit and being wise are evident qualities in a person.*

These men were to handle or to manage this task (We will turn this responsibility over to them). These seven men will be in charge of the ministry of distribution of food. (Food pantry ministry).

The apostles would give their attention to prayer and the preaching of the word. (v.4) *We will attend constantly or persist in prayer and the preaching of the gospel.*

This was approved by everyone and they selected seven men to take care of the ministry of food distribution. **Stephen:** (a man full of the Holy Spirit), **Philip, Procurus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas** and **Nicolas** from Antioch a convert to Judaism.

These men were presented to the apostles who prayed and laid their hands on them.

The apostles prayed for these ministry leaders and their ministry, but they were not in charge of this ministry. **God doesn't call you to be involved in every ministry or service, but he calls you to serve in some area.** The apostles knew they would be neglecting their main ministry if they got involved in the food distribution also.

The outcome? The gospel continued to be preached without hindrances. More people came to Jesus, even some Jewish priests received the message of the gospel of Jesus.

God was honored in how this problem was handled. The church will face problems and difficulties in our time and in the future. Satan will use anything to distract the church and its leaders from the main priority mission). The apostles understood, they should not abandon the preaching and teaching of the word of God to run a food program. **God was pleased with their decision and blessed them.**

A church may have several ministries or areas of service; those areas should have people in charge and not the ministers or the elders for that matter. A church that expects the ministers and elders to do everything won't grow and God will not bless it because of its bad stewardship.

Overseeing a ministry doesn't mean that you have to be in every activity under the sun. Leaders are to empower others to do ministry and let them do them.

The more growth a church experiences, the more challenges it will face. (Complaints, etc)

Any challenge in ministry can be resolved by not ignoring it and honoring God with the decisions made.

Every ministry has to be bathed in prayer. It's by praying that you seek God's wisdom and guidance on the matter. The Christians were devoted to prayer, and we must daily be committed to pray for the ministries we have in this church.

God blesses a church that doesn't let anything distract it from the main goal,

In God's arena, challenges and issues become opportunities for growth. **They become blessings!**