

Challenges In Ministry. Acts 6:1-7

A new year has begun and with it, new challenges. You will be challenged in many areas. Your faith and convictions will continue to be challenged. This is a year in which you will have to make a decision regarding who you would like to see as president of this nation. You will face challenges as individuals and we will face challenges as a church. ***It doesn't matter the ministry or service you may be involved in, you will face big challenges.*** If you start working for God and expect it to be a walk in the park, you will be surprised. 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. 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; 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.** ***Growth is great, but with much growth comes great challenges as well.*** 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 was a great thing happening, the church was growing. More people were becoming followers of Jesus. **Growth has its challenges, (More people to deal with, more personality differences and so on)**

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 could have become racial and had the potential to split the church. This issue needed the attention of the apostles or else it could have divided the church.

The **apostles were the shepherds, preachers, teachers of this church**. They were responsible for the spiritual health of this new community. As church leaders, they needed to resolve this conflict or challenge that had the potential threat to put an end to the expansion of the gospel.

Handling the problem: The apostles moved into action! (they didn't ignore it)

The apostles called the church (the disciples) 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 recognized this would distract them from their main mission.

“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.

"We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program. (NLT)

“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.

The church was growing and more ministries were already developing and the apostles understood they could not do every ministry in the church.

I think I should define the word ministry here. **Ministry** (*service*) *Diakonia*

The phrase *serve on tables* (*wait on table*) v.2 minister on table (Diaconia)

A deacon is a servant or minister who does the ministry or service. Whoever does service is a servant, whoever does ministry is a minister. **This is not a title:** you are called servant because you are serving. There are so many different types of ministries or services, and different people in charge of these ministries. (*Preaching and teaching, young adult, children ministry, music ministry, administrative ministry, hospitality, etc*) Here in our text we learn about two different kinds of ministry this church was involved in.

“We will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word (v.4) the ministry of preaching/teaching and prayer. This was the main ministry of the apostles. And they didn’t want to get involved in another one. **The leaders don’t have to do every ministry or service in the church.** Their job is more to equip others to do the work of ministry. **EPH.4:11-13**

The suggestion to handle this challenge: (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, Procorus, 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. (v.6)

The apostles prayed for these ministry leaders and their ministry. Everyone in the church knew who was in charge of the food distribution ministry.

The outcome of the apostles' decision? The gospel continued to spread without hindrances. More people came to Jesus, even some Jewish priests received the message of the gospel of Jesus.

-New people were empowered to minister in the area of service to which they were called.
-God was pleased in how they handled the challenge. God provided more growth.

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 mission). New areas of service will emerge and more challenges will come, but like the apostles, we must handle them the Jesus way. Not letting anything, even other ministries, distract you from the ministry you have been called to do.

Every church may differ in the areas of ministries. If you are leading a ministry you are a ministry leader/servant leader. When you are in charge of a specific area in your church, you are a ministry leader (servant, deacon). I would like us to start using the phrase ministry leaders. **This is a function, not a title as many have understood it today.**

SICC 2015 ministries: Educational ministry team; hospitality ministry team, maintenance ministry team; outreach ministry team, administrative ministry team

Praise and worship ministry:

- worship leaders:
- sound booth (sound and PowerPoint)
- vocals
- special coordinator:
- Instrumentalists:
- Scheduling
- Planning
- Music filing
- Creating/updating bulletins

SICC has many areas of ministries, if you are not involved in one, find one in which you can develop your gifts abilities. Find one that is suitable to you. We'll love to talk to you about ministries and where do you see yourself serving.

Growth is great, but with much growth comes more challenges. These challenges become opportunities for ministry. In God's arena, challenges and issues become opportunities for growth and for service. **They become blessings!**