

The Important Necessity of Deacons

Acts 6:1-7

Acts 6:1–7 (NKJV)

6 Now in those days, when *the number of* the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

² Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. ³ Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ⁴ but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

⁵ And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, ⁶ whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

⁷ Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Introduction

The Bible teaches that there are two offices in the church. These are recognized offices of men who are ordained into that ministry for the purpose of service to the church. They are Elders and Deacons. They are the necessary and only biblical leadership authorized by the Scripture. Elders are pastors and Deacons are servants of the church. Both are essential to the ministry of the church. But what is often missed is that the Deacons of the church are essential for the ability of the Elders to do what God has called them to do. Without deacons, the Elders can quickly become overwhelmed with important ministerial needs of the church and then not be able to take care of and shepherd the church.

History is full of examples of Godly men who have served as deacons in the church and history is full of examples of deacons that have caused lots of trouble in local churches. In fact, the relationship between a pastor and his deacons has been the brunt of many jokes in the Baptist church.

The rumor once spread that Spurgeon had said, “a deacon is worse than a devil, for if you resist the devil he will flee from you, but if you resist a deacon he will fly at you.” It was common in those days for pastors to complain about their deacons. Spurgeon once observed that “many of our ministering brethren bitterly rate them, others tremble at the mention of their very name, and a few put on their armour and prepare to do battle with them wherever they go, as if they were the dragons of ministerial life.”

But Spurgeon took a different approach. He firmly denied that he ever said such a thing to disparage deacons. Rather, he defended them as a gift from Christ to the church.

Whatever there may be here and there of mistake, infirmity, and even wrong, we are assured from wide and close observation, that the greater number of our deacons are an honour to our faith, and we may style them as the apostle did his brethren, the “glory of Christ” ... Deprive the church of her deacons, and she would be bereaved of her most valiant sons; their loss would be the shaking of the pillars of our spiritual house, and would cause a desolation on every side. Thanks be to God such a calamity is not

likely to befall us, for the great Head of the church in mercy to her, will always raise up a succession of faithful men, who will use the office well, and earn unto themselves a good degree and much boldness in the faith.

Spurgeon could say this because of his own pastoral experience with deacons both in Waterbeach and London.

In his pastorate at Waterbeach, Spurgeon found his deacons to be indispensable for the work of the ministry. Spurgeon was a solo, bi-vocational pastor of a village church that grew from a few dozen to over four hundred members. How did he manage the care of the church? Only with the help of his deacons.

The deacons of my first village pastorate were in my esteem the excellent of the earth, in whom I took great delight. Hard-working men on the week-day, they spared no toil for their Lord on the Sabbath; I loved them sincerely, and do love them still. In my opinion, they were as nearly the perfection of deacons of a country church as the kingdom could afford.

Coming alongside Spurgeon, these deacons not only served the church, but they also mentored their

teenage pastor in the ministry, often encouraging him, but at times rebuking him. On one occasion, a deacon wisely confronted Spurgeon on his careless choice of words in the pulpit.

Mr. King once gave me a kindly hint in a very delicate manner. He did not tell me that I should speak more guardedly in the pulpit; but when I left his house, one Monday morning, I found a pin in my Bible, stuck through Titus 1. 8: “Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you.” Nothing could have been in better taste. The wise rebuke was well deserved and lovingly taken. It was so deftly given that its value was thereby increased indefinitely. Mr. King was a deacon of deacons to me, and to the Waterbeach Church. These wise deacons proved to be instrumental in Spurgeon’s growth and maturation as a pastor, preparing him for a much larger sphere of ministry.

<https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/blog-entries/the-churchs-valiant-sons-spurgeon-on-deacons/>

Lesson

I. The Complaint

II. The Concern

III. The Conclusion

IV. The Choosing

V. The Consequence

I. The Complaint

6 Now in those days, when *the number of the disciples was multiplying*, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

6 Now in those days, when *the number of the disciples was multiplying*,

The church had been growing at a rapid pace. Thousands had been saved.

They were being saved

Acts 2:41 (NKJV)

⁴¹ Then those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added *to them*.

Acts 2:47 (NKJV)

⁴⁷ praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved.

Acts 4:4 (NKJV)

⁴ However, many of those who heard the word believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand.

Acts 5:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ And believers were increasingly added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,

Church growth continued because the apostles persisted in their daily ministry of public proclamation and teaching about Jesus. For the first time in Acts, those who believed are described as *disciples*. The term *mathētēs* was used in the Greco-Roman world to describe a ‘learner’ or ‘apprentice’, who was attached to and followed a respected teacher, usually in a school or fellowship of disciples.

They were being Sacrificial

Acts 2:44–45 (NKJV)

⁴⁴ Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

Acts 4:33–35 (NKJV)

³³ And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. ³⁴ Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, ³⁵ and laid *them* at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

They were Suffering

Acts 5:17–18 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Then the high priest rose up, and all those who *were* with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, ¹⁸ and laid their

hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison.

Acts 5:40–42 (NKJV)

⁴⁰ And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten *them*, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ⁴¹ So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. ⁴² And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus *as* the Christ.

They were being Servants

6 Now in those days, when *the number of the disciples was multiplying*, there arose a **complaint** against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

complaint

grumbling (murmuring) n. — a complaint uttered in a low and indistinct tone.

γογγυσμός, οὐ, ὅ context indicates whether the utterance is one of discontent or satisfaction),

behind-the-scenes talk.

Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). In [A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature](#) (3rd ed., p. 204). University of Chicago Press.

____ I do not believe that this problem of the neglecting of the widows was intentional. Based on the rapid growth and growing needs of a large congregation, and the clear references to the sacrificial giving and service of the people....this was an administrative oversight.

If there was one group that understood the importance of taking care of widows, it was the Hebrews.

Deuteronomy 24:19–21 (NKJV)

¹⁹ “When you reap your harvest in your field, and forget a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. ²⁰ When you beat your olive trees, you shall not go over the boughs again; it

shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow. ²¹ When you gather the grapes of your vineyard, you shall not glean *it* afterward; it shall be for the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow.

Deuteronomy 26:12 (NKJV)

¹² “When you have finished laying aside all the tithe of your increase in the third year—the year of tithing—and have given *it* to the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, so that they may eat within your gates and be filled,

Isaiah 1:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Learn to do good;
Seek justice,
Rebuke the oppressor;
Defend the fatherless,
Plead for the widow.

Ezekiel 22:6–7 (NKJV)

⁶ “Look, the princes of Israel: each one has used his power to shed blood in you. ⁷ In you they have made light of father and mother; in your midst they have oppressed the stranger; in you they have mistreated the fatherless and the widow.

Malachi 3:5 (NKJV)

⁵ And I will come near you for judgment;
I will be a swift witness
Against sorcerers,
Against adulterers,
Against perjurers,
Against those who exploit wage earners and
widows and orphans,
And against those who turn away an alien—
Because they do not fear Me,”
Says the Lord of hosts.

Matthew 23:14 (NKJV)

¹⁴ **Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!
For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense
make long prayers. Therefore you will receive
greater condemnation.**

Most of I Timothy 5 is dedicated to the care of widows.

James 1:27 (NKJV)

²⁷ Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their

trouble, *and* to keep oneself unspotted from the world.

So this is not a lack of understanding of the crucial and obligatory need of taking care of the widows. This could be an oversight due to the language barriers and a simple misunderstanding

Notice that there is no rebuke mentioned for partiality or disobedience to the OT commandments. But I believe Apostles saw the potential for division if this was not addressed.

_____ arose a complaint against the Hebrews
_____ by the Hellenists, because their widows
_____ were neglected in the daily distribution.

The Hellenistic Jews in 6:1 would have been Greek-speaking Jews from the Dispersion or their descendants, who lived in or around Jerusalem and attended synagogues where Greek was spoken (cf. 6:9). Those who had come to believe in Jesus as the Messiah had joined the church

Peterson, D. G. (2009). [*The Acts of the Apostles*](#) (p. 231). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

In Acts 6 no one was being particularly evil, lying to the Holy Spirit or anything of that nature. It was a question of administration, resulting from the church's growing pains. The people of Jerusalem spoke different languages. We know this because of Pentecost, where people "each heard [the apostles] speaking in his own language" (Acts 2:6). Among these many languages two were most prominent: Aramaic, a form of classical Hebrew spoken by those of Jewish descent, and Greek, spoken by those who had settled in Judah as a result of the conquests of Alexander the Great three hundred years earlier. Greek was the *lingua franca* of the day. These two languages understandably resulted in two main divisions of the church, and it was this that led to the problem.

Boice, J. M. (1997). [*Acts: an expositional commentary*](#) (p. 112). Baker Books.

it refers to Jewish Christians who spoke only Greek, as opposed to Jewish Christians whose everyday spoken language was Aramaic (or less likely Hebrew), but who may also have spoken Greek

Peterson, D. G. (2009). [The Acts of the Apostles](#) (p. 231). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

They used the Septuagint instead of the Hebrew Scriptures. While remaining loyal to Judaism, they had absorbed some of the Greek culture that surrounded them. That made them suspect to the Palestinian Jews, especially the Pharisees. “According to the Talmud, Pharisaism made little secret of its contempt for Hellenists ... they were frequently categorized by the native-born and assumedly more scrupulous populace of Jerusalem as second-class Israelites” (Richard N. Longenecker, “The Acts of the Apostles,” in Frank E. Gaebelin, ed., *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, vol. 9 [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1981], 329). Some of that racial and cultural hostility carried over into the church.

Many of the Hellenists had been in Jerusalem for Passover and Pentecost. After their conversion, they decided to remain there under the apostles’ teaching. Others were older people who had returned to Palestine to live out their lives. They were a minority in the church, which helps explain why their needs were overlooked.

As often happens, matters came to a head over a seemingly insignificant issue.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1994). [Acts](#) (Vol. 1, p. 178). Moody Press.

were **neglected** in the daily **distribution**.

Acts 6:1 (NASB95)

were being overlooked in the daily serving *of food*.

The claim that *their widows were being overlooked* (*paretheōrounto*) implies neglect in this context (BDAG). Gaventa points out that ‘because most women spent their lives in households that belonged to their fathers and then their husbands, they controlled little property and had little economic opportunity’.⁹ When widowed, they were particularly vulnerable economically and socially.

Peterson, D. G. (2009). [The Acts of the Apostles](#) (p. 230). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

διᾱκονία, ἡ, *service*, Th.1.133 (pl.), Pl.*R*.371c, etc.; οὐκ ἔστι ταῦτ’ ἀρχή, ἀλλ’ ἐπιμέλειά τις καὶ δ. Aeschin.3.13.

2. *attendance on a duty, ministration*, D.18.206; ἡ δ. ἡ καθημερινή, of *ministering* to external wants,

Act.Ap.6.1; but also ἡ δ. τοῦ λόγου ib.4, cf. 1.17, etc.

II. *body of servants or attendants*, Plb.15.25.21

III. *instruments of service*, = διακόνημα ii, Moschioap.Ath.5.208b

Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996). In [A Greek-English lexicon](#) (p. 398). Clarendon Press.

NOTE:

It should be pointed out that we have no mention of a need like this until we get to chapter 6. The church had grown by the thousands and no need arose until now, and primarily was a language barrier issue and an admin issue. That speaks volumes to the servant heart of the believers of that time. They were already ministering and doing the work of the deacons and making sure the needs were taken care of.

I. The Complaint

II. The Concern

2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said,

“It is not **desirable** that we should leave the word of God and **serve** tables....

desirable ἄρεστός [ἄ], ἡ, ὄν, *acceptable, pleasing*); *satisfactory*, Liddell, H. G., Scott, R., Jones, H. S., & McKenzie, R. (1996). In [A Greek-English lexicon](#) (p. 238). Clarendon Press.

serve tables....

The verb *diakoneō* is related to the noun διάκονος (*diakonos*, “servant”) and similarly can refer to table service or another action associated with hosting. As Mary sits at Jesus’ feet listening to his teaching, Martha asks him, “Lord, is it not a concern to you that my sister has left me alone to make preparations (*diakoneō*)?” (Luke 10:40). More commonly in the nt, *diakoneō* describes the Church’s faithful service in response to God’s grace: “Just as each one has received a gift, use it for serving (*diakoneō*) one another, as good stewards of the varied grace of God. If anyone speaks, let it be as the oracles of God; if anyone serves (*diakoneō*), let it be as by the strength that God provides” (1 Pet 4:10–11).

Lewellen, E. (2014). [Servant](#). In D. Mangum, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, & R. Hurst (Eds.), *Lexham Theological Wordbook*. Lexham Press.

It may be helpful to note that the word for tables, *trapeza*, can mean “a table or counter of a money changer,” or “money matters,” as well as an eating table (cf. such use in Matt. 21:12; Luke 19:23). To involve themselves in the details of serving meals and handling money matters would take them away from their calling

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1994). [Acts](#) (Vol. 1, p. 179). Moody Press.

“It is not **desirable** that we should leave the word of God....”

There are hundred good things that you can do in ministry. Many of those things can be very beneficial to the Body of Christ, but is it the most important thing and are we forsaking the priorities to take care of these other ministries?

Nothing could be so far removed from the Biblical pattern as to make the preaching of the Word of God not central to worship. It is not an add on or a time filler. It is not done because we have to do it or we always done it that way. It is central, It is the priority

It is the persistent pattern of the Early N.T. Church to preach and teach the Word of God and is one of primary means that God has chosen to sanctify his people.

Many in the ministry today have left the emphasis on prayer and the Word of God. They are so involved in the administrative details of their church that they have little time left for intercession and study. Yet pastors are given to the church “for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12). Their calling is to mature the saints so they can do the work of the ministry. By neglecting that calling, they doom their congregations to languish in spiritual infancy. Programs are no substitute for the power of God and His Word. Those whom God has called to the ministry of prayer and the Word must make it their priority.

Prayer and the ministry of the word are inseparably linked. Prayer must permeate a pastor’s sermon preparation, or his sermons will be superficial and dry. He must also pray constantly that his people will apply the truths he teaches them. The man of God must also pray that he would be a pure channel through which God’s truth can flow to his congregation.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1994). [Acts](#) (Vol. 1, p. 179). Moody Press.

The ministry demands total commitment, everything a man has to give. There is no substitute for hard work and discipline. A young man once said to the gifted expository preacher of God's Word Donald Grey Barnhouse, "I'd give the world to be able to teach the Bible like you." Looking him straight in the eye Dr. Barnhouse replied, "Good, because that's exactly what it will cost you."

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1994). [Acts](#) (Vol. 1, p. 180). Moody Press.

This was the priority right from the beginning

Acts 2:42 (NKJV)

⁴² And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

1 Timothy 4:13 (NKJV)

¹³ Till I come, give attention to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine.

1 Timothy 4:16 (NKJV)

¹⁶ Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them, for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.

1 Timothy 5:17 (NKJV)

¹⁷ Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine.

2 Timothy 4:1–4 (NKJV)

4 I charge *you* therefore before God and the Lord Jesus Christ, who will judge the living and the dead at His appearing and His kingdom: ² Preach the word! Be ready in season *and* out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. ³ For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, *because* they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; ⁴ and they will turn *their* ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables.

Titus 2:1 (NKJV)

2 But as for you, speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine:

I. The Complaint

II. The Concern

III. The Conclusion

3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ⁴ but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

The solution to the ministry need and to allow the apostles to remain devoted to prayer and the word was to appoint men over this ministry need. If this was not done, the potential of disaster, division and a disfunction would cripple the effective nature of the Apostles ministry of the Word and Prayer.

This had a number benefits.

1. It kept the priority of the Prayer and the Word the Priority.

2. It enables the Apostles to be devoted and not distracted.

3. It allows others in the church to do ministry that is needed

4. It keeps the Apostles, Elders, Pastors from being overly worked and stressed in trying to take care of all the needs.

This is a pattern teaching as far back as Exodus and Moses.

Exodus 18:17–24 (NKJV)

¹⁷ So Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you do *is* not good. ¹⁸ Both you and these people who *are* with you will surely wear yourselves out. For this thing *is* too much for you; you are not able to perform it by yourself. ¹⁹ Listen now to my voice; I will give you counsel, and God will be with you: Stand before God for the people, so that you may bring the difficulties to God. ²⁰ And you shall teach them the statutes and the laws, and show them the way in which they must walk and the work they must do. ²¹ Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them *to be* rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. ²² And let them judge the people at all times. Then it will be *that* every great matter they shall bring to you, but every

small matter they themselves shall judge. So it will be easier for you, for they will bear *the burden* with you. ²³ If you do this thing, and God *so* commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all this people will also go to their place in peace.”

²⁴ So Moses heeded the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said.

3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men

Notice that the apostles appeal to the congregation of believer to seek these men out. They were to look among themselves for qualified men and bring the names to the apostles to appoint. The congregation is involved in this process.

We don't have have formal process like some churches do, but we listen to you and consider the names you recommend. Someone came to us about most of you who are deacons and said that they thought that that man would make a good deacon. Or as in this case today, it was said, “Have you ever considered the men to be deacons. Look, they have a love for Christ and His church and are already serving the body.”

seven men— does not mean that that is the perfect number or that we are only to have seven. It just means that this is the number they needed to take care of the need.

But most importantly was the fact that these men were godly men. Men who love Christ, love their families and are full of the Holy Spirit and Wisdom.

3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven **men** of *good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom*, whom we may appoint over this business; **4** but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

There are 5 requirements listed in this text that must be met for a man to be appointed as Deacon.

1. **among you** — —from the church—believers, and I would add membership. Those who have already become a committed part of that body, submitting to the leadership and discipline of the church.

That indicates more than the obvious truth that those who lead the church must be believers. Churches should seek to develop their leadership from within their own ranks. By hiring pastors away from other churches, they often overlook the gifted men God has raised up in their own congregations. A church committed to the ministry of edifying and equipping its members will not have to look elsewhere for its leaders

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1994). [Acts](#) (Vol. 1, p. 182). Moody Press.

2. **men**

άνήρ, άνδρός, ό (Hom.+, common in all the mngs. known to our lit.) a male person

- ① **an adult human male, *man, husband***
- ② in contrast to woman *man*

Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000). In [A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature](#) (3rd ed., p. 79). University of Chicago Press.

man n. — an adult person who is male, as opposed to a woman; sometimes referred to collectively as men.

1 Timothy 3:12 (NKJV)

¹² Let deacons be the **husbands** of one wife, ruling *their* children and their own houses well.

, those who would lead the church must be men.

Women certainly have vital roles to fill (cf. Titus 2:3–5). In the early church, such women as Dorcas, Lydia, Phoebe, Priscilla, and Philip’s daughters were greatly used by God. Nevertheless, God’s design for the church is that men assume the leadership roles (1 Cor. 11:3, 8, 9; 14:34; 1 Tim. 2:11–12).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1994). [Acts](#) (Vol. 1, pp. 181–182). Moody Press.

3. good reputation, Pres pass Part

to be approvingly testified of v. — to be or become affirmed favorably by firsthand authentication.

μαρτυρέω (*martyreō*) witness, give testimony (Jn 3:28);

2. LN 33.263 **speak well of**, commend, speak respect,

vouch for (Lk 4:22; Ac 6:3; 10:22; 16:2; 22:12; Col 4:13; 1Ti 5:10; Heb 11:2, 4, 5, 39; 3Jn 6, 12

Swanson, J. (1997). In [Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek \(New Testament\)](#) (electronic ed.). Logos Research Systems, Inc.

They must be men of integrity, above reproach, as is required of elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.

1 Timothy 3:8–14 (NKJV)

⁸ Likewise deacons *must be* reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, ⁹ holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience. ¹⁰ But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being *found* blameless. ¹¹ Likewise, *their wives must be* reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling *their* children and their own houses well. ¹³ For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus.

Servants must set an example of godliness for their people to follow. And they must be qualified spiritually regardless of their position in the world or their human ability. To have a **good reputation** was essential for these seven, since they would be entrusted with large sums of money to purchase the food to be distributed.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1994). [Acts](#) (Vol. 1, p. 182). Moody Press.

4. **full of the Holy Spirit**

Those who would lead the church must also be **full of the Spirit**. They must be fully yielded to His

control in every area of their lives. Such men were Stephen (Acts 6:5) and Barnabas (Acts 11:24).

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1994). [Acts](#) (Vol. 1, p. 182). Moody Press.

5. [wisdom](#)

A final requirement is that they possess **wisdom**. They must have biblical and theological knowledge, and the practical wisdom to apply biblical truth to the situations of everyday life. They must be men of sober, righteous judgment. First Chronicles 12:32 describes some wise leaders of Israel as “men who understood the times, with knowledge of what Israel should do.” Such men does God call to serve His church.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1994). [Acts](#) (Vol. 1, p. 182). Moody Press.

Some say that you cannot use Act 6 as formal declaration of the office of deacon, and with that I would agree. The men in this passage are never called formally “deacons”. The word in different forms is used a couple of time to refer to the ministry but there is not formal office recognize as such. But when we understand the nature of Book of Acts and the transitional nature from Old Covenant to

New Covenant, and the nation Israel to the Church, a lot of this make perfect sense.

The church is being formed. It is taking shape. We still have apostles at this point. Paul is still Saul and not an apostle as of yet. The blueprint for the church is being drawn now. It is not until Paul and the Pastoral epistles that we get the details of Elders and Deacons.

Here in Acts 6 we have the infancy of deacons. The DNA is established. The Reason for Deacons and the Requirement of Deacons and the example of how to go about appointing them. Only example we have in the N.T. and it is sufficient, since the needs of the church will change as the culture and the world changes.

The question arises as to whether these seven can be properly viewed as the first official deacons. They performed some functions of the later deacons, and forms of the Greek word *diakonos* (deacon) are used to describe their ministry (vv. 1–2). Yet to view them in terms of a formal office is anachronistic. Of the seven, only Stephen and Philip appear elsewhere in Scripture, but they are never called deacons. Indeed, Stephen's later ministry was clearly that of an evangelist, as was Philip's (Acts 21:8). While Acts later refers to elders (14:23; 20:17), there is no mention of deacons. That is strange, if the office of deacon began in Acts 6. Further, all seven had Greek names, implying that they may have been Hellenists. It seems unlikely, however, that a permanent order of deacons for the Jerusalem church would include no native Palestinian Jews.

There are important principles in this passage for the continuing life of the church. Here we see that the congregation is to nominate certain spiritually qualified men to serve, with the final appointment resting with those already in position as teachers and spiritual leaders. Still, it seems best to see the selection of these seven as the Jerusalem church's response to a temporary crisis. It should be noted that the Greek word group from which our English word "deacon" derives denotes service in general. *Diakonos*, *diakoneō*, and *diakonia* are used throughout the New Testament in a general, nonspecific way (cf. Luke 4:39; 10:40; 17:8; 22:27; John 2:5, 9; 12:2; Rom. 13:3–4; 15:25; 2 Cor. 8:3–4). Thus their use in Acts 6 does not imply that the seven held the office of a deacon. Significantly, when the church at Antioch later sent famine relief to the Jerusalem church, no mention is made of deacons (Acts 11:29–30). Instead, the relief was sent to the elders. Stephen and Philip certainly did not continue long in this role, since both became evangelists. And persecution would shortly scatter the Jerusalem congregation (Acts 8:1), ending the ministry of the other five. God raised them for a brief period of ministry, to handle a crisis. The continuing unity of the church shows the effectiveness of their ministry.

3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; ⁴ but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word.

we may appoint— the congregation is to select them but the apostles, now elders are to appoint them.

This the ordination.

Deacons are to be ordained in much the same way a elders

Titus 1:5 (NKJV)

⁵ For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and **appoint elders** in every city as I commanded you—

It says that the men are to be tested, observed, before they are appointed

1 Timothy 3:10 (NKJV)

¹⁰ But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as deacons, being *found* blameless.

the same as the elders

1 Timothy 5:22 (NKJV)

²² Do not lay hands on anyone hastily, nor share in other people's sins; keep yourself pure.

Acts 6:6 (NKJV)

⁶ whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.

____ The reason for the selection and ordination of these men is again emphasized.

_____ 4 but we will give ourselves _____
continually to prayer and to the ministry
of the word.

proskartereó: to attend constantly

Original Word: προσκαρτερέω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: proskartereó

Phonetic Spelling: (pros-kar-ter-eh'-o)

Definition: to attend constantly

Usage: I persist, persevere in, continue steadfast in; I wait upon.

4342 proskartereó (from 4314 /prós, "towards, interactively with" and 2594 /kartereó, "show

steadfast strength," derived from 2904 /krátos, "prevailing strength") – properly, to consistently showing strength which prevails (in spite of difficulties); to endure (remain firm), staying in a fixed direction.

[4342 /proskarteréō means "to continue to do something with intense effort, with the possible implication of despite difficulty – 'to devote oneself to, to keep on, to persist in'"

Lesson

I. The Complaint

II. The Concern

III. The Conclusion

IV. The Choosing

That all seven bore Greek names suggests all were Hellenists. If true, it was a demonstration of the loving unity of the church. Since the Hellenists felt slighted, the church decided to appoint seven from among them to rectify the situation. A split was thus avoided, and again Satan's attack was thwarted.

Stephen was to play a pivotal role in the spread of the gospel beyond Jerusalem. It was the persecution

connected with his martyrdom that propelled the church out of Jerusalem (Acts 8:1). The commendation of him as **a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit** reveals his character.

Philip also plays a prominent role in Acts. He took the gospel to the Samaritans (8:4–25), and to the Ethiopian eunuch (8:26–40). Four of his daughters became prophetesses (21:8).

Nothing definite is known about the remaining five men. Some early traditions connect **Prochorus** with John the apostle, possibly as his amanuensis when he wrote his gospel. According to those traditions, he later became bishop of Nicomedia and was martyred in Antioch (John B. Polhill, *The New American Commentary: Acts* [Nashville: Broadman, 1992], p. 182).

All that is known for certain about **Nicolas** is that he was a **proselyte** (a Gentile convert to Judaism) from **Antioch**. Some of the church Fathers associated him with the heretical group known as the Nicolaitans (Rev. 2:6, 15). But there is no evidence, apart from the similarity in the names, to connect him with that group. And as Lenski rightly observes, “It ought to be understood that decidedly more evidence is required in a matter of so serious a charge” (R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of the Acts of the Apostles* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961], 246).

6 whom they set before the apostles;
and when they had prayed, they laid
hands on them.

This first occasion in the New Testament of laying on of hands signified the identification and affirmation of the church with these men, and the support of their ministry. Elders, deacons, and all who served in the early church were ordained this way (cf. Acts 13:3; 1 Tim. 4:14; 5:22; 2 Tim. 1:6).

All though little is known about most of these men, they played a crucial role in the foundational history of the church. But for them, either the apostles' priorities would have been compromised, or the church may have split. Either would have been disastrous.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1994). [Acts](#) (Vol. 1, p. 184). Moody Press.

I. The Complaint

II. The Concern

III. The Conclusion

IV. The Choosing

V. The Consequence

7 Then the word of God **spread**, and
the number of the disciples

multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

As a direct result of the Apostles being free to devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word, the churches impact through the teaching and preaching of the Word grew and spread even more.

The Priorities had been recognized and set and now the church could be the church in all its fullness. The Apostles could pray and study and teach, the deacons could serve the food and take care of the widows and the church was unified and had a powerful influence on the culture through the spiritual growth of the saints and the heralding of the gospel.

spread

auxanó: to make to grow, to grow

Original Word: αὐξάνω

Part of Speech: Verb

Transliteration: auxanó

Phonetic Spelling: (owx-an'-o)

Definition: to make to grow, to grow

Usage: (a) I cause to increase, become greater (b) I increase, grow.

837 auksánō – properly, grow (increase); become greater in size (maturity, etc.). **837** /auksánō ("to grow") is key to authentic discipleship. Indeed, the Lord requires non-stop progress (development) in the life of faith.

The word of God ‘grew’ in the sense that its influence extended and the number who believed it grew. In Scripture, ‘the word of God’ is viewed as a vital force, reaching into people’s lives and transforming situations according to God’s will (e.g., Is. 2:3; 55:10–13; Jer. 23:28–29; Rom. 1:16; 10:17–18; 1 Thes. 2:13; Heb. 4:12–13; 1 Pet. 1:23–25)
Peterson, D. G. (2009). [*The Acts of the Apostles*](#) (pp. 235–236). William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.

multiplied greatly

sphodra: very much

Original Word: σφόδρα

Part of Speech: Adverb

Transliteration: sphodra

Phonetic Spelling: (sfod'-rah)

Definition: very much

Usage: exceedingly, greatly, very much.

4970 sphódra (from sphodros, "all-out, exceeding; very much", L-S) – properly, "done to the max," going all-

out ("wide-open") with total effort – like doing something "with a vengeance!"

[4970 /sphódra ("exceedingly") is "properly the neuter plural of sphodros ('vehement, violent') and means 'exceedingly, greatly,' and is placed after adjectives" (J. Thayer).]

The church today needs organization for the same reasons as the first fellowship. Pastors must be freed to focus on the preaching of the Word and prayer. Better organization can help meet the needs of all members and thus avoid conflict. And a unified, well-taught church will be a powerful witness to the lost world.

MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1994). [Acts](#) (Vol. 1, p. 185). Moody Press.

When Spurgeon first came to the New Park Street Chapel in December 1853, the church was in serious decline. A previous pastor had relocated the congregation to an awful part of town. The church had been through several successive short pastorates. Now, only a few dozen gathered in the cavernous hall each week. One of the deacons had just written to the Baptist association reporting no

growth in the membership and asking for their prayers.

Yet, among those who stayed were faithful deacons like William Olney and James Low. These men continued to “[hold] the fort in troublous times,” serving, shepherding, and praying for God’s grace. And in His providence, it was Olney who heard from a friend about a boy-preacher out in Cambridge who was causing a stir. It was Olney who invited him to supply the pulpit, despite his youthfulness and countrified manners. And because of these deacons’ humble perseverance and faithfulness, the history of their church would be forever changed.

<https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/blog-entries/the-churchs-valiant-sons-spurgeon-on-deacons/>