

Serving - more than waiting on tables



Acts 6:1-7



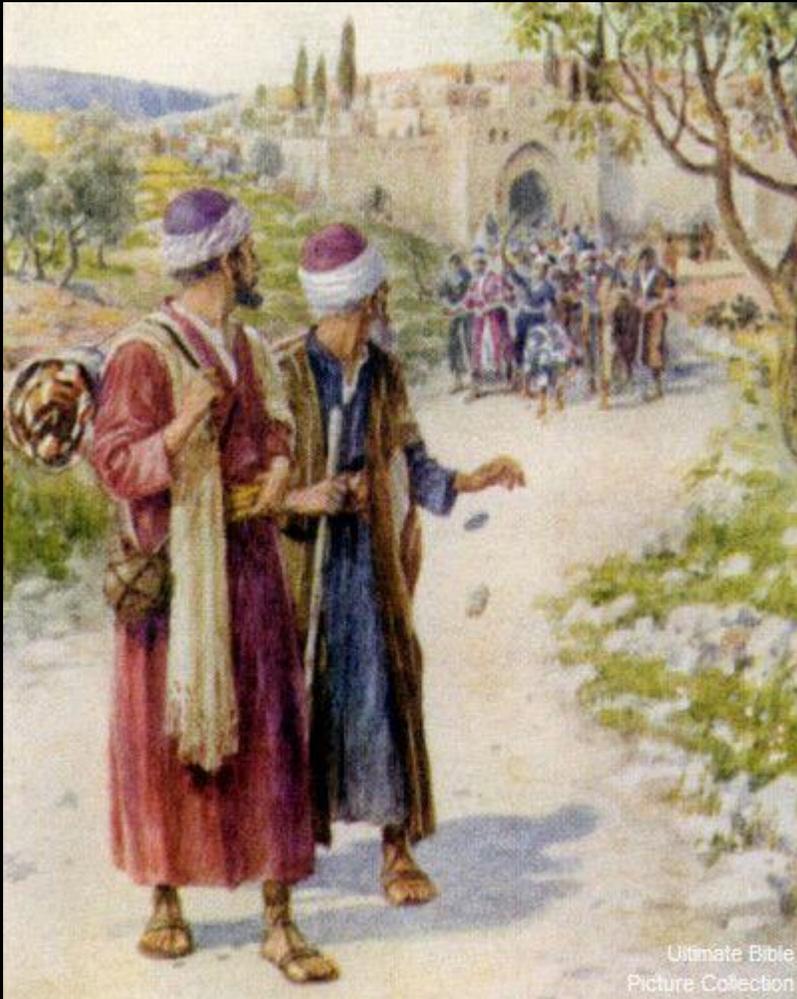
Prince Phillip, the Duke of Edinburgh, 10 June 1921 – 9 April 2021

Service

- ⁶ *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.*



Helping the Poor



- *They gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship when they recognised the grace given to me. They agreed that we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised.¹⁰ All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I had been eager to do all along.*

- Galatians 2:10-11

The problem: overlooked!

- “Complained”
- Cultural dynamics



How do the apostles show good leadership here?

- ¹ *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.* ² *So 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.*
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.'*
- ⁵ *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.* ⁶ *They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.*

The solution: seven servants



- *It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. (2)*
- *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. (3)*
- The apostles were looking for well qualified people - spiritual people.
- “To wait on” = deacon = minister or servant

The solution: seven servants

- ⁸ *In the same way, deacons are to be worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁹ They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. ¹² A deacon must be faithful to his wife and must manage his children and his household well. ¹³ Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.*



- 1 Timothy 3:8-10, 12

The solution: seven servants

- Character matters!
- ⁵ *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.*
- ⁶ *They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.*
- Any names seem familiar to you?

What do we learn about service from these verses?

- ¹ *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.* ² *So 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.* 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.'*
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Management



- *Management is “the art of getting things done through and with people in formally organised groups.”*

- Peter Drucker

Disempowering people

- Confusion about the purpose of the job
- Not knowing whether they're succeeding
- Not enough time or resources to do the job well
- Believing they can't make a difference
- Poor communication with the leadership
- Not being listened to or trusted
- Someone else solving the problems and telling them what to do
 - William Byham Zapp! *The Lightning of Empowerment*



Empowering people

- Direction - clear key result areas, goals, methods of measurement
- Knowledge - skills, training, information
- Support - approval, coaching, feedback, encouragement
- Good communication with leadership
- Encouragement, praise, recognition of their contribution.
- Working with a team that cares
- Responsibility to make decisions



Empowering people



- A church that is high on praise and encouragement is not a church full of big-headed, egotistical people but one where people feel their contribution matters and they want to do more.

6 Summaries in Acts

- After the apostles' decision to give their attention to prayer and preaching (6:7)
- After the dramatic conversion of Saul of Tarsus (9:31)
- After the equally wonderful conversion of the first Gentile, Cornelius, and the overthrow of Herod Agrippa I (12:24)
- After Paul's first missionary journey and the Jerusalem Council (16:5)
- After the second and third missionary journeys (19:20)
- And at the end of the book after Paul's arrival in Rome, where he preached 'boldly and without hindrance' (28:30–31)

A Serving Community

- There is a temptation with church to ask: “What's in it for me?”
- A better question: “How can I contribute?”
- Can we expand our energy and commitment to include our serving community?
- Because we need to serve!





- Big fund-raising dinner in June - inviters, decorators, bakers, event organisers ...
- Offering hospitality to visitors and newer people
- Sharing a testimony or story in our service
- Playing an instrument or doing tech
- Design and social media promo
- Mentoring a young person
- Connecting with table tennis players on Sunday afternoons
- New premises: maybe after school club, ESOL, cooking class, budgeting service - you name it!