



Acts Chapter 6

Introduction

What is your instinctive reaction if someone asks you what the priority of the church should be?

How do you usually respond to the pressure of competing, good things to do in your life?

Read

(Acts 6:1-7)

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.

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.

The issue in the early church was that it had grown too large for the ad hoc distribution of donations by the apostles. Probably through being overwhelmed by roles and tasks, the apostles had unconsciously been unfairly treating the widows who spoke Greek rather than Aramaic. The apostles were experiencing that feeling of having too many good things to do!

So, with the whole church community, they chose seven Greek-speaking leaders to be responsible for the food distribution, to make sure there was fairness and equality for all the widows. The twelve apostles then focused their time on ministry of the word (preaching, teaching and training) and prayer.

Discuss:

Does this kind of delegation make you feel uncomfortable?

Does it feel like the Apostles are *avoiding* some type of tasks?

Do you every feel this way about church today (KBC or other church)?

Read

(1 Corinthians 12:12-31)

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³ For we were all baptized by^[c] one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. ¹⁴ Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

¹⁵ Now if the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body.¹⁶ And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason stop being part of the body.¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be?¹⁸ But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹ If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰ As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

²¹ The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” ²² On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, ²³ and the parts that we think are less honourable we treat with special honour. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty,²⁴ while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body together, giving greater honour to the parts that lacked it,²⁵ so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. ²⁶ If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honoured, every part rejoices with it.

²⁷ Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.²⁸ And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance, and of different kinds of tongues. ²⁹ Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? ³⁰ Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues^[d]? Do all interpret? ³¹ Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

The apostle Paul describes the church community as a body, with different parts playing different roles. This seems to be what is happening in Acts – the apostles have one role to play, these seven Greek-speakers have another role to play. And these men are uniquely suited to this role because they were Greek-speaking leaders; they were best able to lead this ministry which until this point had accidentally treated Greek-speaking widows unfairly.

Discuss:

Is there a role that you play in the body of Christ, the church community?

Which part of the body do you see yourself providing to the whole?

Is there a role you could be part of, perhaps even one that you are **particularly suited / gifted** to play?

How might God be able to use you for his glory in the KBC community?

Read

Note that the seven leaders were described as “full of the Spirit”. Some commentators describe this phrase as meaning:

- They appear to be people whose lives are characterised by the steady presence of the Spirit. (James Hamilton)
- People whose lives are marked by the ongoing ministry of the Spirit. (I Howard Marshall)

People who are “full of the Spirit” in Acts (6:3, 5, 7:55 and 11:24) are thus likely to display characteristics such as the following “fruit of the Spirit”: (Galatians 5:22-23)

The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³gentleness and self-control.

Discuss:

Can you think of someone in your life who you would describe in the same way?

As “full of the Spirit”?

What is it about them that prompts this description?

What could we do to develop lives that would also be described as “full of the Spirit”?

Summary

*Ministry of the word and prayer (in all its forms) and practical acts of love and service (in all its forms) both appear to be important to the church. While ministry of the word and prayer appears to be **central**, both types of ministry are important, and a church that is lacking either is missing something!*

Discuss:

Do you think KBC models the importance of both these things well?

A prayer for all day everyday: Holy Spirit, help me be like Jesus and live for Jesus.