

***“Working as a United Team:”
Pastors and Deacons***

Acts 6:1-7

Exodus 17:8-13

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

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Acts 6:1-7 (CEV)

1. A lot of people were now becoming followers of the Lord. But some of the ones who spoke Greek started complaining about the ones who spoke Aramaic. They complained that the Greek-speaking widows were not given their share when the food supplies were handed out each day.
2. The twelve apostles called the whole group of followers together and said, “We should not give up preaching God’s message in order to serve at tables.
3. My friends, choose seven men who are respected and wise and filled with God’s Spirit. We will put them in charge of these things.
4. We can spend our time praying and serving God by preaching.”
5. This suggestion pleased everyone, and they began by choosing Stephen. He had great faith and was filled with the Holy Spirit. Then they chose Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and also Nicolaus, who worshiped with the Jewish people in Antioch.
6. These men were brought to the apostles. Then the apostles prayed and placed their hands on the men to show that they had been chosen to do this work.
7. God’s message spread, and many more people in Jerusalem became followers. Even a large number of priests put their faith in the Lord.

Exodus 17:8-13 (CEV)

8. When the Israelites were at Rephidim, they were attacked by the Amalekites.
9. So Moses told Joshua, “Have some men ready to attack the Amalekites tomorrow. I will stand on a hilltop, holding this walking stick that has the power of God.”
10. Joshua led the attack as Moses had commanded, while Moses, Aaron, and Hur stood on the hilltop.
11. The Israelites out-fought the Amalekites as long as Moses held up his arms, but they started losing whenever he had to lower them.
12. Finally, Moses was so tired that Aaron and Hur got a rock for him to sit on. Then they stood beside him and supported his arms in the same position until sunset.
13. That’s how Joshua defeated the Amalekites.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-12(CEV)

9. You are better off to have a friend than to be all alone, because then you will get more enjoyment out of what you earn.
10. If you fall, your friend can help you up. But if you fall without having a friend nearby, you are really in trouble.
11. If you sleep alone, you won't have anyone to keep you warm on a cold night.
12. Someone might be able to beat up one of you, but not both of you. As the saying goes, "A rope made from three strands of cord is hard to break."

Introduction:

- I am always amazed how God plans and orchestrates His work.
- He takes the least of these and does the extraordinary.
- Our Bible teaches us that God is a God of Plans and God of Order.
- God has always worked by plans.
- He had a plan when He made the universe!
- He had a plan when the making of humankind and establishing the human family.
- He had a plan for the work of the church.
- He had a plan for the financing the work of His church.
- It would seem strange to me that God would have a plan for everything else and not have a plan for the proclamation of the Gospel and meeting the needs of the saints.

A. The age long struggle in the area of Christianity has been a fierce fight.

1. On one side, seeking to advance the work of the Kingdom, we find the church, on the other side; we find Satan and all his imps.
2. Satan's work began in the 4th chapter of Acts, when we seen the bitter persecution aimed at the early church.
3. But the apostles stood tall and staunch and God came to their rescue.
4. He delivered them and the work of the church went on.
5. In the 5th chapter of Acts, we see Satan working through Ananias and Sapphira.
6. The lied to the Holy Spirit and death fell upon them. God took them out.

B. Fear fell upon the people and great numbers believed.

1. Then the apostles/preachers were arrested by the religious powers.
2. They were beaten and commanded not to preach the gospel anymore, but they went out rejoicing and proclaiming the gospel stronger than ever.
3. The devil became an eyewitness to the fact that after each persecution the church was stronger than ever before.
4. Now we must remember that the devil is not only evil; he is also cunning and wise, so he decides to attack from the inside.
5. The devil will start a campaign of criticism and faultfinding.
6. It works the same way today; we do not fear persecution from the outside.

C. So the devil does his work through an inside campaign.

1. One of the disgraces of Christianity today is that we have so many church quarrels and splits.
2. When these things happen, families and friends are divided, people are hurt, relationships are broken, many people quit the church, and young people are lost to the service of Christ.
3. There is no need for any church to have these quarrels.
4. They are usually based on trivialities, hearsay, and misunderstandings.
5. I want us to know that the church will never run into one single thing that cannot be settled in a prayerful conference.
6. If we have the Holy Spirit of God within us, when Christians go to quarreling amongst themselves, Satan sits back and laughs.
7. When in loving unity, we march forward in a solid line together; the devil trembles and takes a temporary leave.

D. By the time of the 6th chapter of Acts, the church has grown and multiplied to at least three thousand souls.

1. There were two groups in the church, the Jews and the Greeks.
2. In order to help all those who were in need, every church member contributed into the treasury as much as they were able.
3. The church is now so large that this distribution was a big task.
4. The Grecians felt that the Grecians widows were not receiving their fair share, so they began to complain.
5. The devil would be glad to cause a split decision and hinder so many from being saved, but the apostles were not going to allow it.

E. They held a conference and brought the matter up.

1. Pastor Peter presided and he said brethren, here is the trouble.
2. John stood to his feet and said brethren, I am sorry this matter has come up, but we must correct the situation. We must straighten it out!
3. Phillip stood and said, there are two courses of action for us to take.
 - a. We were called to be proclaimers of the Gospel and not welfare workers.
 - b. You remember, our Lord told us to preach the gospel, and I think we ought to give our time to the ministry and have the church select others to handle these matters.

***E. They held a conference and brought the matter up.
(cont'd)***

4. Thomas now says brethren; I believe that Philip has the solution to our problem.
 - a. I move that we ask the church to select seven good, wise, spiritual, faithful men to take care of these matters.
 - b. Andrew seconds the motion and it was overwhelmingly carried.
 - c. Peter was instructed to take the recommendation to the church conference.

F. Note that the apostles put the redemptive side of the gospel above and before the social side.

1. Pastor Peter presided and he said brethren, here is the trouble.
2. It is all right to feed people and meet the needs of people, but the most important part of the church's work is the preaching of the gospel and to present Christ to the lost.
3. The church is now being called into conference and Peter makes this statement: "Brethren, there has been some murmuring in our midst. It has been brought to our attention, and we have prayed about it and we are presenting you with this recommendation. We do not feel that it is all right for us to give up our calling to proclaim the gospels to serve tables. Therefore we recommend that you select seven good men from among you to handle these matters and we will give ourselves to the ministry."
4. Well, why seven, as we look about us, it appears that God has chosen the number seven as a symbol of divine perfection.

G. God really has a way of perfecting His work and creative genius.

1. We read that the presentation pleased the multitude and I can imagine one of the brothers moved that the recommendation be adapted.
2. There were several seconds. The vote was carried and the recommendations passed unanimously.
3. I want you to see the beauty and harmony and the goodness of all this. There is always a right way and a wrong way to do anything.
4. Whenever the church as work to do or a decision to be made we should always pray and commune with God for His guidance and direction along with consulting His holy word. These seven to be selected were to be proven men.

G. God really has a way of perfecting His work and creative genius.

(cont'd)

5. They were to prove their worthiness by their good lives, their faithfulness to all matters of the church life, their tithing, their concern for others, and their Cooperative spirit.
6. They are to be consecrated men full of the Holy Spirit.
7. They are to be sound in scripture principle, holding the mystery of faith in pure conscience.

H. We should not select persons who do not believe the bible to be the word of God, and do not believe the teachings that are the foundation of the faith.

1. They are to men of intellectual capacity, which is full of wisdom.
2. It is not necessary that they have a college degree, but they must have common sense.
3. They are to be men of unwavering loyalty.
4. They are to be loyal to the church, loyal to their Pastor, loyal to their convictions, and loyal to serving and giving to the work of the kingdom.
5. The men are to be servants of God, the Pastor, and the Church.
6. They were to be peace makers and not peace breakers!
7. The church did a very wise thing, the complaint had risen from the Greeks, and every deacon was able to meet the need.

I. That's the bigness of he Spirit of the Christian Spirit.

1. Christians must be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.
2. These persons were selected by apostles to create a team that would make a difference, resolve conflict, bring harmony to the church, but most of all free up, liberate the Pastor for the teaching and preaching of the gospel.

J. Adversarial or cooperative: which adjective best describes the Pastor-Deacon Relationship.

1. I often fear the answer is adversarial, but a cooperative relationship between a Pastor and his Deacons is essential to the harmony and effectiveness of the church.
2. Building such a relationship really demands commitment on both sides.

K. How can we create the United Team?

1. A church and its Pastor and Deacons are an exciting combination.
2. Officers of the church are ordained by God.
3. There is power in a congregation and its leaders, the Pastor and Deacons.
4. They are to transform people and communities.
5. They change lives and the world by the power of the gospel.
6. The Pastor and the Deacons are an important part of God's divine team.
7. God's ordained preacher and deacons hold unique positions.
8. The Pastor is the one who feeds the flock and leads them to reach others.

*L. How shall we work together as a united team of
Pastor and Deacon?*

1. Honor your Pastor and Deacons by praying to Him and every Pastor must pray for their Deacons and leaders.
2. Officers of the church are ordained by God.
3. There is power in a congregation and its leaders, the Pastor and Deacons.

***L. How shall we work together as a united team of
Pastor and Deacons. (cont'd)***

4. Why does your Pastor and Deacons need prayer?
 - a. We are fighting supernatural enemies, Ephesians 6.
 - b. For our struggle is not flesh and blood, but against the rulers of darkness and the power of darkness, authorities of darkness against spiritual evil in the heavenly realms.
 - c. We are human and we are susceptible to temptation.
 - d. We need wisdom and counsel for leading and teaching, and preaching.
 - e. Pray for your Pastor's strength, wisdom, discernment, and power every day.

*L. How shall we work together as a united team of
Pastor and Deacons. (cont'd)*

5. Praise and encourage each other.
 - a. The enemy is always trying to discourage us.
 - b. Good words lift and revitalize an individual.
 - c. Focus on your Pastor's and Deacons strong points and speak of them often.

***L. How shall we work together as a united team of
Pastor and Deacons. (cont'd)***

- 6.** Protect each other.
 - a.** Because of who we are, we must pray for each other.
 - b.** We are always under attack.
 - c.** There are powers of darkness; there are those whom no one can please.
 - d.** Protect your Pastor by putting out fires in the congregation.
 - e.** Protect your Pastor by refusing to pass along and share in gossip.

L. How shall we work together as a united team of Pastor and Deacons. (cont'd)

7. Partner with each other.
 - a. The Ministry can be lonely work.
 - b. People often promise more than they can deliver.
 - c. Most church work is done by a faithful few.
 - d. Make sure that you are a part of the valuable minority, in 1992, the Summer Olympics were in Barcelona, and the USA assembled a team of players that no one could handle. They defeated their opponents by 40 points each game (Malon, Stockton, Jordan, Pippin, Magic, Byrd, and Barkley, The Dream Team).
 - e. Volunteer to help in the work of the ministry, teaching, visiting, and winning souls to Christ.
 - f. Your Pastor will be encouraged when you show up to do ministry.

*L. How shall we work together as a united team of
Pastor and Deacons. (cont'd)*

8. Pay your Pastor.

- a. Pay double honor for those who labor in the word and doctrine.
- b. The Labor is worthy of his reward.
- c. Lift your Pastor's burden of financial stress by paying him well.

Conclusion:

- *See John 17*
- *Q&A*