



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Keys to Winning Leaders: Prayer and God's Word

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Acts 6:1-7

“Now in those days, as the disciples were greatly multiplying, there became a murmuring of the Hellenists (for themselves) against the Hebrews, because they were continually overlooked in the daily service of the widows. 2) Now the Twelve, having called to themselves the multitude of the disciples, said, ‘It is not pleasing for us, in leaving behind the Word of God, to constantly serve tables. 3) But select carefully brothers, seven men from among you, those continually witnessed to be full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we will appoint over this office. 4) But we will continually be intensely devoting ourselves to prayer and the service of the Word.’ 5) And this word pleased all the multitude, and they chose (for themselves) Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Phillip and Prochorus and Nicanor and Timon and Parmenas and Nicolaus a proselyte of Antioch, 6) Whom they set before the Apostles, and having prayed they laid their hands on them. 7) And the Word of God was continually growing, and the number of disciples in Jerusalem increasingly multiplied exceedingly, and most importantly, a great crowd of priests became continually obedient to the faith.”

“THIS WAS NOT THE FIRST TIME THAT GREAT NUMBERS OF THE MOST INTELLIGENT AND INFLUENTIAL JEWS EMBRACED THE DOCTRINE OF THE SAVIOR (SEE ABOVE, ON 4:13).” J. A. ALEXANDER

What does the great multiplication of the Church have to do with the murmuring of the Widows? Who are the Hellenists and the Hebrews? Why are they overlooked? Who would not be pleased if the Twelve only served tables? Why seven? What are the most important priorities of the leaders of the Church?

How are all the seven similar? What do all the verbs in the last verse have in common? Are these crowds of priests formerly the most influential enemies of the Church?

FOCUS ON FUTURE BIBLE STUDIES:

- JUNE 11-13: BIBLE STUDY POSTPONED NATIONAL PASTORS' CONFERENCE NEAR DC
- JUNE 18-20: ACTS 6:8-15 THE CONGRESS OF ISRAEL SEES A FACE LIKE AN ANGEL

The scars on the lacerated backs of the Apostles have probably already healed before anyone would dare complain against them. Their continual civil disobedience daily in the Temple, with their prayers and preaching centered on “Jesus as the Christ” at the risk of their lives, would have held back any murmuring by all within this loving Church for some time. But as it became obvious after weeks and months or possibly even years that the Sanhedrin was not going to arrest the Apostles again for their flagrant civil disobedience and the Church was abounding in growth, the escalating demands upon the Apostles began to take their toll. If the Church has already doubled since the last count of 5000 men, then the majority of the people in the Capital of Israel were probably attending the Church meetings at the Temple in the Portico of Solomon. Though the Apostles probably rotated as they led the prayer and preaching, the gifts and provision for the poor within such an enormous flock of maybe 50,000 probably reached a time saturation point and the Apostles could no longer adequately manage the gifts with the needs, so the complaining began along one of the oldest avenues of contention between the Jews.

“WE MUST CONSTANTLY REMEMBER THAT ‘THE MAIN THING IS THAT THE MAIN THING REMAINS THE MAIN THING’.” DAVID COOK

BIBLE STUDIES

WEDNESDAY @ 8:00AM –BIBLE STUDY – FREDERICKSBURG – BOB EVANS ON RT. 3 AND 12:00NOON – OCCOQUAN – MADIGAN’S – 201 MILL STREET
THURSDAY @ 7:00AM –BIBLE STUDY – CHESTER – SHONEY’S AT RT. 10 (IRON BRIDGE ROAD) & 301(12531 JEFFERSON DAVIS HIGHWAY)
FRIDAY @ 7:00 AM –BIBLE STUDY – NORFOLK – GOLDEN CORRAL, 6103 N. MILITARY HWY, NEAR THE NORFOLK AIRPORT

Virginia

The Keys to Winning Leaders: Prayer and God's Word

I. EMERGENCIES OF GROWTH

ACTS 6:1

"The daily service of the widows" was an established custom of every synagogue where two collectors went around to houses and markets to collect goods and money for the needy, especially the widows. The unbelieving Jews from the emptying synagogues from which the believers had departed were no longer willing to care for them, and the Church was more than happy to demonstrate their loving care for their own. If in the USA about 10% of the population are widows, then the percentage in Jerusalem would have been much higher because many Jews in their latter years would often move to Jerusalem so that they would finally be buried there. So there probably was between 5000 to 10,000 widows in the Church, 416 to 833 for each Apostle! For hundreds of years the Hebrews who spoke fluently the biblical language and followed the biblical customs looked down on the Hellenistic Jews who would not be as fluent in Hebrew and would tend to follow the Greek customs. This natural contempt, which had been so long suppressed by the ardent love of the believers urgently caring for one another, was feared first by the sensitive, murmuring widows who were foreigners.

"WE MUST ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT WE SHALL LOSE ALL OUR LABOR BESTOWED UPON PLOWING, SOWING, AND WATERING, UNLESS THE INCREASE COMES FROM HEAVEN, (1 COR. 3:7)." JOHN CALVIN

II. EXALTING THE GREATER

ACTS 6:2-6

This was probably an age old problem that the leaders in the synagogues had tried to deal with unsuccessfully for years and no-doubt they wondered what the Apostles would do. The Twelve do not rebuke the widows, neither do they apologize for neglecting any of them, instead they gather the Church in the Temple and present the wisest solution. They first acknowledge the necessity of maintaining their priorities given them by God in order to please Him, *"It is not pleasing for us, in leaving behind the*

Word of God, to constantly serve tables." Then they ask the Church to identify and elect seven men *"continually witnessed to be full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we will appoint over this office."* They do not ask for experts or those who have experience previously from the synagogues, they will delegate this sensitive responsibility only to proven, Spirit filled, wise men recommended by those who know them. Then they state most clearly their calling, job description and passion as the leaders of the Church, *"But we will continually be intensely devoting ourselves to prayer and the service of the Word."* They list prayer as their first priority and with it the all powerful Word of God. Of course, *"this word pleased all the multitude."* The names of all seven are Greek and therefore most likely Hellenistic Jews. This loving Church elected those men who would naturally understand and even tend to side with the Hellenistic widows in order to insure that the problem was solved. With prayer and hands laid upon them, these men lead the next thrust of evangelism!

"THE APOSTLES HAD SERVED THEIR MASTER WISELY AND SKILLFULLY, AND THEIR DISCIPLESHIP AND DELEGATION RAISED AN ARMY OF STEPHENS AND PHILIPS TO SPREAD THE GOSPEL. THE MINISTRY OF THE APOSTLES AND OF THE CHURCH WAS MULTIPLIED MARVELOUSLY!"

KENT HUGHES

III. EXPLOSION OF GROWTH

ACTS 6:7

All the verbs in this final verse are continuous. The first priority is still the final priority, *"the Word of God was continually growing"* in respect as it was studied, presented and obeyed. Which led to the greatest growth literally as *"the number of disciples in Jerusalem continually greatly multiplied exceedingly."* And because the Apostles are able to focus on their only priorities, *"most importantly, a great crowd of priests became continually obedient to the faith."* Crowds of their leaders and former persecutors are won for Christ!

Questions to Ponder:

- 1) Is the Word of God continually growing in your life because it is studied, presented and obeyed?
- 2) Does your spiritual leadership grow because prayer is a first priority of your life?
- 3) Are others, especially leaders, won for Christ because you pray for them and present the Word of God to them?