



Series: This Is My Church—Part Two

Title: Spread The Word

Acts 6:1-7

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Objective: Every congregation can grow by embracing the elements that characterize a healthy growing church outlined in Acts 6.

Introduction; When I first went to Mulberry Church I began saying, “God did not me here to do what He called you to do; and He did not send you here to do what He called me to do. He called us to do what He called us to do. Let me tell you a story about a famous Softball Team right here in Englewood—The Blue Team: So once upon a time The Blue Team went to Sports Complex for a game. Just as the umpire was saying, "Batter up," Blue’s catcher arrived and took his place behind the plate. Mike Austin, the center fielder didn’t show up at all but he was kind enough to send his regrets. Jared Way, the third baseman likewise failed to come to the game, having been up late the night before. Joshua, the shortstop was present, but left his glove at home so he didn’t play. Two of his substitute fielders were away on a weekend trip but said they were there in spirit. Kevin, the pitcher, went to the mound and looked around for his teammates. As he looked around his heart became very heavy because there were so many positions on the field that were not covered. The game was announced, the visitors were in the stands, and there was nothing to do but pitch the ball and hope for the best. But in addition to pitching, Kevin covered first and third base, as well as short stop and center field. When the absent players heard that their team had lost, they were very upset and held a meeting. They couldn’t understand why the Blue Team lost the game so they decided to get fire the pitcher and get a new one. Like the Blue Softball team, the church can’t survive without everyone pulling their weight. The pitcher—the pastor—is important, but unless everyone else shows up and plays their positions, get some hits, runs the bases—the game will be lost

Read—Acts 6:1-7 NKJV 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. ²Then 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. ³Therefore, 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; ⁴but 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 ... ⁸ And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.

- #1. Meet needs** (*Acts 6:3 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.*)
- A. George Washington Carver: My purpose alone must be God's purpose—to increase the welfare and happiness of His people. Nature will not permit a vacuum. It will be filled with something. Human need is really a great spiritual vacuum which God seeks to fill.**
- 1. The work of ministry belongs to the members** (*Ephesians 4:11-12 Now these are the gifts Christ gave to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. ¹² Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.*)
- a. **Philippians 2:3-4** Let nothing be done through selfish ambition and conceit but with humility consider others as being better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests but also to the interests of others. Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus who being in the likeness of God did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of me. And being found in the likeness of a man, He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death.
 - b. **Watchman Nee:** The kingdom of God suffers greatly from the neglectful behavior of would-be “spiritual” people who busy themselves with prayer and Bible study, attending only to their own spiritual needs. The Lord's people should trust him to meet their spiritual needs, and devote themselves meanwhile to the tasks which God has given them to fulfill. Spiritual life is for spiritual work. Its secret lies in the continuous outflow of that life to others. We ... shall only lack if we are self-occupied. He who is occupied with the Father's business will find him or herself perpetually satisfied.
 - c. **Acts of the Holy Spirit:** God places a variety of people in a church body. He knows the needs of a church, so He brings people together with all their giftedness and talents and abilities so that corporately they can address the needs and problems that arise in a church. When you look around and think of all the people God has placed in our church, you have to realize that every member is here on purpose—by God's purpose, and that the work of ministry here belongs to each of you.
 - d. **Romans 12:9-13** Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. ¹⁰ Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; ¹¹ not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; ¹² rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer; ¹³ distributing to the needs of the saints, given to hospitality.
 - e. **Philippians 3:10-12** That I may know Him and power of His resurrection and becoming like him in his death [self denial-crucifixion] so that one way or another I will experience the resurrection of the dead. Not that I have already attained, but I press on that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has laid hold of me.

f. *Pastor Dan:* Your calling is to take away the hurt of others. A little care, a little love, a little kindness and a little taking an interest in people is as powerful as a great sermon; it is a move of God that will never fade, it is one thing that will make an eternal difference in the lives of others.

#2. **Spread the Word** (*Acts 6:5-7* 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.)

A. **Members Spreading the Word:** *When I look back at how many people it has taken to get me where I am today—I am absolutely overwhelmed by the love the church because the church first loved me. I believe in the church because the church first believed in me. Mike Mears and Mr. White. Bobby Brown and David Strickland. The Baptist Preacher who bought me my first Old and New Testament Bible. The men from first Baptist Church who brought me the books The Cross and Switchblade and Run Baby Run. Ben Stone who invited me to live at Youth With A Vision. Mrs. McGee, the teacher at Southeastern University, who treated me like I had been a good guy all my life, allowed me to date her daughter and loved me like a son. Crandall Miller who taught me that what you feed grows and what you starve dies. Wayne and Matti Friedt who helped Nancy and I get back on track when our marriage was headed for divorce.*

1. **Be Salt—Be Light** (*Matthew 5:13-16* You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men. ¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.)

- a. *Oswald Chambers:* God will baptize us with the Holy Spirit, not for anything for ourselves at all, but that we may be witnesses for Him. God will never answer the prayer to be baptized with the Holy Spirit for any other reason than to make us witnesses to Jesus.
- b. *Bob Harrington:* Our challenge is to save the lost, stir the saved and reach the left
- c. **Matthew 28:18-20** And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Go therefore^[c] and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age
- d. *Pastor Dan: Romans 1:14-16* I am a debtor both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to wise and to unwise. ¹⁵ So, as much as is in me, *I am* ready to preach the gospel to you who are in Rome also. ¹⁶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ,^[a] for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek
- e. *Author Unknown:* Nothing great happens if you hold back
- f. *Joan Borysenko:* Some tension is necessary for the soul to grow, and we can put that tension to good use. We can look for every opportunity to give and receive love, to heal our wounds and the wounds of others, to forgive, and to serve. You will be encouraged to serve the Lord by helping others, discovering your ministry and learning to work with others.

- g. *Pastor Tommy Barnett:* Whatever you need, give that away to someone else. Every Sunday I stand at the front door to shake hands and hug everybody who will let me. One person said to me, “Pastor Barnett, you sure are a loving person.” “No,” I replied, “it’s just that I need to be loved so much myself; I’m just giving away what I need.
- h. **James 1:22; 2:14, 26** Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. Faith if it does not have works is dead ... as the body without the spirit
- i. *Pastor Dan:* When Nancy and I who at IGC in Tulsa I was asked to be the youth pastor. I went to John Osteen’s and Tommy Burchfield mentored me that weekend. I learned three things that have been the guiding principles of my life and ministry from then until now: Be Yourself; Be Available (Take an interest in others) Be Spiritual.

Closing and invitation; Fred Craddock: To give my life for Christ appears glorious, to pour myself out for others ... to pay the ultimate price of martyrdom; I’ll do it. I’m ready, Lord, to go out in a blaze of glory. We tend to think that giving our all to the Lord is like taking our life’s savings and laying it on the table and saying—Here’s my life, lord. I’m giving it all. But the reality for most of us is that he sends us to the bank and has us draw out all that we have in one dollar bills. And then He tells us to go through life putting out a dollar here and a dollar there. Give by helping a neighbor in need, working with young people, calling on people who are missing from church, visiting the sick, being faithful in tithing or giving a cup of water to a shaky old man in a nursing home. Usually giving our life to Christ isn’t glorious. It’s done in all those little acts of love, a dollar at a time. It would be easy to go out in a flash of glory; it’s harder to live the Christian life little by little over the long haul.

STARING AT THE GATES OF HELL Auguste Rodin was a French impressionist sculptor. Though many do not recognize his name, most are familiar with his work—*The Thinker*. The Thinker was originally meant to sit on top of Rodin's greatest masterpiece, the Gates of Hell. The Gates of Hell is a tall, haunting work with seemingly countless figures writhing in passion, pain, and agony, sliding down into their judgment with the Thinker sitting above it all with a mood of regret and contemplation. Each figure in hell has his or her own story and identity tied up with Dante's *Inferno* or some other mythological story. It has been said that The Thinker is contemplating an eternity of judgment separated from God. Another interpretation for what the Thinker is thinking is that the Thinker is contemplating an eternity of judgment separated from God. Another interpretation The Thinker is Adam considering the sins of his descendants.

Author Neil Cole author of several books including *The Organic Church: Growing Faith Where Life Happens*. He writes about being at a party where The Thinker was being displayed. He overheard a woman in the crowd saying, "Oh, I could just stare at the Gates of Hell forever." Cole said there was a long pause in the conversation as her words began to sink in. A few gave an uncomfortable chuckle as it dawned on them how significant her words truly were. "All I could think about was," says Cole, "Oh, I hope not." If we—you and I—sit back in our fortress frightened by all that seems to threaten us, we will allow countless folks to exist without knowing the love that God has for them! We need to be on the offense and storm the gates of personal hell. This is what it means to be Church--according to Jesus!