



Series: This Is My Church—Part Three

Title: First Things First

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; The real secret of success in any and every endeavor is learning to put first things first—last things last—and in between things in between.

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. ⁵And 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, ⁶whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. ⁷Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem ... ⁸And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people.

- I. Priority** (*Acts 6:2,4 Then 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 ... ⁴but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word)*)
- A. Bob Yandian:** *Belonging to and participating in a local church is of utmost importance for every born-again believer. The main function of the members of the local church is to relieve the pastor of the daily responsibilities so he or she may dedicate him or herself to prayer and the study of God’s Word. Ushers, greeters, counselors, hospital workers, children, and youth workers are all vital to the churches successful and effectual functioning. There were no perfect people in the infant church and neither do*

we find perfect people in today's church. But we can strive to walk free of strife and in the unity of the faith with a heart to serve one another in the body of Christ. God offers His divine wisdom to all who will ask. .

1. **Prayer** (*Ephesians 6:18* Pray in the Spirit at all times; stay alert and be persistent in our prayers for believers everywhere. *Romans 8:26-28* The Holy Spirit helps us with our weaknesses. For example we do not know what God wants us to pray for but the Spirit prays through us with groaning and utterances that cannot be expressed in words. And the Father who knows the hearts of everyone, knows what the Holy Spirit is saying because He prays for us in harmony with God's very own will. And all things work together for good to those who love God and to those who are called according to His purpose.)
 - a. *Bob Yandian:* The solution for resolving the neglect of the Grecian widows proposed by the people was for the church leaders to distribute the provisions to them. Peter and the apostles quickly see their true calling and responsibility as being jeopardy. The typical solution given by the people for solving problems in the church is for the church leaders to personally handle situations that arise. They desire the pastor to pray for the sick, visit those in prison, and witness to those who need salvation. However, the pastor is not responsible for taking care of everyone, but to ensure that everyone is taken care of.
 - b. *1 Thessalonians 5:16-18* Rejoice always; pray without ceasing for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you
 - c. *Pastor Dan:* Prayer is that time we set aside in our lives whereby we nurture relationship with God and allow God to nurture relationship with us. Prayer is that time we set aside in our lives where we pour out our hearts to God and wait in His presence until He pours out His heart to us.
 - d. *Oswald Chambers:* Prayer does not prepare us for the greater work; prayer is the greater work.
 - e. *Pastor Dan; 2 Chronicles 7:14:* Prayer is a choice ... Prayer is a Privilege ... Prayer is an attitude ... Prayer is a Sacrifice ... Prayer is our Hope.
 - f. *George Mueller:* It is not enough to begin to pray, nor to pray aright; nor is it enough to continue for a time to pray; but we must patiently and believingly continue in prayer until we obtain an answer.
 - g. *John 14:13-14* Whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in my name I will do it.” So why do we not see more answers to prayer? For the simple reason that Christ did not pledge to tickle or satisfy our every whim; He promised to give us everything that we can connect to the glory of God.
 - h. *Pastor Dan:* Prayerlessness plagues the church robbing it of its power and the will of resistance against sin. Believers who neglect prayer literally loads the gun that the Prince of Darkness uses to shoot them. Prayerless believers are responsible for the church turning its focus inward instead of outward. Jesus said to His disciples in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:41), Rise and pray lest you enter into temptation; for the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak.” Negligence in prayer results in powerlessness, vulnerability towards sin and temptations which we are responsible for bringing on ourselves. Praying people

encounter opposition and attacks from the enemy but there is a difference between those who pray and those who neglect prayer—the power to overcome the onslaughts of the enemy.

2. **The Word** (*Joshua 1:8 This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.*)
 - a. **Bob Yandian:** The pastor is the final authority in the local church and his or her responsibility is to teach the Word of God. This is the pastor's only responsibility. Anything else is subject to his own personal desires, strengths and weaknesses, and ability to delegate.
 - b. **Proverbs 4:20-22** My son, give attention to my words; incline your ear to my sayings. ²¹ Do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the midst of your heart; ²² for they *are* life to those who find them, and health to all their flesh.
 - c. **Pastor Dan:** The Word of God and prayer to our spiritual lives are what food and water are to our physical lives.
 - d. **Smith Wigglesworth:** His Word has a life-giving power. **Psalms 119:50** says, "Your Word has given me life." This Word is the divine revelation; it is the Word of life, of healing, of power—the living Word of God. I wish that everyone would give themselves over to carefully reading more of the Word of God. There is something about the Word that is so wonderful; it brings new life into you until you realize you are a new creature.
 - e. **Psalms 19:7-11** The law of the LORD *is* perfect, converting the soul; the testimony of the LORD *is* sure, making wise the simple; ⁸ the statutes of the LORD *are* right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD *is* pure, enlightening the eyes; ⁹ The fear of the LORD *is* clean, enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD *are* true *and* righteous altogether. ¹⁰ More to be desired *are they* than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. ¹¹ Moreover by them Your servant is warned, *and* in keeping them *there is* great reward.
- II. Leadership** (*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. **John Maxwell:** *Everything rises and falls on leadership. Leadership is a person influencing people to accomplish a purpose.* **Spirit Filled Life Bible:** *The leadership in Acts is some of the most spiritually powerful the church has ever known. Whenever Christian leadership has forgotten the models shown in Acts, they lost most of their power. Applying the lessons for leaders given in Acts will help give today's Christian leader a ministry of increased power and effectiveness.*
1. **Commit to faithful men** (*2 Timothy 2:2 And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.*)

- a. *Woodrow Wilson:* If you will think about what you ought to do for other people, your character will take care of itself. Character is a by-product, and any man who devotes himself to its cultivation in his own case will become a selfish snob.
- b. Matthew 23:11
- c. *Author Unknown:* When God measures man, he puts the tape around his heart, not around his head.
- d. *Fred Smith; Learning to Lead:* Character development is especially important to leaders. And it's a process, not a plateau where we sit down to rest. Leaders who last don't stop growing; they continue to stretch themselves.
- e. **Matthew 16:24** if you save your life
- f. *Heraclitus; 540-480 B.C.:* A man's character is his fate
- e. *Fred Smith; Learning to Lead:* When leaders fail, more often it is the result of a character flaw than lack of competence. Character development is especially important for leaders. And it's a process, not a plateau where we sit down to rest. Leaders who last don't stop growing; they continue to stretch themselves.
- f. **2 Chronicles 26:5** as long as Uzziah sought the Lord God prospered him
- d. *John Maxwell:* The first step we must take in developing our leadership skills is not in the practice of leading others but in the art of learning to lead ourselves.
- c. *Thomas Trask:* A leader is spiritual. Pastors must have a sensitivity to the Great Shepherd. They must be people of prayer and the Word, and in a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. Those who lead the church must be doctrinally sound, have Bible-based ministries, and love people and the work of God. They are disciplined in their own lives, time and priorities.
- f. **1 Peter 5:1-4** The elders who are among you I exhort ... Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly, nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock

Closing and invitation; Bill Hybels: Ministry is so hard because of the resistant work of the evil one and because of culture that does not uphold the values of Christianity, you take many hits in ministry. You have to deal with budgets, hire and fire and deal with the problems of ministry but the greatest revenge for all the hits you take in serving the church is the love that you receive from working with and for the people you love.