



Sermon Series Notes

“Top Priorities in Ministry, & Life” (Acts 6:1-7)

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v.1 We have no details as to what this distribution of food looked like, or whether it was breakfast, lunch or dinner, or all three. We also do not know if this was racially motivated, but it seems that it was not based on Acts 4:32. It was simply the result of growing pains.

v.2 The apostles were not at all saying they were above waiting on tables. They had been taught repeatedly by Jesus that the greatest among them would be the servant of all, and they had all been humbled when Jesus washed their feet just prior to His final Passover meal with them. They would never forget the living lesson in that experience. What they were saying here is they understood the priorities of their calling. The problem needed to be solved, but the solution was not to have them sacrificing the primary responsibilities of their calling.

vv.3-4 How they came up with seven we are not told, but that is the number of men they thought needed to solve the problem.

vv.5-6 So they are commissioned to serve the apostles by solving this problem. We consider these men to be the first deacons of the early church. The word deacon simply means a servant.

v.7 What tremendous fruit, and it was because of the wise decisions they made. The word spread because the apostles made the ministry of the word a priority. When the persecution came after Stephen was martyred, the disciples “preached the word wherever they went (Acts 8:4). They preached the word because they had been taught the word.

My study yielded four main points from the text: Potential division, delegation, discernment, & divine blessing.

POTENTIAL DIVISION

Isn't it interesting that the potential for division here was a result of the numerical growth of the church. Anytime a church grows numerically, especially as quickly as this one did, there will be growing pains, and people will be neglected.

See Psalm 133; The unity of the early church was maintained here because of the wise decisions made by the apostles, and the willingness of some servants to step up to the plate and solve a problem. So the potential division was averted because of...

DELEGATION (assign & entrust)

“Delegate or Die” (Mike McIntosh); I love to delegate.

See Ex.18:13-23

Eph.4:16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Division was averted because of delegation. And then there was...

DISCERNMENT (good judgment)

The apostles understood the priorities of their calling, and thank God they did not the challenges of church growth to get them side-tracked. Let's pause and dig in for a few minutes on the two priorities they realized, prayer & the ministry of the word.

Prayer

Jesus of course had taught them how to pray. He had also been an example to them in prayer. See Luke 5:15-16.

Jesus interceded for them (See Luke 22:31-32). Intercession is one of the greatest privileges we have in prayer.

Deut.9:19-20 I feared the anger and wrath of the Lord, for he was angry enough with you to destroy you. But again the Lord listened to me. And the Lord was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him, but at that time I prayed for Aaron too.

Paul the apostle was always praying for the saints (Rom.1:8-10a; I Cor.1:4; Eph.1:15-19a; 3:14-19; Phil.1:3-5; Col.1:3-4; I Thess.1:2).

Paul also frequently asked the church to pray for him (See II Cor.1:8-11a; Col.4:2-4; I Thess.5:25).

When church leaders have a personal prayer life, and when they publicly model prayer before the congregation, the people learn to pray, and hopefully come to understand the priority of prayer.

Prayer should be done in a place at a specified time, but it should also be an ongoing attitude and opportunity throughout the day (I Thess.5:17). See Neh.2:4-5, noting context.

Why is prayer so important?

Prayer enables me to maintain the peace of God to guard and guide my life (see to Phil.4:6-7).

Colossians 3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.

BrabeuM To be an umpire; To decide, determine, direct, rule.

When we get saved we have peace **with** God. An ongoing challenge of the Christian life is to maintain the peace **of** God.

Acts 24:16 I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.

See II Cor.2:12-13

My decision to come to St.Petersburg was based on the peace God gave me after praying about my decision. I had three choices of open doors at the time, one in New Jersey, one in Dallas Texas, and the third in St. Pete.

Personal challenges in life (Phil.4:6-7)

When Jesus was facing the cross, he prayed (Mark 14:33-36); Luke tells us that an angel came to strengthen Jesus as he prayed (Luke 22:42-44).

Prayer helps readjust me to an eternal focus (Psalm 73:1-3, 12-14, 16-17, 21-26)

Many decisions in life cannot be made correctly apart from prayer; What job, school, who to marry, house/car to buy, where to live, etc.

David inquiring of the Lord (I Sam.23:1-4; 30:1-8; II Sam.2:1; 5:17-19, 22-25).

Without prayer we can be easily deceived; The Gibeonite deception (See Joshua 9:3-6, 14).

“A false step taken by a Christian can be forgiven by God. But you must live with the consequences the rest of your life.” (G. Campbell Morgan)

The Word

The movement of God through Pastor Chuck Smith and Calvary Chapel is due to the teaching of the word of God. Chuck taught his disciples, and his disciples are teaching others. Chuck used to say “Healthy sheep naturally reproduce.” And it continues to this day.

I am so privileged to be a part of it.

Jesus’ example (Mark 10:1; Matthew 7:28-29)

Jesus’ prayer John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.

Jesus’ instructions to Peter (John 21 – “Feed my sheep”)

Paul’s instructions (II Timothy 4:1-4)

The power of the Word (Jeremiah 23:29; Hebrews 4:12-13)

A hammer breaks to pieces, but also “nails you.” Fire purifies, consumes dross, softens hardened steel, regenerates (burning fields, etc.), replenishes (potash: potassium carbonate from wood ashes is used in agriculture to replenish soil).

The provision of the Word (II Tim.3:16-17)

Provides the ABC’s of life

Psalm 119 is all about the Word of God. It’s 176 verses are divided into 22 sections, and each section begins with a different letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and each verse in each section begins with that letter as well.

Deut.8:3 Man does not live by bread alone...widow who lives for pleasure is dead...

Gives short and long term guidance (Psalm 119:105)

Essential for defense against our adversary (Luke 4:1-13; Eph.6:17b); Roman maichaira sword).

Great encouragement in times of suffering

Psalm 119:50 My comfort in my suffering is this: Your promise preserves my life.

Romans 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

Essential for faith; Rom.10:17 Faith comes by hearing...

When linked with the peace of God, directs us in the will of God

See Col.3:15-16

Word of God + Peace of God = Will of God

DIVINE BLESSING

Due to right priorities and wise decisions

CONCLUSION

Thank God for the discerning decisions made by the apostles, especially maintaining the priorities of prayer and the ministry of the word. May they continue to be the priorities of this ministry, and as well as priorities in each of our lives.