

Free to Give
Giving is About More Than Money
Acts 6:1-8
February 5, 2017

Giving is about investing our LIVES to spread GOD'S WORD.

Acts 6:1-8 — *1 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution. 2 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. 3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. 4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. 6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. 7 And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. 8 And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.*

1. Giving is about SERVING. Acts 6:1-6

When is success a bad thing? When it comes so quickly that you aren't prepared to handle it. That's just one of the reasons people who win big in the lottery end up bankrupt and in worse shape after they win than they were before they won.

1 Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

The church in Jerusalem was experiencing exponential growth (v.1). That can lead to one of several struggles...

Uncertainty of Purpose - Constant busyness, daily decisions, and ever-pressing needs tend to cause the congregation to have an uncertainty of purpose.

Fuzzy Priorities - A wider ministry sparks additional demands. As a result, church leaders may begin throwing aside yesterday's priorities to put out today's fires. Soon, what should be most important places second to what is most urgent.

Tendency Toward Professionalism - Expanding ministries sometimes hire a staff of pros to take over the work. The result is a church full of spectators.

Loss of Individual Significance - It's easy to get lost in the crowd, to think no one cares about your problems. Just the size of the congregation is intimidating.

It was about serving. So what did the church do? (v.2)

2 And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.

Here is what they didn't do -- 1) Ignore the problem, 2) Resent the problem, 3) Overreact to the problem

Luke 14:23 — 23...'*Go out to the highways and hedges and compel people to come in, that my house may be filled.*

3 Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. **4** But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

The Apostles listed **5 Characteristics** for those who would be appointed for this ministry in the church...

First, those who would lead this ministry were to be men.

Second, they were to be from among the congregation, which at least implied that they were to be believers in Jesus.

Third, they needed to be men of good reputation.

Fourth, they were to be full of the Spirit. They must be fully yielded to His control in every area of their lives.

Fifth, they should possess wisdom. They must have biblical and theological knowledge, and the practical wisdom to apply biblical truth to the situations of everyday life.

5 And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch. **6** These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

Here are the ABCs of management from the Apostles:

Assess your problem accurately (6:1-2)—Are you attacking the right problem?

Budget your time strategically (6:2, 4)—Are your priorities right?

Choose your leaders wisely (6:3)—Are you choosing and following biblically qualified leaders?

Distribute your load widely (6:3, 5-6)—Are you delegating the load? Are you doing your part?

7 *And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.*

2. **Giving is about SACRIFICING.** Acts 6:8; 7:54-60

Acts 6:8 — **8** *And Stephen, full of grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.*

Acts 7:54–60 — **54** *Now when they heard these things they were enraged, and they ground their teeth at him. **55** But he, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. **56** And he said, “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God.” **57** But they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and rushed together at him. **58** Then they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. **59** And as they were stoning Stephen, he called out, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” **60** And falling to his knees he cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.*

John 3:16 — **16** *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”* Giving is about serving others. It’s about sacrificing self and finally...

3. **Giving is about SPREADING.** Acts 6:7-8; 8:4-5, 32-35

Acts 6:7-8 — **7** *And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. **8** And Stephen, full of*

grace and power, was doing great wonders and signs among the people.

Acts 8:4–5 — *4 Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word. 5 Philip went down to the city of Samaria and proclaimed to them the Christ.*

Acts 8:32–35 — *32 Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this: “Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. 33 In his humiliation justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth.” 34 And the eunuch said to Philip, “About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?” 35 Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus.*

Giving is about investing our LIVES to spread GOD’S WORD.

Let’s talk about giving being about more than money...

1. Why was the number of disciples increasing in the face of persecution in Jerusalem (v.1)?
2. What would the problem in the church in Jerusalem look like in our church today (v.1)?
3. What kinds of problems can develop because of success in the life of a church (v.1)?
4. What could have happened to the spread of the Gospel in the early church if the Apostles had said that the church was too big (v.2)?
5. What do you think people mean when they say that a church is too big... and what should a church do about that attitude (v.2)?
6. When was the last time you recommended a man to serve our church family as a deacon because you believed they had a good reputation, were full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom? If you’ve never done that, why not (v.3)?

7. What do you believe should be the priorities of pastors in our church today? What do you believe the priorities of our pastors are today (v.4)?
8. What did the laying on of hands say about the task these men were being given (v.6)?
9. What was the result of people stepping up to serve in the church (v.7)?
10. Why do you think that personal sacrifice is so powerful when it comes to spreading God's Word (v.8)?