

# GOD IS LOOKING FOR GREAT LEADERS

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**By the Book™** A Chapter by Chapter  
Bible Study Series from Jerry Vines  
Ministries

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## Let's Begin

*The church is an organism. It is the living, breathing, growing body of Jesus Christ on earth. It pulsates with divinelife. However, in order to function properly, it must be organized. In the New Testament church, organization was very simple. The famed British pastor, G. Campbell Morgan, once said, "Church organization in the New Testament was spiritual, simple, and sufficient."*

*There has never been a time in the history of the church when leadership is more needed than today. Sadly, it could be argued there has never been a time in the history of the church when leadership is more lacking than today! Today's lesson focuses on God's expectations for church leadership.*

*With that in mind, as we journey through Acts 6, let's use the following outline as we go:*

- I. The Reasons for Great Leaders (v. 1)**
- II. The Requirements of Great Leaders (vv. 2-6)**
- III. The Results of Great Leaders (vv. 7-15)**

## I. The Reasons for Great Leaders (v. 1)

The Bible teaches a local church is the body of Jesus Christ — at least in that particular location. Unlike the days of His flesh, the Lord Jesus works His ministry through His spiritual body, the church of our wonderful Lord. Now, of course, we know a body is a living organism. Just so, the church is the body of Jesus Christ, and, therefore, it is an organism. It pulsates with the Divine life of God!

Even so, the church is not only an *organism* but also the church is an *organization*. Think of it this way: my body is an organism, but if it is going to function the way it ought to function it must be organized.

As we noted earlier, the New Testament organization of the church was very *simple* and deeply *spiritual*, but it was also wonderfully *sufficient*. Too often the organization of the church has become complex. And, along with the complexity, carnality and corruption have sadly followed.

Our goal should be to restore the simplicity and the genuine spirituality of the organization of a New Testament church. Admittedly, this will not be easy; but it is necessary nonetheless. Essential to the organization of any good New Testament church are godly spiritual leaders who serve responsibly in the local body

of believers. A church needs men who are committed to Christ, who deeply understand the Christian faith and are willing to sacrifice their life for it.

Our text particularly focuses on men as leaders. Most scholars are convinced the verses about which we're concerned constitute the origin of the office of deacon. Of course, the word "deacon" does not occur anywhere in these verses. Yet the root word is imbedded here as seen, for example, in verse two: "Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables." The phrase "serve tables" uses the verb form of "deacon." The word "deacon" means those who serve; so a deacon is a servant, a leader.

With this background in mind, let's look at *three reasons for great leaders*. *The first reason for great leaders is because of church multiplication*. Note the beginning: "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations" (v. 1). The

### Reflection Connection

*Do you think of your church as more an organization or an organism? Explain. Be prepared to discuss the differences as well as the similarities between an organization and an organism to the entire group.*



specific occasion for the appointment of the first deacons was a growing church. Isn't it a blessing when a church is growing? Don't you like to be around something that is growing, something that is increasing?

Along with blessings came special needs. Large assemblies of people bring special problems and demand special needs. When my wife and I had our first child, it changed everything. Growing families always change. When a first child is born, it's never again the same in your house. Well, that is exactly the way it is at a church.

It's an exciting thing when a church grows, but keep this in mind: problems will surface. The number of disciples was "multiplied."

### Reflection Connection

*True or false: small churches have fewer problems than big churches. Explain your answer. Ask the group the same question.*

*A second reason for great leaders is ministration.* The widows in the Jerusalem church were neglected in the "daily ministration." This simply means the daily distribution of food. The New Testament church helped meet the physical needs of the people. Many of those who became Christians in that day lost their jobs for their faith and many of those believers were very, very poor. They had to have someone to help them meet their physical needs and the early church did this. The Christian faith has always been a caring faith.

*Along with blessings came special needs.*

The church was growing; large numbers of people flooded the assembly. And, because the church was a caring community, meeting the physical needs of the congregation became a priority. Thus, the disciples were not only trying to minister to spiritual needs, they were ministering to physical needs as well. Therefore, the widows were neglected in the daily ministration. It is not necessary to suggest the neglect was intentional.

*A third reason for great leaders is the presence of murmuring.* There arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews. Who were the Grecians and how were they different from Hebrews? Both the Hebrew and the Grecians were Jewish Christians. However, the Grecian believers were Jews who lived both outside the city of Jerusalem as well as outside Palestine itself.

In addition, Grecians had been brought up in the midst of Greek culture; consequently, they began to speak the Greek language.

In contrast, the Hebrews were born and bred in Palestine. They tenaciously held on to the customs and the traditions of the Hebrew tradition. They spoke only their mother tongue, Aramaic.

Thus, a natural tension between the two groups existed. One of the miracles of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ is its extended arm into all groups and classes of people, bringing them together in the one body of Christ! There's no room for racism in the church!

The question every church must answer is this: *are we here to serve God without jealousy and without murmuring?* The Apostle Paul gives the standard for every leader. He writes: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings" (Phil. 2:14). Is this the standard by which you gauge leaders in your church?



## II. The Requirements of Great Leaders (vv. 2-6)

The twelve came together and explained the problem to the people. The congregation was growing, the ministry was suffering, and the people were complaining. And, the chief concern the apostles professed was neglect of prayer and the Word of God: “It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables” (v. 2). There’s nothing wrong with serving tables but that wasn’t their priority assignment. Their assignment was to preach the Word!

In addition, we find another focus about which the apostles were concerned: “But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word” (v. 4). Wed to preaching was a specific focus on continual prayer. Wise is the church that frees its preachers to pray and to preach the Word. This duo constitutes what gets the work of God done. They could pray heaven down and they could preach in the power of the Holy Spirit! That’s God’s assignment for the man of God.

Unfortunately, too many churches treat their pastors as “entry-level workers.” By that term I mean rather than the preacher spending adequate time in his study, praying and scouring the Word of God, the church expects him to perform tasks almost anyone could do. For example, anyone with a valid driver’s license could take a widow to the grocery store. Or, anyone with a telephone could make calls to check up on people. Also, if the pastor is laden down with menial duties which others could do, few precious hours per week can be spent sharing the Gospel.

Not that these tasks mentioned are insignificant. Rather the performance of these tasks ought to be assigned to someone other than the pastor. The pastor’s most important role is preaching, praying, and proclaiming Christ to the church and in the community. That’s what the apostles were saying here — “Let us stay with what God has called us to do.” They insisted that the *priorities* of the office must be understood (vv. 2-4). That’s the first requirement.

The second requirement focused on the *people* who must be selected. They brought the people together, instructing them to select seven men. Luke clearly reveals God’s design for structure in the New Testament church. Note the apostolic requirements: “Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business” (v. 3).

Even though the church had become very large, they instructed the people that only a small group of men would be needed. Leadership must be of the very highest spiritual caliber. Thus, they were to be sincere men, proven and tested over time. They were to be faithful and possess a good testimony. In addition, they were to be spiritual men, men full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit.

### Reflection Connection

*Do you think there is proper focus on the pastoral assignment of preaching in your church? Explain. Are there duties expected of your pastor which may make his assignment to preach the Word more difficult?*

*Wise is the church that frees its preachers to pray and to preach the Word.*



### Reflection Connection

*How much focus should be placed on the quality of leadership expected in the local church? Explain. Do you think the church too often settles for second best when looking for leaders? Why or why not?*

It must be noted that as extremely high as the qualifications were for these deacons, still it remained the assignment of the apostles to preach the Word of God and to continually pray.

The third requirement concerns the *procedure* which must be followed (vv. 5-6). Scripture says they prayed, laid hands on them and set them aside for service. These men were chosen by the people. It was a church decision. Nor was it a coincidence that all seven men had Greek names! This demonstrates their sensitivity, their sincerity, and their spirit. What a great example of love and leadership is provided for us!

### III. The Results of Great Leaders (vv. 7-15)

Look at the results of these men who were sold out for God: “And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (v. 7). When a church keeps its spiritual priorities in order, the result will always be that the Word will increase, people will be saved, and the church will grow. In fact, miracles will inevitably take place in its midst. That’s the New Testament church, the New Testament church organized for ministry.

In addition, notice a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith. The Gospel is, as the Apostle Paul would later pronounce, the “power of God unto salvation to all who believe, to the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom. 1:16). Faithfully preaching the Word results in men and women from all nations and all religious backgrounds coming to the Cross.

Hence, as God continues looking for men to lead, the men for whom He looks will not be sidetracked by ministry to social needs or lesser tasks. Rather through proper organization, as well as continued proclamation, the right kind of men will surface — leaders on fire for God — resulting in a wider, deeper and more spiritual ministry of the Gospel.

*Not only do great leaders produce great results but also great leaders reap great rewards.*

With this broader ministry comes more blatant attacks from the enemy. Stephen, one of the great leaders God called and the church ordained, became the focal point of the last part of chapter six (vv. 8-15). His faith was so strong and his wisdom so remarkable that he became the chief target of the religious leaders in Jerusalem. Being unable to counter his remarkable testimony, the Jewish mob rushed upon him, offering no mercy whatsoever. A moment later, Stephen, the servant of God, became the first martyr of the Christian church. Not only do great leaders produce great results but also great leaders reap great rewards.



### Wrap Up

*What does it cost to have great leaders in the church? The answer to that question depends upon the faith of the people asking it. Do you want great leaders in your church? If so, it will take a non-negotiable commitment to making the priorities for leadership clearly understood. And the priorities for leadership will always demand that prayer, preaching the Word, and proclaiming the Gospel to church and community will take precedence over every other task in the church. It will also mean the church must follow the Biblical procedure in commissioning its leaders. They must be men full of wisdom, filled with the Holy Spirit, faithful men of highest integrity who serve as our leaders. May God give us great leaders, leading us and serving Him.*

### Golden Greek Nugget

Luke uses the term translated “disciples” in verse one. This usage constitutes the first of many times (28 times in Acts) to which the church is referred in Acts. Here it is applied to Christians in general. The Greek term “disciple” literally means a “learner.” As followers of Jesus Christ, as the church of God, we are primarily called to be learners.

