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Bigger Waves Bring Bigger Debris
Acts 6:1-7

He wanted so badly to conduct. His conducting style, however, was different. During soft passages he would crouch extremely low. For the loud passages he would often leap high into the air, even shouting to the orchestra as he did. His memory was poor. Once he forgot that he had instructed the orchestra not to repeat a section of music. During the evenings performance when he went back to repeat that section, the orchestra had already gone ahead as previously instructed... so he stopped the piece, yelling "Stop, Stop all wrong. That will not do. Start again!" For his own piano concerto he decided to try conducting from the piano, but at one point he jumped from the bench, knocking the candles off the piano and bumping over a choir boy. At another long delicate passage, he jumped high to cue a loud entrance but nothing happened because he had lost count and signaled the orchestra too soon. As his hearing became worse and worse, the musicians tried to simply ignore him and take their cues from the first violin, finally the musicians came to him pleading him to go home and give up conducting. The man who many consider to be one of the greatest composers of all time learned that no one is gifted in every area, not even Ludwig Van Beethoven.

Those people who have been given great strengths seem to often have couple with that some great weaknesses. The point is that God has seen fit to not create one single person that can do all aspects of ministry perfectly. He has gifted certain people with the ability to teach well. Others he has gifted them with the ability to care for the widows and hurting. Some he has gifted to exercise leadership over a flock of people and others especially gifted to serve others well. As the group of people get larger in number it becomes more and more important that the

people begin to discover specifically how God has crafted them and then find out what it is that God wants them to do about it. Discover where it is that God wants them to begin serving in the local church. This is why we went through a study on the spiritual gifts in the first part of this year. This is why we have the spiritual inventories in the lobby you can fill out and then sign up to meet with a Spiritual gift counselor. As our church grows you will discover that your inability to meet all the needs of this body becomes more and more apparent. We need each other because as the number of our church body increases so also will the number of people who feel left out. So also the cliques and groups and prejudices will creep in to erode the trust and unity and teamwork that makes for an effective church body team that enjoys working together for God's kingdom. The few left trying desperately to do it all and be all for all will be swamped by demand and overwhelmed by the tyranny of the urgent. At this point it will be tempting to lose focus. It will be tempting to throw out yesterday's focused priorities to put out today's fires.

Turn with me in your Bibles to the book of Acts. The book of Acts chronicles the rapid growth of the church as it starts with a small band of committed followers waiting in the upper room in Jerusalem for the promised power of the Holy Spirit to come and indwell them and empower them to get the mission critical good news that God has sent Jesus Christ as their Savior to free them from the chains of sin and self and bondage, to give them a new life, forgiveness, freedom and satisfied joy. As you can imagine, many people, thousands respond to this gift of grace from God. The church swells large in just a few short weeks. With these large waves of rapid growth come in large debris as well. Debris of opposition and persecution from within and without. The religious power mongers, chief priests and elders of the Jewish community see this Jesus movement as a threat to their position and want to snuff it out. They were hoping that getting rid of Jesus would finish it off, but now the whole thing seems to be getting out of hand. The wave is growing larger

and larger and so their opposition efforts and persecution also increases. Opposition has come from within and without and now in chapter 6 of Acts the opposition comes from an internal conflict that threatens to distract them from the key priorities that makes them strong. The leadership is being threatened from being swamped by the overwhelming physical and emotional demands of people. Mixed into all of this are people feeling left out in the ever-increasingly big sized church, feelings of prejudice, Jealousy and suspicion. Big waves bring bigger debris don't they. Here in Acts 6 the author Luke highlights the growth of the church but also includes the problems that go along with that growth and what the wise leadership does to meet those challenges. (READ Acts 6:1-7)

In verse 1 and 7 Luke refers to the increasing growth of the church. He mentioned the church growth twice in chapter 2 once in chapter four and once in 5 and now twice in chapter 6. Healthy things grow, but this does not make them immune to growing pains. As we see here, this is a healthy church gifted with strong Godly leaders, but that does not guarantee the absence of problems. Here are 12 highly gifted leaders, hand-picked and trained by Jesus himself, but still the church had difficulties. Folks we should not be shocked when frictions and factions cause problems in the church. When a church faces serious problems, it presents the leaders and its members with a number of opportunities. The problems give us an opportunity to examine our ministry and discover changes that need to be made. When times are successful and the buildings are full of people and the budgets are being met it's easy for us to maintain a status quo, get comfortable...but that is dangerous. Success is last year's nest from which the birds have flown. God does not want His church to rest on its laurels or to read its own yellowing press clips. God desires to continually work in new and fresh ways and to refine His church for His glory not our own. Problems force us to re-examine where we are and where God wants us to be. That is necessary for growth as they give us the opportunity to exercise our faith

in the Lord and as we see this morning, faith in each other as leaders lead well when the growth comes and problems threaten.

Take a look at Acts 6 verse 1 where we see the problem that is threatening the church. A complaint, a murmuring arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews, those that spoke Greek and lived more Greek like as their culture. The native Jews or Palestinian Jews spoke Aramaic. They were descendants of those brought back to Jerusalem by Nehemiah and Ezra after the captivity. They were proud of their exclusive observance of tradition. The Hellenists or Greek speakers were victims of Babylonian captivities that centuries before had ended up settling in other parts of the Mediterranean world. The Greek culture was engrained in them but these folks never lost their love for Jerusalem and the temple, and many made pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Some of these would stay to live, but they were always treated as second-string bench sitters. They were regarded these Greeks as liberals and all that prejudice should have been left aside when they all came into faith in Christ...but it didn't seem to. The Greeks were complaining because they felt their widows weren't being taken care of, as well as the native Hebrew widows. Specifically they felt overlooked and missed in the daily serving of food at that time needed for survival.

The first thing we see the leadership do here is listen. The Godly leader will listen well to people. They listened to the problem. A leader cannot afford to ignore complaints. Rapid growth doesn't mean we can let important needs continue on unmet. It may be very tempting for busy leaders to dismiss or ignore complaints and right them off as out of touch or irrelevant. It might be tempting for the leader to view the complainers as anti-spiritual and say something like, "Hey, get with it what are you complaining about, look at all the growth. Do you want to be a part of something big that God is doing? Then stop complaining and get on board or go take a hike!" They didn't do that. The apostles listened well

and understood the problem and then recognized that it was based in fact.

Listening is not easy is it? Especially when our emotions get involved. Especially when anger starts to take over. James chapter one exhorts us to “be quick to hear, slow to speak slow to anger for the anger of man does not accomplish the righteousness of God.” Listening demand humility in our part for we must set aside our initial snap judgments and be open to be told we might be doing something wrong. That’s not easy because if we had seen we were doing something wrong in the first place we would have already changed...but we didn’t so that is why listening to complaints requires a great deal of humility. When someone is telling us we are failing to do something right or doing something wrong to listen well demands that we clothe ourselves in teachable humility. If we start with humility we have a better chance of actually understanding what it is the other person is trying to tell us. Anger and defensiveness cause communication misfires. Listen to understand not to defend yourself. That can come later if it needs to happen. But here in Acts 6 the Apostles listened well, understood the problem and responded well.

In these seven verses we begin to see some of the structure of the church developing. Some people think that all structure is evil and that as soon as the church becomes organized it becomes crystallized. But all structure is not bad and a loose organization underestimates the power of the flesh. Loose organization is inconsistent with God’s creation which reflects the highly organized, well-thought out and planned nature of its Creator. The church does not run like a Fortune 500 company with org-charts, committees and sub-committees rejecting any bold new proposals because we have never done it that way before. Those people are underestimating the power of the Spirit to work through a transformed new life in Christ. The church is an organism and a biblical organization always responds and flexes to meet the need and to respond to what the spirit is doing. If we create a program and then ask the Spirit to bless it

we have got it all wrong. We dare not force the Spirit to fit into our mold. I think that's why God challenges the structure at times to remind us to flex to him and not mold to our own desires. The structures are tools, the Spirit is the real power behind it as we are connected to the living head of the church Jesus Christ.

The early church leaders listened well and then recommended a solution, that would meet the need and move to where the Spirit was moving them to meet the needs of the widows.

The second thing we see the leaders do we find in the next three verses, 2-4. The leaders kept focus on their God shaped priorities and calling. It would have been very tempting for them to respond in humility and say, "Wow. You guys are right we really missed it here. Tomorrow all 12 of us are going to roll up our sleeves and get down here at 5AM and personally make sure those widows get equal treatment. Thanks for bringing this problem to our attentions don't worry about a thing we will take care of it." That sounds pretty spiritual response doesn't it? Aren't the leaders supposed to be servant minded? Isn't that what Jesus modeled for them to serve others. Didn't he say "I came not to be served but to serve others..."

When you are in leadership, it is tempting to be the superman. Tempting to think. Here is a problem and I can solve it like no one else can. We like being the all-powerful hand of God to other people. We don't want to appear like we aren't servant minded. Servanthood is good. You can hear the murmuring, "So now your too big to wait on table eh?" Leaders can be tempted to want control and must know all things and direct all things and pass everything through them for approval or veto. Some leaders are people pleasers whose decision making are driven by the dissenters. They are squeaky wheel leaders that are only driven by the whiners. They bow down to those who are critical of leaders who happen to have a different priority then them. Some leaders are tempted to be workaholics who say, "you know I could probably wait on those

tables. I just have to get up a little earlier each morning and maybe I can work a few more hours in the evening...I don't think my family will mind....too much."

These early church leaders did not bow to any of these temptations forced on them by others in the church or by themselves because they had a clear sense of what God had called them to do and how he had especially crafted them. They also firmly believed that God had given the church body all the gifts needed to accomplish the ministry that God wanted to happen in their church. So they refused to let their priorities grow fuzzy. They focused on the priorities that God had given them, they were probably very tempted to throw out yesterdays priorities to try and put out today's fires...but they didn't bite that tempting apple. Look at verse 2 "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables (can you hear in this response the underlying pressure on them from some people to be the superman here and personally fix the problem?) V. 4 God wants us to give priority to the word of God and prayer. That's our focus. God Word and prayer. Not a bad thing for the leaders of the church to be focused on is it? Here at our church I'm glad the highly value the Word of God that we believe is inspired and wholly from God to us. We are not called to argue with God about what it says, we are called to obey it and live it. The Bible is very relevant. We don't make God's word relevant...it simply is.

The author of Acts is making it very clear here that the temptation to be distracted from what most important is a major threat to the movement. He closely links attention to the word of God in v.2 and the spread of the word of God v.7 with the increased disciples. The Apostles did not make the strategic mistake of leaving their focus on the word in order to fix a pressing problem. They did not succumb to the tyranny of the urgent to leave the most important behind. We learn here that whatever threatens the ministry of the word, even if its something that is very good like caring well for widows, is a major threat. Leaders must

listen well to people, but also keep focused on what God has called them to do, especially the word of God and prayer.

It doesn't mean the leaders don't care about the widows, it means they cared enough to know they were not the ones who could serve them best. They refused to try and play superman and become a bottle-neck to ministry. My pastor friends are amazed that I don't usually attend the trustee meetings. They can't believe I don't want to have a say in how the money gets spent and budgeted and resources allocated at the church. I do let people who are at the meeting know my thoughts on certain matters, but for the most part I try to trust the trustees. They are filled with the Spirit and well-gifted and called to apportion the resources well. They do a great job so I empower them to do it. I want to focus on what God has called me to be doing and they can focus on what God has called them to be doing.

That brings us to the Third characteristic of a leader that leads well when the bigger waves bring bigger debris. The godly leader will release other people for ministry. V.3 The apostles trust the people of the church body to select from among themselves seven men. When the leaders don't have to be the paid professional that does all the work of the ministry and release and empower others to minister in their God given calling...the church will flourish. Trust is built up and a new fresh kind of teamwork develops. The people get to see how the Holy Spirit works in power right through them. When the lay people fail to exercise their gifts in the body either from their own laziness or because the pastor is doing everything, the church will not grow into maturity. The church will never grow beyond the bottle-necked pastor. And in this church it isn't very big. It is not my gifts, nor Kirby's gifts that make this church grow and thrive and operate....its your gifts that you exercise. That is what makes this church grow and mature.

The Apostles ask the church body select 7 men. The word here for select, means to inspect or examine. They were not just looking for the

first 7 guys who raised their hands. They wanted the people to thoughtfully evaluate from the men and choose seven. They were to be v.3 men of good reputation. Known by people to be men of integrity, could be trusted and ready to be released into ministry. If the people can't trust you by the way you act then you are not ready for ministry. Reputation does matter in leadership. Secondly, these men should be full of the spirit, spiritual men. Now to some of us the phrase spiritual man conjures up for us images of some kind of pious Peter with a Bible tucked under his arm spouting off religious sayings and quoting a verse for every occasion. But often those aren't the guys that are truly spiritual, but often they are simply trying on a mask of fake religiosity. A spiritual person is a normal person being the one that God intended him to be. A spiritual person is dependent on the activity of God What makes you spiritual is that you expect God intends to work through you. A carnal Christian is one who is counting on himself to pull it off. Look at me he says, just give me a chance. I can do it. Jesus is lucky to have be on the team. He may be very talented but if he is not relying on God and resting in Christ then he is not a spiritual man. These seven men are being called to do God's work, and its impossible to do God's work in the flesh...they must be spiritual. The one chosen by the people must also be full of wisdom. This is the ability to apply truth to a situation in a practical way. Not just one who knows the right thing, but one who knows truth and appropriately applies that truth to real life situations. There was a problem in the church. The distribution of food was not equal and they needed men who would be well respected, God dependant and practically wise.

The believers came up with names of seven men. Doesn't say how. They may have voted, discussed. It doesn't say here, but I'm sure they prayed about it and then presented the seven to the Apostles. Interesting that the seven men all have Greek names. Certainly, they are not going to overlook the Greek speaking widows, and in their wisdom would not

slight the Hebrew widows either. They have fit their passion and giftedness of discover a ministry tailored to fit them and the needs of the church. That is orienting your ministry to the giftedness of the body. Two of these men Stephen and Phillip have their names introduced here as they will soon become major players in our Acts story as Godly empowered leaders used by God to spread the Word.

These men were brought before the Apostles and they prayed for them and laid hands on them. V.6 Laying hands signifies the transferring of power, the empowerment, the confirmation of their ministry calling. The godly leaders releases people for ministry. Keeps focused on the main priorities that God has for him and listens well to people.

What are the results? It makes sense that when the word of God is not neglected that it spreads. V.7 the number of disciples continue to increase greatly and a great number of priests were becoming obedient to the faith. That last phrase in v.7 encourages me. I think the toughest group to win over would be the professional priests. They tend to think they have it all together or at least try to make others think they do. But even here we read even the priests, a great many of the priests are getting it. They have seen the example of the early church. They see how their leaders are addressing problems and it is a whole lot different from the chief priests they are used to. The early church leaders are listening well to concerns, they are keeping the focus of the Word of God and prayer and empower and release other people for ministry. That may well have caused them to take a second look at the claims of Christ. As priests, they were performing the ritual sacrifices in the temple, but now as they listened to the Word, they were discovering that Jesus was the key to all the rituals they knew so well, all the animals and sacrifices had an explanation in Jesus. They all pointed to Him as the One and Holy perfect sacrifice.

Lets pray.

Heavenly Father we are impressed by this early church story and the leadership and ministry as we are still living in the age of the Spirit and age of the church. We ask that you would empower us for ministry. Help us not to become distracted by the tyranny of the urgent and throw away the truly important things that you have called us to do. Root out of our body murmuring, strife, prejudice, jealousy. Pull out the thorns of control, the desire for being a superman, a people pleaser and workaholic especially when its done in your name. God may be we spiritual people, desperately dependent on you, who recognize that you God are in us and intend to work through us. May we see that happen for your glory. Amen.

Acts 6

Church like an iceberg. Already at least 5000 men. Float along with the current aimlessly. Pick up and carry along a lot of debris. Jealousy, suspicion, prejudice.

Having tried to attack the church by outside opposition and inside corruption now the attack comes in the form of distraction. If he could preoccupy the apostles with social administration. Good things but not essential to their calling, he could leave the church without defense.

Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number,
A complaint arose
On the part of the Hellenistic Jews,
Against the native Hebrews,
Because their widows were being overlooked
In the daily serving of food

(with 6:7 this makes 6 times it mentions that the early church was increasing in number. Interesting that complaints arise during times of increase. Another challenge or opposition from within. Prejudice. Taking preference for own kind.

The Palestinian Jews were descendants of those brought back to Jerusalem by Nehemiah and Ezra after the Dispersion. They spoke Hebrew or Aramaic and were proud of the exclusive observance of tradition. There were Greek speaker or Hellenists whose descendants were victims of the Babylonian captivity centuries before and had eventually settled in places all over the Mediterranean world, and beyond. These folks never lost their love for Jerusalem and the temple. The Greek culture was engrained in them and many would make pilgrimages to Jerusalem and the temple and some would stay to live. But they were never accepted as equals by the Palestinian Jews. The main distinction was that Jerusalem had synagogues that worship in Greek and Hebrew synagogues that worship in Hebrew. The Hebraists tended to regard the Hebrews as liberal.

The Greek speakers were felt left out by the natives because they couldn't speak Aramaic. In the Jewish world, there were racial tensions that existed between the Grecian Jews and the Aramaic Jews tragically this same tension was brought into the church. , different treatment, uncared for, unequal, less then because they were different, in the minority. Complaints arise as a number of people start to talk about what they see as unfair. Overlooked, not considered, missed. So many certain ones were getting the short end of the stick, but it was always the same ones coming out empty. Message. Hey we'd like to help here but we take care

of our own kind first and you are not on the same priority. Prejudice. A preconceive negative assessment of another person. Or leaning to one side of an issue without consideration of the others perspective.

We often think if we could rapidly grow and many people come to Christ and attend it would solve a lot of our problems. Isn't that what we've been praying for that many people would come and flood our church seeking to hear the truth? Be careful what you ask for...there are a great number of problems that come with rapid growth of a church. One problem is that certain people will feel left out, especially if the leadership structure and care is not in place to handle the growth.

v.2 And the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said:
"It is not desirable for us to *neglect the word of God*

Statement of priorities. Any growing ministry the leaders must be devoted to these two priorities. Too often leaders become swamped by the overwhelming flood of physical and emotional needs in the church and the priorities get left aside. Sometimes it is the pastor's fault as he wants to keep all the control and reigns in his own hands, and sometimes it's the people's fault with their expectations wanting their pastor to do all, be all and be seen in all. When that happens the standards in preaching and teaching decline. When lay people fail to exercise their gifts in the body, since the pastor does everything himself. The church will not grow beyond the bottle-necked pastor. It will not grow into maturity. People must ensure that the pastor is freed from unnecessary responsibilities. People are amazed that I don't attend the trustees meetings.

in order to serve tables. (Tables may refer to tables used for food serving or for money changing tables, ANE banks. This is probably referring to the place where funds and supplies were administered to widows. They were elected to oversee the distribution of monies to the needy and widows

But...select from among you, brethren

The word select means to inspect or examine. They were not just looking for the first 7 guys who raised their hands. They wanted the congregation to 1) thoughtfully evaluate the men and then choose seven. 2) They were to be qualified reputable, spirit filled and wise. 3) They were to take leadership to supervise and work skillfully.

Seven men of good reputation, (Known to be these other two things by reputation. All three needed for handling of finances.

Full of the Spirit
And of wisdom

Whom we may put in charge of this task

But we will devote ourselves
to prayer,
and to the ministry of the Word. +

(Had the 12 been trying to serve tables as well as teach and preach? Maybe someone had suggested this was the answer to make sure their was not hint of discrimination divvy up the widows needs for all the 12 to take care of. Get the apostles leadership to bear. But that would have left them with little time to do anything else. It as a well-meaning but deadly attack.

Temping to think. Heres a problem. No one can solve it like I can. I should take care of this by myself. We like to be the ubiquitous hand of God to others. We don't want to appear as though we aren't servant minded. Servanthood is good. Jesus modeled it. What the problem are you too big now that you are not willing to wait on tables and serve the least?"

Was it too much and things were falling through the cracks? Are they saying we are doing too much and not doing a great job at any of it. We need to be focused on what God has called us to and gifted us to do. They recognized they can't do it all and others gifted in the body needed to be released for ministry. If we spend a large part of our time and effort in caring for the widows and making sure this care is done well and equally and fairly without prejudice leaving people out and hurting feelings, then it will mean we will be Neglecting the word of God. That's not going to be of best help to our growing church. We need men to come alongside of us and do that well.

v.5 and the statement found approval with the whole congregation;
and they chose Stephen,
a man full of faith
and of the holy Spirit
and Philip

Lived in dependance on God, not their own strength. The knew how to take truth and apply it to a particular situation.

(all seven had Greek names implying they were Hellenistic. The last one was not even a Jew. The early church seem to feel that the problem of unintentional neglect of the Greek widows would be best solved by the Greek men and they would certainly not neglect the Aramaic women and thus bring a balance to the benevolence ministry.

Introducing Stephen and Phillip prepares the reader for future ministries of these men. The reference to Greacian Jews looks beyond to the wider spread of the gospel outside the area of Jerusalem and Judea.

Prochorus,
Nicanor,
Timon
Parmenas
Nicolas, a proseyte from Antioch
And these they brought before the apostles;
And after praying,
They laid their hands on them.

(here is some evidence for a congregational form of government. The group decided as a whole who would fulfill this position. They must have had some way of knowing who was in the faith and able to vote as they then decided and brought the group to the apostles for commissioning. The practice of laying on of hands was a gesture signifying commissioning for a ministry and vesting of authority. Laid hands was used in OT period to confer a blessing Gen 48. Used to transfer guilt from the sinner to the sacrifice Lev.1:4 and to commission a person for a new responsibility Num.27:23. In the NT, laying on of hands was done in healing Act 28:8, Mark 1:41 and for blessing Mark 10 and ordaining or commissioning Act 6, 13 and imparting of spiritual gifts Acts 8:17, 19:6, I tim 4:14 and II Timothy 1:6

Priorities for spiritual leadership.

Are these the first deacons? It doesn't call them as such here, but actions related to deacons of "waiting" and distributing" are mentioned. Later these men were called the "seven". If this passage does not describe the origination of deacons, then where did it start? Some say this was a precursor to the office of elder. Others say this was just a temporary position for a specific need as it was not given for an overall need but specifically to care for the needs of these widows. They appear to be the first deacons.

v.7 and the word of God kept spreading;
the number of disciples continued to increase greatly
in Jerusalem
and a great many of the priests were
becoming obedient to the faith

(Increasing numbers in Jerusalem but not beyond. The great commission calls for a witness beyond, in Samaria, Judea. What obedience will not fulfill, persecution will. God allows suffering and persecution in our lives

to challenge us out of our comfortable areas, to test, strengthen our faith, to train us for what He has ahead.

It makes sense that the Word of God would spread when it is not neglected. When pastors devote themselves to the word it will spread.

When a church faces serious problems, it presents the leaders and its members with a number of opportunities. The problems give us opportunity to examine our ministry and discover what changes need to be made. In successful times its easy for us to maintain status quo, but that is dangerous. Success is last years nest from which the birds have flown. Anyone who thinks ministry will continue successfully automatically is heading for failure. Regular examination is necessary for growth.

The apostles studied things and decided they were to blame, so busy serving tables they were in danger of neglecting the word and prayer. Trying to do too much. Pastors and leaders today struggle with this. Some are so busy with secondary tasks that they fail to spend adequate time in studying the word and prayer. It's much better to put 10 men to work then to do the work of 10 men.

Church problems give us the opportunity to exercise our faith, in the Lord and faith in each other. The leaders suggested a solution, the members all agreed. They members then selected seven men and the apostles set them apart for ministry. The church saw how they needed to adjust their structure to make room for growing ministry. When structure and ministry come into conflict, it give us an opportunity to trust God for the solution. The apostles were not afraid to release others and empower others for ministry and share their authority with others. (NCD Empowering Leadership)

The result was the church was blessed and greatly multiplied

Olgivie: Not for sale at any price. Will not sell out integrity. Art auction p75

Swindall the Bride p.86. Nothing evil about a large church. The early church grew large. Large isn't bad.

Critical of leaders who have different priorities then mine. Why don't you care for my widowed mother? P87 Obviously the leaders lack compassion. Apostles are playing favorites. They are interested only in numbers not individuals.

The more a work flourishes the more opportunity for people to slip through the cracks and get missed.

Busyness: daily decisions. Needs that threaten to knock a church off the focus of the original purpose. As a ministry grows it needs to constantly evaluate why are we doing this activity? It is contributing toward our goal?

Fuzzy priorities. Tempting to throw away yesterdays priorities in order to put out today's fires. The tyranny of the urgent puts the squeeze on the truly important.

Tendency toward professionalism. As ministry grows the pros are hires to take over the work. The result is that we have a church full of spectators. The church staff should be equipping the members by cultivating their spiritual gifts and releasing them to minister. Swindall p. 101

Loss of the individual touch. Its easy to get lost in the crowd. Easy to think that no one cares about your problems. Its intimidating to make waves by stating a question or need.

Three groups in the church:

Disciples/congregation	body of believers in Jerusalem
The twelve/Apostles	Appointed overseers, elders, pastors
Seven men (deacons)	Assist the elders in delegated areas.

Principles:

Strong leadership doesn't guarantee the absence of problems. 12 highly gifted and well trained leaders but still the church had difficulties. We should not be surprised when frictions and factions cause problems.

Rapid growth doesn't excuse needs that are going unmet: Busy leaders may be tempted to dismiss or ignore complaints as superfluous but wisdom pulls for a strategic solution to meet the needs without losing sight and focus of their priorities.

Concerned involvement doesn't require losing ones priorities. Through wise delegation, pastors and leaders don't have to overwhelmed by the hundreds of needs that come their way. They must guards their time of prayer and study. I can't be involved in what I once was when I first came. (Illustr. Copy machine) I don't know. I trust Judy and the trustees will provide exactly what we need. I must release them to minister.

Do you know your limits. If I work through lunches. If I get up a little earlier. If I scrap that time with the family...I'm sure they'll understand.

A cynic once said that as soon as the churches get organized they become crystallized. Two sides to church government. One says all stucture is bad, it cannot be from God. They would reject any sort of church membership. However this loose organization underestimates the power of the flesh and lack of organization is inconsistent with the character of God. All creation reflects the highly organized nature of its

creator. Other say that the church must function like a Fortune 500 company with detailed org charts committees, sub-committees and sub-sub committees. They hope the holy spirit will operate under their rigid structure and will tend to reject any bold new proposals because “We have never done it that way before.” These people tend to underestimate the power of the spirit to work through a transform new in Christ person. Both extremes are wrong. The church is not a high-powered organization nor is it a loose commune. It is an organism connected to the living head Jesus Christ.

Principle: Biblical church organization always responds to need and to what the spirit is doing. To create a program and expect the HS to get involved is backwards. We dare not force the spirit to fit into our mold. Organization is not an end in itself it is put in place to facilitate what the Lord is doing.

- 1) must be men in this leadership position
- 2) must be believers
- 3) of good reputation. Set an example of godliness for others to follow. Essential due to the large sums entrusted to their care to purchase food and needs.
- 4) Full of the spirit. Yielded to God’s control in their lives.
- 5) Wisdom. Able to apply biblical truth to practical life situations. When a person is young the person basically think that he or she knows just about everything. But as we grow older that changes, or ought to change. Mark Twain said that when he was 15 he thought his father was a very ignorant man. But by the time he was 21 he was amazed to discover how much his father had learned in those 6 years. As we get older we realize that problems are not always susceptible to simple solutions and we discern our own inability to handle them.

Principle: God calls all people to ministry and He calls different people to different ministries. Those who focus on Prayer and the ministry of the word ought not be distracted from their priorities. This is not to say that those who focus on preaching/teaching are more spiritual then those who focus to minister to the needs and hurting. Both need spirit filled people to exercise their gifts. Different callings, require different gifts. Different people. Entering the “ministry” is far more then becoming a pastor of a church. All Christian are to be in the ministry. And follow Jesus who came not to be served but to serve. Where are you serving in the body?

What they didn’t do:’

Call a meeting and vote out the minority dissenters

Just leave them alone until they leave and start their own church
Form a committee to discuss the problem

What did they do?

Asked the believers to elect 7 men based on some criteria. There were probably more Aramaic Christians than Greek speaking believers but they said Lets elect Greek speaking leaders because they will be most attentive to the problem we are having.

Principle: Get more than just the pastor to minister. Gift oriented ministry. Have a goal of at least 60 percent in some ongoing ministry. Better yet 100 percent. In most churches 20 percent of the people do 80 percent of the work.

A plurality of leadership seems to be biblical. Elders.