

Acts 11 – **Called to Serve - Acts 6:1-7**

If you are a **Christian** today - if **Jesus** is your **LORD**
then you are **CALLED TO SERVE** **Jesus Christ**

We are called to SERVE Jesus;

in how we LIVE

in the CHOICES we make

in how we RELATE to God & to other people

EVERY Christian is called
to **SERVE** God in **every area** of our lives

Colossians 3:17 (esv)

17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

THAT is the Service to God
that **Every** Christian is **CALLED** to

But then - **SOME** of us are **CALLED TO SERVE** - more “**Formally**”
we’re **CALLED TO SERVE** - **WITHIN The Body of Christ**

There are some **HERE** today - & some **LISTENING** to this msg
that are **CALLED TO SERVE** God - **at a DIFFERENT Level**

At a more **FORMAL** level - - At a **LEADERSHIP** level

But It’s **NOT JUST** those people
that I need to **listen** today

I need **every person** to really **track** with me today - -
because this message is for **EVERY person**

Because - **1)** You may be **CALLED** to this level of **SERVICE**
& may either **not KNOW** it, or **be RUNNING** from it

2) You may be **MARRIED** to someone
who is **CALLED** to this level of **SERVICE**

3) We are ALL in a **CHURCH** that is **RUN** by people
who are **CALLED** to this level of service

& so we have to know **HOW to interact** with them

& that covers everybody - so please - **DON'T** Check out - Stay with me
LEARN about being - **CALLED TO SERVE** . . . **Ok?**

Let's Pray

Our text starts today with a **PROBLEM** in the church
that **LEADS UP** to those who were **CALLED TO SERVE**

Acts 6:1 (ESV)

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

There's a **number of things** we have to **Look At** in this Vs
in order to ***"Set the Stage"***

FIRST - it was **when** the church was **GROWING**
that **there arose** LIT ***"Murmuring / Grumbling / Complaining"***

FROM one group in the church - **ABOUT another group**
Can you imagine THAT ??

That stuff's been around since the **VERY Beginning**
There are two **GROUPS** of **Jewish Christians** here in **V.1**

& what's Really **DRIVING** this ***Murmuring & Complaining***
is some Serious **CULTURAL** Differences

The **First Group** - the ESV calls "**HELLENISTS**"

Were **Greek-Speaking Jews** who had adopted **Not Only** the
Greek **Language** - Greek **Lifestyle** - And the Greek **Customs**

The **city of Alexandria** in Egypt was kind of their **BASE**
& it's a very interesting **History Lesson** - How they got there

But for our Focus today - what's important is;

They were **JEWS**

They were **CHRISTIANS**

They had Adopted the **GREEK** Culture

The **OTHER Group** the ESV calls "**HEBREWS**"

This Second Group;

Were **JEWS**

Were **CHRISTIANS**

They Held Very Firmly to the **HEBREW** Culture

Do you see the **Potential Problem** ??

& So - The **GREEK** Jews
were **Murmuring** & **Grumbling** & **Complaining**

About how their **WIDOWS** were being treated
by the **HEBREW** Jews

Now this **“Murmuring & Grumbling”** that was going on . . .

This is the **SAME WORD** used in the **Septuagint** (GK O.T.)
of the **MURMURING** of the **Israelites** in the desert - **against Moses**

& so - This is a **Very Serious Problem**

Because **when** this kind of **Grumbling & Complaining** starts
Division & Dissention are **Never Far Behind**

& so the Church Needed **LEADERS**
that were **CALLED TO SERVE**

NOT just to **make sure** everyone was **taken of** -
but also to **STOP** the **Dissention** that was threatening the church

& those of us who serve must **ALWAYS Remember**

Altho we may be **CALLED TO SERVE - Physically**
there's **always** a larger **Spiritual** need - Just **“Under the Surface”**

Actually - the **murmuring** & **grumbling** had the **potential**
to do far **more damage** - than the Ministry **“Distribution”** issues

& so - **God’s** going to **take care** of both
by **APPOINTING** those - who are **CALLED TO SERVE**

Now - The **PHYSICAL problem** was that there were **WIDOWS**
whose **basic needs** were not being met

& **the care** of **Widows** & **Orphans** is a **HUGE THEME** in the Bible
Both in the **O.T.** & the **N.T.**

James 1:27 (ESV)

27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Since the **Earliest Law** in the **O.T.** - **Widows** & **Orphans**
have always been at the **top of the List** - to be ***“Cared For”***

& there **were Widows** who were **NOT** being **taken care** of

& so - Altho the **Murmuring & Grumbling** was **WRONG**
The Widows **DID** need to be **CARED FOR**

Just **one more thing** here in **V.1** . . .

The word translated **DISTRIBUTION** (end of Vs)
is the GK word **DIAKONIA** (DEE-A-KO-NIA)

which is usually translated **TO SERVE** - or **TO MINISTER**

This is the **GREEK word** from which we get - **DEACON**

& so **MOST** literally - **V.1** says the widows we're being neglected in
the Daily **SERVING** - or the Daily **MINISTRY**

Some translations add the words ***“Distribution OF FOOD”***

Inserted by the **translators** because of the **context in V.2**
regarding ***“SERVING TABLES”*** (*We'll talk about in a Min*)

But the **broader meaning** of this word is;

Serving, or Ministering - in a Physical or Tangible sense

& so we say that the **Deacons** Primary job
is to meet the **PHYSICAL NEEDS** in the Church

That **DOES NOT** mean that this is not a **SPIRITUAL** service
it's actually a **VERY Spiritual** service - (*as we saw w/ the Murmuring*)

So it's a **SPIRITUAL** Serving of the Lord
But their **ACTIONS** - are Primarily **PHYSICAL**

So - The **Widows** of the **Greek Jews**
were **NOT** receiving the "**Physical Ministry**" they needed

& so - **God** sets up an "**Organization**" to Fix it

God is a - **God of ORGANIZATION**
we **see it** all the way back to **Creation** in **GEN CH 1**

In Fact - We **see it** in the very **GODHEAD**

Often **people** - who usually think they're **super-spiritual**
will **Criticize** the "**Organization**" of the church

But the Bible shows God Clearly - as a **God of Organization**
& we **see it** right **here** . . .

Acts 6:2 (esv)

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

This is **NOT** because "**Serving Tables**" was **Beneath the Apostles**

What we see here is the beginning

of the “Functioning Body” concept of 1Cor Ch 12

I REALLY Encourage you to read thru 1Cor 12:12-31

Take your time

Read it in the NLT until you really understand it (1Cor 12:12-31)

We ALL make up the Body of Christ - ALL of US

We Really need to understand

we ALL have a place - a FUNCTIONING place - in the body

& that place MAY very well BE

a place of Formal SERVICE to the rest of the Body

One thing we know for sure is - it takes ALL OF US doing our part
to make the body of Christ FUNCTION properly

Let me just give you a FEW Vs's

from this Critical Text in 1Cor Ch 12 - from the NLT

1 Corinthians 12:12 (nlt)

12 The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:17-18 (nlt)

17 If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?

18 But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it.

1 Corinthians 12:27 (nlt)

27 All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it.

PLEASE - Read - Understand - & APPLY - 1Cor 12:12-31

The **VERY LIFE** of this Church **DEPENDS** on **EACH** of us
Understanding **WHERE** God has made us to **FUNCTION** in the body

& **THAT** - is Exactly what the Apostles are saying - in **Acts 6:2**

again - Acts 6:2 (esv)

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.

It's NOT that Ministering to the **PHYSICAL** Needs was not
a "**High Enough**" calling - - IT **WAS** - & IT **IS** !

IT'S THAT - in the 1st Century Church

There were only **24 hours** in a day - - - **JUST LIKE TODAY**

& THE APOSTLES only had SO MUCH **Time**, &
SO MUCH **Energy** - - - **JUST LIKE TODAY**

& THE APOSTLES COULD NOT meet **ALL** the needs themselves
JUST LIKE TODAY

& so - God **DESIGNED** the church

so that **SOME** would **FOCUS** on **Preaching & Teaching**
& **SOME** would **FOCUS** on **Meeting the Physical Needs**

& They are **BOTH** Equally **as HIGH a CALLING**

& God has **MADE** different people to **FIT PERFECTLY**
into **EACH** of these **TWO MAJOR Areas** of the ministry

Does that Make Sense ?

Now - there is again **a Complexity**
with the phrase “**SERVE TABLES**” (V.2)

This phrase is what we call - **AN IDIOM**
An **IDIOM** is a Phrase that is **PECULIAR** to a **specific CULTURE**

This IDIOM DOES translate **LITERALLY** - **to SERVE TABLES**

But it had a **much broader meaning** to the **1st Century Culture**

It meant to Provide for the PHYSICAL Needs

To **SERVE in GENERAL**

It even meant to **Handle FINANCIAL Needs**

So - **These** about to be **CALLED - DID NOT** become **WAITERS**
The Phrase means “**To Meet The Physical Needs**” of the people

Do you see it ??

SO - **The Apostles** called the church together -
they explained they could **NOT** do **BOTH** these jobs

& then they said . . . Acts 6:3 (esv)

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.

Here's the solution - - - the **EXACT SAME** solution we use **today**

The Apostles said - Pick Seven men
& put them in charge of the PHYSICAL NEEDS of the church

& they came to be known as - DEACONS

Because that is the word used here
for the SERVICE & the MINISTRY they were to "Oversee"

This is a Very Unique Person who can fill this role

This is a person who LIVES
what Pastor Jeff taught LAST WEEK

Last Week Jeff taught on "A Lifestyle of SELF DENIAL"
THAT is a description of a True SERVANT, a True DEACON

But far too often - what we experience in the church
is more SELF-DIRECTION - than SELF-DENIAL

In other words - People say (in essence)
"I'll serve if I can do it on MY terms, MY way, MY time"

Unfortunately - THAT is NOT a SERVANT

A SERVANT - "Sees the Need" & "Meets the Need"

& if God has Called you to be this type of Servant
Please hear me loud & clear . . .

WE DESPERATELY NEED YOU
to Start Serving where God has CALLED YOU TO SERVE

LOOK AROUND - SEE the NEED - & then ASK US about it

& we'll do everything we can
to PUT YOU in "The Service of the Lord" - - - OK ?

Alright - Let's look at the FOUR Qualifications
these DEACONS had to possess (from V.3)

1) They had to be "FROM AMONG YOU"

They have to be people we KNOW

We can't really hire a Deacon out of the paper

2) Good Reputation

They have to be "well spoken-of" by other people

3) Full of the Holy Spirit

To be FILLED with the Holy Spirit means

You ALLOW the Holy Spirit to Control your Thoughts & Actions

4) Have WISDOM

Wisdom is the ability to UNDERSTAND & ACT Wisely

Wisdom is "The Right Application of Knowledge"

KNOWLEDGE Puffs Up - & Produces Pride

WISDOM is UNDERSTANDING, & Acting WISELY

These are the qualifications for DEACONS

& Remember - these people are OVERSEERS

V.3 is actually Referring to "Putting them IN CHARGE
of meeting the Physical needs"

& So - Now that the physical needs of the church are met,

we read in Acts 6:4 . . .

Acts 6:4 (esv)

4 But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

It's NOT "**Better Ministry**" - It's "**Different Ministry**"

REMEMBER - 1 Cor 12:17 (nlt)

17 If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?

God **NEEDS EACH of Us** to **FUNCTION**
as the **part** of the Body that **HE** made us to **BE**

Some **Minister** to the **PHYSICAL NEEDS**

Some **Devote** themselves to **PRAYER** & **Teaching The WORD**

IF we **Don't** have **BOTH** - we're a **LOPSIDED, Out-of-Balance** Body
& it's just a **matter of time** - till we **FALL DOWN** !!

& so the **Apostles** said - **You** guys minister to the **Physical Needs**
We'll **DEVOTE OURSELVES** to **Prayer** & **Teaching the WORD**

But **TRUST ME** - This is **NOT** the **EASIER** of the **TWO Ministries**

The **GREEK Word** for **DEVOTED** here - is **Pros-kar-tear-o**

The word **means** - ***to continue to do something with intense effort, despite difficulty***

& I **PROMISE YOU** - Being **DEVOTED**
to **Prayer** & the Ministry of **The Word**

Requires **INTENSE EFFORT** - **DESPITE DIFFICULTY**

Which is **WHY** the **Apostles** themselves **Could NOT** meet all the **Physical Needs** of the church

Now - It's interesting that **ALL the names**
I'm about to read in **V.5** - **Are GREEK names**

& that **Probably** - has some **significance**

Acts 6:5 (esv)

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.

Remember - it was the **GREEK Jews**
who started this **Murmuring & Complaining**

& we **can't tell** for sure - but there's a **pretty good chance**
the Apostles picked **7 GREEK Jews**

to handle the problems that **existed** with the **GREEK Jews**

Do you see the wisdom in that ??

This would **be very similar** to us saying
If the **Children's Ministry** needs help

it **should come** from the people
who have **kids** in the **Children's Ministry**

If we're going to start a **Drug & Alcohol Ministry**
it **should be** started by someone who's **Overcome an Addiction**

If someone **SEES a Need** - in an area
where they are **involved** in the church

Then **the best thing** to do is have **THAT person**
step up & meet that need

Does that make sense ??

Alright - so - In **V.6** - They **COMMISSION** these **New DEACONS**

Acts 6:6 (esv)

6 These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.

This **form** of “**Commissioning**” someone for their **Service to God**
goes all the way back to **MOSES** & **JOSHUA** in **Deut 34**

& we still **commission people** the exact **same way**

& now - Here’s the **BEST PART** of this entire text - - **THE RESULTS !**

Acts 6:7 (esv)

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.

How IMPORTANT is it - that we have **Some People**
meeting the **Physical Needs** of the Church

So that **Some People** can be **Devoted**
to **Preaching** & **Teaching the Word** ??

Well - The Results here are;

- 1) The **Word of God** continued to **INCREASE**
- 2) The number of **Disciples MULTIPLIED** Greatly
- 3) & even a bunch of **Jewish Priests** were being **SAVED**

That's some **Serious Spiritual FRUIT**

PLUS - the **Murmuring & Complaining** was **STOPPED** -
preventing the **Dissent** that was about to **"Break Out"**

There are **Huge PRACTICAL LESSONS** in this text:

FIRST - It takes **ALL of us - Functioning** in
the position God has **CALLED US TO**
In order for the **church** to **Bear Spiritual Fruit**

& So - If we are **CALLED TO SERVE**
then we really need to ask God - **WHERE** . . .

& begin **taking steps** to **ANSWER** that **CALL**
SECOND Some of us **MUST** focus on the **PHYSICAL NEEDS**
& Some of us **MUST** focus on **TEACHING THE WORD**

& it **CAN'T BE** the **same** people

God has made Different **TYPES of People**
to serve in Different **TYPES of Areas** in the church

But the **Important thing** to **understand** is:

It takes **ALL OF US** to **Accomplish** God's **Purpose** for the **church**

Which **brings up** another **GOOD POINT** . . .

There is a **real problem** with churches **OVERWORKING**
those who are **CALLED TO SERVE**

The reason **SOME** Servants are **OVERWORKED**
is because **NOT ALL** that are **CALLED TO SERVE** - ***Are Serving***

So again - **If** you have been **CALLED TO SERVE**
in a more **FORMAL** way in the **church body**

Please - **Answer the CALL**
TALK to us - Our ***phone numbers*** are on the ***Bulletin***

& start **taking steps** toward **DOING**
what God has **CALLED** you **To DO**

In closing - **Let's see ONE MORE TRUTH**
that has **DEVELOPED** since **CH 4**

FIRST - the enemy tried to **stop the growth** of the Church
thru Outside **PERSECUTION** - (**CH 4**)

THEN - The enemy tried to **stop the growth** of the Church
thru Inside **Hypocrisy & Deceit** (**CH 5**)

NOW - The enemy tries to **DERAIL the growth** of the Church

By **getting** the Apostles to **FOCUS**
on **things** they weren't ***Personally CALLED*** to **focus on**

If the Enemy can **STOP** you by **Persecution** - **HE WILL**

If the Enemy can **STOP** you by **Hypocrisy & Deceit** - **HE WILL**

If the Enemy can **DERAIL** you - By **getting you to Focus**
on things God has **NOT** called you to - **HE WILL**

But no matter **HOW** he **STOPS** you - or **DERAILS** you
He **Counts it ALL- AS A WIN !!**

If you have been **CALLED TO SERVE**
I pray that you **ARE** serving

& **IF NOT** - I pray that **you'll get started**

Let's Pray