

July 21, 2024

# Selfless Service

Jeff Rogers

Acts 6

In 1988, Nike released a new ad campaign that dominated advertising for a generation of athletic gear buyers. It was a simple yet direct challenge for everyone to get involved in sports and purchase Nike gear to wear. Nike's three-word campaign is "Just Do It." Without explanation or elaboration, the marketing executives challenged our generation to "Just Do It." Everyone from Bo Jackson, Michael Jordan, Tiger Woods, Roger Federer, Kobe Bryant, and more were enlisted by Nike to present this challenge to the world.

The Bible issues similar challenges to Christians, urging us to act with urgency. In Hebrews 12:1, *"...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us."* Paul uses metaphors to describe his living for Christ, *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith"* (2 Timothy 4:7). Isaiah makes this colorful illustration of serving God, *"But they who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint."* (Isaiah 40:31). And the Jeremiah says, *"If you have raced with men on foot, and they have wearied you, how will you compete with horses? And if in a safe land you are so trusting, what will you do in the thicket of the Jordan?"*

All these sports metaphors serve one purpose throughout Scripture, and that purpose is to emphasize that Christianity is not a spectator sport! God does not save a person so that he or she can sit on the sidelines. No, God intends for every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ to get on the field and play. This is a call to action, a call to active Christian living. Focus for a few minutes on the questions, *"Am I sitting on the sidelines, or am I on the field of play?"* Maybe it should be, *"Am I playing the right position?"* Or, *"Am I giving selflessly of myself on the field, or am I holding back?"*

This is a serious consideration for the age and stage of our class members. Most of us have raised our children, and they have left home or will soon be leaving. We are not experiencing the constant threat of financial catastrophe! Time, particularly discretionary time, is a little more abundant than when the kids were home. And for some, work demands have eased, making travel, a second home, or some other diversion accessible to us. Your life stage and resources are not an accident and are valued in the service of God.

We must be cautious with such things, *"To whom much is given, much is required."*

## **I. A Problem of Administration (Acts 6:1)**

- A. Caring for widows, orphans, & strangers (foreign or unknown persons) (1 Timothy 5:3-4, 5-6, 9-10)
  - 1. 60+ years of age (1 Tim 5:9a)
  - 2. The wife of one husband (sexually moral) (1 Tim 5:9b)
  - 3. A reputation of good works
    - a) Raised children
    - b) Shown hospitality
    - c) Served the saints
    - d) Cared for the afflicted
    - e) Devoted to good works
  - 4. Refuse the younger widows (1 Tim 5:11-15)
  - 5. Do not unnecessarily burden the church (1 Tim 5:16)
- B. Rather than depend on Temple authorities, the Jerusalem church cared for the widows by themselves (not me: government, church, another family member, etc.)
- C. The Problem: Greek-speaking Jews were being neglected (Hellenists). Though we don't quite know the circumstances, tensions were high in the church over this issue.

## **II. Seeking a Solution**

- A. Rather than a solution of "revelation" (Ananias & Sapphira), an administrative solution was reached.
  - 1. No prayer is mentioned.
  - 2. No divine revelation is cited.
  - 3. A practical administrative solution is proposed (Acts 6:2-3).

- 
- a) What are the character qualities? (Acts 6:3)
    - (1) Must have good reputations
    - (2) Must be Spirit-filled (converted).
    - (3) Must be submitted to God
  - b) Who was selected?
    - (1) Stephen – later martyred
    - (2) Philip (Acts 8:5, 21:8, ‘the evangelist’)
    - (3) Prochorus – nothing else known
    - (4) Nicanor – nothing else known
    - (5) Timon – nothing else known
    - (6) Parmenas – nothing else known
    - (7) Nicolaus – a Gentile from Antioch (Acts 2:11, 13:43)
  - c) What were their duties?
    - (1) Relieve the apostles of the daily ministrations. (Acts 6:2)
    - (2) To serve; to wait tables.
      - (a) *Diakoneō* – to attend to the wants and needs of others
      - (b) To manage or attend
      - (c) To wash feet (serve)
      - (d) To help in the low tasks or in the small things.

- B. What might have happened?
  - 1. Some would have the complainers thrown out of the assembly.
  - 2. Some would have the complainers shunned. (ignored, until they stop “making trouble”)
  - 3. Some would recommend they be outvoted.
  - 4. Some would separate from them and start another church
  - 5. Some would start a committee and delay
  - 6. Some would suggest the 12 apostles needed to assume more responsibility.
  - 7. Some would ignore the complaint or, worse, suggest it is invalid.

### III. Spirit-Led Decision

- A. It is significant, based on the names, each of these men was Greek-speaking (Hellenist). There were probably more Aramaic-speaking Christians, but they put Greek-speaking Christians as leaders.
- B. The seven men were the first official body of officers in the church other than the apostles.
- C. The probable basis for this decision? Exodus 18:13-23, esp. vs. 21

### IV. Sound Principles of Church Leadership

- A. Division of leadership
  - 1. The example of Moses and Jethro (Leaders are not to assume more and more, but give away).
  - 2. The example of Nehemiah (Nehemiah assesses (ch 1 & 2). Gives away (Nehemiah 3)
- B. Plurality of leadership
  - 1. That spiritual gifts may come to bear on decisions
  - 2. That imbalances may be corrected.
- C. Spiritual qualifications
  - 1. Maturity (1 John 2:12-14; Stages of maturity: Babe (1 Peter 2:2) Child; Young Man; Father)
  - 2. Character (Acts 6:3)
  - 3. Not materialistic, or positional, or prideful.

### V. Our Selfless Service

- A. **Luke 22:25–27**, *And he said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. 26 But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. 27 For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.*
- B. **Mark 9:35**, *And he sat down and called the twelve. And he said to them, “If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all.”*
- C. Jesus washed the feet of the disciples (John 13:1-10).

---

“According to Cornelius a Lapide, Thomas Aquinas once called on Pope Innocent II when the latter was counting out a large sum of money, “You see Thomas,” said the Pope, “the church can no longer say, ‘Silver and gold have I none.’” “True, holy father,” was the reply; “neither can she now say, ‘Rise and walk.’” The moral of this tale may be pondered by any Christian body that enjoys a fair degree of temporal prosperity.” **FF Bruce, *The Book of Acts*,**

Through Peter and the Church in Jerusalem, God sent the message of salvation to the “Jew first.” The command and invitation were simple: “Repent and believe the gospel...” Many did. However, some, including the religious elite (priests, captain of the temple guard, and Sadducees (who did not believe in any resurrection)), became angry, vexed, and irked. Their anger drove them to lay hands on Peter and John and put them in jail! However, many (5000 men) believed the message (word) of Peter.