

February 28, 2021 by Steve Brandon



A Problem in the Early Church

Acts 6:1-7

1. The Problem (verse 1)

2. The Solution (verses 2-7)

Over the past few months at Rock Valley Bible Church, we have been looking at the book of Acts. We have seen the church of Jesus Christ begin and grow and expand at a rate faster than any time ever in the history of the church. It went from a 120 people in Acts 1 to 3,000 people in one day as recorded in Acts 2 (see verse 41). After this, the church continued its growth. In the very last verse of Acts, chapter 2, we read, "the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47).

The picture we get from the first two chapters of Acts is of scores of people repenting from their sin and believing in Jesus every day. And every day they were being brought into the church. Perhaps one day the church receives a dozen new believers. Then, the next day, they receive fifteen more. Then the next day six, followed by forty. It was all the Lord's doing. It was the Lord who "added to their number day by day those who were being saved" (verse 47).

By the time Acts 4 came along, the numbers were north of 5,000. That's the number we read in chapter 4 and verse 4. That number includes only the men who were believing. It doesn't include the women who were coming to faith. Nor does it include the number of young people who were believing, either. So, perhaps the number was as high as 6,000 or 8,000 or more.

The numbers were growing because it seemed as if everyone who heard the word was believing! "Many of those who had heard the word believed" (Acts 4:4). In other words, it was the majority of people who heard the word were believing.

How unlike our day this is. This certainly hasn't been my experience. I have only seen a small, small percentage of unbelievers respond positively to the gospel. This may be explained because of the newness of the message. People hadn't grown cold to it yet. Further, the time was right, as it was the dawning of the Messianic age.

I saw a great illustration of our day yesterday, when Yvonne and I were out for our walk. We try to take a daily walk, which allows us to touch base with each other and talk about any issues in our lives. On our walk, we happened upon an older woman, perhaps in her 60's. She was out walking her little dog. She asked us how we were doing. I replied, "We are doing fine. How are you?" She said that she was doing just fine as well. After a moment's pause, I continued, "We are solving life's problems." She said, "When you figure it out, let me know." Then, I said, "Yep, we all have problems. We have little problems. You have little problems. The world has big problems. I'm thankful that Jesus will come and solve all of our problems someday." She said, "What did you say?" I said, "I'm thankful for Jesus. Because he can solve our problems." Hearing exactly what I said, she turned angry and said, "Oh, you bring the Bible into it!!" I was taken a bit aback. She was so hostile, so quickly. I simply replied, "I mentioned Jesus to say that I'm not able to solve my problem on my own. And I'm thankful that Jesus is." Then we walked on a bit in silence because of the tension.

This is the sort of hostility that we face in our day and age. But not so in the early portion of the book of Acts. There we see continued growth. In Acts 5:14, we read, "More than ever believers were added to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women." People kept pouring into the church! Acts is all a demonstration how Jesus was fulfilling his promise to build his church (Matthew 16:18). What an exciting story we have been studying in recent months!

Now, that's not to say that everything was going well. There was some opposition along the way. Forces that were trying to stop the spread of the church. The first opposition that came was from the religious authorities. In Acts 4, Peter and John spent an evening in jail for preaching the gospel. When released, they were warned not to speak again. Well, they did. "With great power the apostles were giving their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus" (Acts 4:33). And the church continued to grow, not only in numbers, but also in love. "Great grace was upon them all" (Acts 4:33). People were selling their possessions to meet the needs of those who lacked.

But again, not all was good. The second hindrance to the growth of the church came from within the church. It was greed and hypocrisy. Ananias and Sapphira sold a piece of property and then pretended to give everything to the apostles to distribute when, in fact, they kept back some for themselves. They were trying to put on a religious show of generosity! They wanted to be seen by others as generous and full of grace. But they were frauds, and died on the spot when Peter confronted them. Though such hypocrisy in the church could have meant disaster, it didn't. Rather, "the people held [the believers] in high esteem" (Acts 5:13).

But that didn't stop the opposition to the church. It continued on with persecution. In Acts 5 (as we looked at last week), all of the apostles spent an evening in jail for preaching the gospel. When they were released, all of them were beaten and warned not to speak again. Well, they did speak again. And Jesus was growing his church. In Acts 5:42 we read, "And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus."

This is the context of our text this morning. Chapter 6 and verse 1 begins with these words, "Now **in these days** when the disciples were increasing in number." Chapter 6 comes upon the backdrop of wildly successful church life, when people were coming to faith in droves and when the church was ever-increasing in size! Yet, like in all of church life, there are problems. I love how the book of Acts doesn't hide the

problems under the rug, but exposes them and explains how the apostles worked through them.

The title of my message this morning is this: "A Problem in the Early Church." Because that's what we will see. So let's read about this problem (and the subsequent solution).

Acts 6:1-7

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. 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. 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. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 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. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. 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.

This passage is so typical of everything that came upon the early church. There is a problem, but in the end, it all turns out well. This is what verse 7 says, "the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciple multiplied greatly." But that's the end of the matter. Let's look at the issue at hand. This is simply what I'm calling, ...

1. The Problem (verse 1)

We read in verse 1, ...

Acts 6:1

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.

A "complaint" arose in the early church. Literally, there came to be a "grumbling." This is so typical of church today, that church can almost be seen as a "grumble factory." People don't like something that's going on, so they "grumble." They didn't like the sermon, so they "grumble." Or there was something wrong with the worship service. The slides weren't working or the drums were too loud or we sang the wrong songs or the service went too long, and we "grumble." Maybe the sign outside isn't right, or there's still ice in the parking lot, or it's too cold in the building, or there's a coffee stain on one of the seats, or the kids are running through the building again. And we grumble.

I get it. When you gather together with the same people for weeks and months and years on end, it's easy to be discouraged. It's easy to "grumble" when things aren't quite going quite your way or when something needs to be addressed. But somehow, the church seems to be a Petri dish of complaints.

I remember seeing a cartoon of a church auditorium. In the back of the auditorium, there was a window, where you could register your complaints, before entering the service. We forget that we should enter to worship. Instead, we enter to criticize. That's how it feels sometimes, especially as a pastor. I also remember seeing another cartoon of a pastor looking up at the clouds. All he saw was face of people in his congregation. And when he thinks of these people, he remembers their complaints. He said, "That cloud looks like Mrs. Cheezeeder complaining about my hymn selections. That cloud over there looks like Mr. Barkwell complaining about the budget for youth ministry. That other cloud looks like Mrs. Lintcatcher complaining about the women's fellowship meetings ..." I think, of anybody in the church, I have heard more grumbling than any of you have, as people come to me with their complaints.

Again, I get it. There are legitimate reasons to be disappointed with how things are going at church. One of the only ways to effect the change is by pointing out the bad and speaking to others about what needs to be change. But the best way to be an agent of change is by gaining a reputation of being an encourager first. So may I just encourage you, to be in the habit of pointing out the good, far more than pointing out the bad. Have a reputation of being the positive, encouraging one, and your complaints will make far more of an impact!

I read from Sam Crabtree's excellent book, "Practicing Affirmation." His book is about the encouragement that we all need and how to give encouragement to others.

"The importance of affirmation does not entirely remove the place of correction. We're going to live with sinners. We're going to marry a sinner. Our children will be sinners. Our parents are sinners. The people around us are going to pull boneheaded moves, and in love it will sometimes be our place to point them out. They are going to smell bad, and it's our job to inform them before they go out in public. They will burn the burgers. They will do something that is mediocre, that will hurt the team or waste household finances, or something else regrettable. But love does not look first for ways to correct.

Think this way: give so many affirmations as a pattern, a way of life, that you gain a reputation for it. You are known for your affirmations, not your criticisms, your corrections. In Acts 4:36 Barnabas is called the "son of encouragement." What's my reputation? Mr. Crabby Pants? Old Lady Battle-Axe? Miss Nit-Pick? We should unleash so many affirmations that those around us lose track. So, it's not a matter of mathematical precision. It's not a strict algebraic formula but a spiritually organic way of living, more like a romance than rocket science, less like knitting (with its relentless counting: knit one, purl two), more like the weather--how much rain is enough? Well, that depends on how dry it's been. And what are you trying to grow--a watermelon or a cactus?

According to one perspective, 'It takes more than one positive to overcome a negative. You hurt my feelings, so do something nice for me. Are we okay? Not usually yet. The bean counters are telling us that a healthy state in a system actually requires 3-5 positive events to overcome one negative event.'^[1]

Anyway, there was this complaint in the early church. Widows were being neglected in their daily distribution of food.

Apparently, in the early church, they took on a role of caring for widows. There was no welfare in the days of the apostles. There were no food stamps in those days either. There was no governmental agency where those in need could go and receive help. There was no social security for those who had no other form of income. Most of these functions fell upon families. But those without family support were in a desperate situation. They had nowhere to help. They had nowhere to turn. And the church stepped up to fill in the gap.

This is where some of the proceeds of the sales of property we saw in Acts 4 were going: to help widows in their distress. James calls this true religion. "Religion that is pure and undefiled before God, the Father, is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction" (James 1:27). This has always been the heart of God: to care for those in need, especially for orphans and widows and immigrants. "For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing" (Deuteronomy 10:17-18).

That's why Isaiah exhorted Israel, "Learn to do good; Seek justice, correct oppression; Bring justice to the fatherless, Plead the widow's cause. (Isaiah 1:17). That's exactly what the early church was doing. They were "pleading the widow's cause." They were helping them with a daily allotment of food. However, some widows were being neglected, which brought on the complaint. Again, look at verse 1, ...

Acts 6:1

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.

So, in the early church, there were two groups of people: (1) there were "the Hellenists" and (2) there were "the Hebrews." The Hellenists were those who were influenced by the Greek culture of the day. They probably spoke Greek. They probably grew up apart from the synagogue and apart from religion. As a result, they probably educated in the secular schools of the day. The Hebrews, on the other hand, were the Jewish people, through and through. They spoke Aramaic. In school, they learned enough Hebrew to read and recite from the Old Testament. They were fully engaged in the religious culture of the Jews.

So, you have these two sorts of people in the church. it's not so much unlike the culture of our day. On the one hand, you have those who come from Christian families, who have known the Scriptures from their youth. They were homeschooled and memorized all the verses in AWANA. They have social and family resources to help get them ahead in life. On the other hand, you have those who were saved out of a godless background, whose parents are divorced and they grew up with dad out of the home. They went to the public school, knowing nothing of the Bible. Without much support from home, they have struggled financially in life.

Apparently, in the early church, there was some sort of natural division between the Hellenists and the Hebrews. This division was enough that when resources were limited, one group was neglected. The group that was neglected were the Hellenists, who were raised in the Greek culture of the day. And those of Hellenistic background, rose up to defend their widows. Their complain was fully justified (as many complaints are).

At some point, their complaint reached the apostles. They were gracious enough to hear the complaint. They were also wise enough to deal with the complaint. We see them responding in verse 2, which I am calling, ...

2. The Solution (verses 2-7)

First off, they gather everyone together to address the situation.

Acts 6:2

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.

Apparently, it seems as if the apostles were asked to come and take the oversight of the "widow-feeding operation" (WFO). Whoever was doing it wasn't doing a very good job. Or, perhaps nobody was really in charge of the task. Perhaps the task fell to whoever happened to show up on any given day.

At any rate, the apostles couldn't take over the oversight of the program. This wasn't because they were incapable or because they were unwilling, but because of what it would cost them. It would cause them to "give up preaching the word of God."

This is totally consistent with what we have seen so far in the book of Acts. Throughout the growth and development of the early church, we have seen the apostles focus their attention upon preaching, and we have seen the Lord use their preaching to grow the church. On Pentecost, Peter stood up and preached to the people, 3,000 people were saved. Peter continued to preach after healing the lame beggar, and the number of disciples were more than 5,000. This all came through the preaching of the apostles.

Further, upon several occasions, they told the religious authorities, we cannot stop preaching! It is what they were doing. In fact, they were doing this "every day, in the temple and house to house, ... teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus" (Acts 5:42). The religious authorities couldn't stop them. And now, the pull of the administration of the church was trying to stop them as well. The apostles said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables."

This is the typical battle that we all face: the battle between the good and the best. Serving tables would be a good thing for these apostles to do. It's honorable in the sight of God. It joins with the heart of God. It is "true religion" at its finest (James 1:27). But to do so would cost the best for the apostles: preaching the word of God. It was not right for the apostles to serve tables. And so, they come with some advice:

Acts 6:3

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.

The solution the apostles put forward to solve this situation was to give a task to the congregation: they should find and select seven men who were capable of overseeing the task. This is simply the principle of delegation. The apostles, like all of us, have limits. They couldn't do it all. So they sought to delegate some of their duties.

I'm reminded of Moses, when he was in a similar situation. In the early days of the nation of Israel, soon after they left Egypt on their way to the promised land, there was too much for him to do. Day after day, people would come to Moses with their problems, seeking insight from the Lord. Day after day, from morning till evening, Moses would hear their cases and judge between them. It came to pass that Moses' father-in-law, Jethro observed what was happening. He said, ...

Exodus 18:14-26

"What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone, and all the people stand around you from morning till evening?"

And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to inquire of God; when they have a dispute, they come to me and I decide between one person and another, and I make them know the statutes of God and his laws."

Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. You and the people with you will certainly wear yourselves out, for the thing is too heavy for you. You are not able to do it alone. Now obey my voice; I will give you advice, and God be with you! You shall represent the people before God and bring their cases to God, and you shall warn them about the statutes and the laws, and make them know the way in which they must walk and what they must do. Moreover, look for able men from all the people, men who fear God, who are trustworthy and hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And let them judge the people at all times. Every great matter they shall bring to you, but any small matter they shall decide themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. If you do this, God will direct you, you will be able to endure, and all this people also will go to their place in peace."

So Moses listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he had said. Moses chose able men out of all Israel and made them heads over the people, chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens. And they judged the people at all times. Any hard case they brought to Moses, but any small matter they decided themselves.

This is almost exactly what is going on in the early church. To serve tables, the apostles would burden themselves, and wear themselves out. It was too much for them to do. So, like Moses, they worked to distribute the labor.

The parallels even came down to the type of men to appoint over the labor. Certainly, these men had to be able to do the work. But they also must have a certain character. Jethro said, "look for able men from all the people, men (1) who fear God, (2) who are trustworthy and (3) hate a bribe, and place such men over the people as chiefs of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties, and of tens" (Exodus 18:21).

If you are going to be in charge of judging people in the place of Moses, these character qualities must be in place. (1) There must be a fear of God! That is, an understanding of our position as God's creatures. (2) These men must be trustworthy! They need to be dependable, otherwise Moses would continually be dragged into their duties. (3) These men must hate a bribe! This is great importance for all judges, lest justice fail.

So, likewise, the apostles identify certain character qualities that must be in place for those who would serve tables. The apostles instructed the people to search out "seven men of (1) good repute, (2) full of the Spirit and (3) [full] of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty" (Acts 6:3).

First of all they must be "of good repute." That is, they must have a good reputation. They must be "well thought of" by others. When their names are mentioned, others smile, thinking them to be honest, hard-working, solid people. The apostles didn't want to place just anybody in the task of serving tables, even people who could get the job done. They wanted those who had a pattern of dealing well with others to do the job.

The second character quality that the apostles mentioned is that they must be "full of the Spirit." That is, they must be believers in Christ. But beyond that, they must give evidence of the work of the Spirit in their lives. And what does the Spirit produce in our lives? Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23). These are the sorts of things that are necessary when you serve others, because they will find reason for complaint. Any good leader will respond in gentleness and joy, which is why these men must be "full of the Spirit."

Finally these men must be "full of ... wisdom." That is, they must be able to navigate life, and the complexities that come their way. They must be able to manage people and manage things. They must be able to solve problems on their own. And thus, have a measure of independence, that they wouldn't have to go and ask the apostles repeatedly for counsel on how to serve the widows in need. They can figure it out for themselves.

Now, these character qualities sound a lot like the character qualities needed for deacons in the church. In 1 Timothy 3, Paul puts forth the character qualities needed for those who would serve the church as deacons:

1 Timothy 3:8-9, 12

Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ... Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their

children and their own households well.

In 1 Timothy 3, we see Paul mentioning how deacons must have a good reputation by dealing well with people, being dignified and truthful and honest. Paul says that they must have a solid Christian testimony, "holding to the mystery of the faith." Paul says that they must have wisdom to manage their children and households well.

I think it's no accident that the qualifications for deacons looks like the qualifications that the apostles are putting forth as needed to serve tables, because, these men who would be chosen here in Acts 6 are the budding basis for deacons in the church. They are not "deacons" in the official sense of the word. But they are doing the role of what deacons do. The word, "Deacon" means "Servant." And that's what these men are called to do. They are called to "serve" tables. They are called to "deacon" tables. That's why I like to call these men "proto-deacons." They are setting forth the budding pattern of leadership in the early church, which will fully develop into the offices of elders and deacons.

As the New Testament develops, so does its leadership. In the church today, there are two offices. There are elders and deacons. Elders are also called, "pastors" and "overseers." They are like the apostles. The elders are responsible for the spiritual matters of the church (like the apostles). Deacons are like the seven men that are appointed in verse 6. The deacons are responsible for the physical matters of the church (like these men appointed in Acts 6). If you want to see a job description for elders of the church (or pastors), there is no better description in all of the Bible than is found in verse 4.

Acts 6:4

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

You ask, "Steve, what is your job description as a pastor of Rock Valley Bible Church." I am called to devote myself to prayer and to the ministry of the word. That's it. That is my calling in this life. I'm called to pray. I'm called to preach.

Prayer manifests itself in many ways. I am called to pray in private. I am called to pray in public. I am called to pray every moment of the day (1 Thessalonians 5:17). I am called to spend seasons in prayer. I am called to pray for you. I am called to pray for my neighbors and family members. I'm called to pray for God's kingdom to come. This all requires time and effort.

When a pastor truly understands what he can (and cannot do), he will be driven to prayer, especially in light of what he is called to do. I have an impossible job. I am called to do what only God can do. The only way that I can fulfill my duty before God and before all of you is to pray, asking God to do what only God can do. I love what John Piper says about this. Speaking to pastors, he says, ...

"Brothers, the proper goals of the life of a pastor are unquestionably beyond our reach. The changes we long for in the hearts of our people can happen only by a sovereign work of grace.

Salvation is a gift of God (Eph. 2:8). Love is a gift of God (1 Thess. 3:12). Faith is a gift of God (1 Tim. 1:14). Wisdom is a gift of God (Eph. 1:17). Joy is a gift of God (Rom. 15:13). Yet as pastors we must labor to 'save some' (1 Cor. 9:22). We must stir up the people to love (Heb. 10:24). We must advance their faith (Phil. 1:25). We must impart wisdom (1 Cor. 2:7). We must work for their joy (2 Cor. 1:24).

We are called to labor for that which is God's alone to give. The essence of Christian ministry is that its success is not within our reach. ...

A cry for help from the heart of a childlike pastor is sweet praise in the ears of God. ...

Prayer is the translation into a thousand different words of a single sentence: 'Apart from me [Christ] you can do nothing' (John 15:5)."^[2]

The ministry of the word is varied. I am called to preach publicly on Sunday mornings. I am called to preach and teach in the various groups and individuals I meet with throughout the week. I am called to counsel those in need from the word of God. I am called to do work of an evangelist, spreading the word as an example to you all (2 Timothy 4:5). This is true. I feel as if every conversation with those outside the church, especially, is an opportunity for evangelism. It is always on my mind. That's why I transitioned the conversation with the woman walking her dog to speak about Jesus. I'm seeking to minister the word to every unbeliever I come into contact with.

Further, I am called to write. I'm called to write blog posts and sermons. Even notes of encouragement can rightly fall under the ministry of the word. I am called to take the word of God, and bring it to bear upon our lives, however I can make it happen. This requires time. This requires dedication. This requires devotion.

When Paul instructed Timothy in his pastoral duties he said, "Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, to teaching" (1 Timothy 4:13). Timothy's "devotion" was to be toward the ministry of the word. Paul later told Timothy to "preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching" (2 Timothy 4:2). Timothy was to be ready at all times to minister the word of God. This requires time and effort. Again, as Paul told Timothy, "Practice these things, immerse yourself in them, so that all may see your progress" (1 Timothy 4:15). The ministry of the word is to be immersive project.

As a result of these things, I work really hard to focus my attention upon what I am called to do. There are many things that are done here and around the church that are needed. I am willing to do them all. But, like the apostles, I am not called to them. I'm not called to mow the lawn on the church property. I'm not called to clean the building. I'm not called to collect and manage the finances of the church. I'm not called to make repairs around the building. I'm not called to run the audio/visual equipment at church. I'm not called to play the instruments at church. I'm not called to administrate every program in the church. I'm called to minister the word of God. This, in turn, will equip you all to do these things (Ephesians 4:12).

It's my hope, that you are pleased to come along side me (and the other elders) in this task, as you have been for so many years. I'm so thankful. I say this because, in our text we see the congregation pleased with the plan.

Acts 6:5

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.

Seven men were selected from the congregation. We know only a little bit about two of these men. We know the most about Stephen. We will see him next week, beginning in verse 8. We will hear him preach the longest recorded sermon in the book of Acts (in chapter 7). Indeed, he was a man "full of faith." He died a martyr's death. We know a bit about Philip. We will see him in Acts, chapter 8, when the word of God begins to spread to Judea and Samaria. It was Philip who brought the word to those places, preaching "the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 8:12).

But the rest, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, we know hardly anything of them, other than their name. However, we do know that their names are all Greek names. Which might mean that there was some sensitivity on the part of the apostles and people to appoint those who would have a vested interest in serving the Hellenistic widows. Finally, we see the resolution to the problem completed.

Acts 6:6

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

At this point, we see the problem solved. We see the church at peace. Further, we hear nothing more in the book of Acts of the daily distribution for the widows. Apparently, these men did a good job. In that we can rejoice. Verse 7 is an indication that the apostles were, indeed able to fulfill their ministries.

Acts 6:7

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.

Now, one comment before we close. We, as elders have been talking about expanding our leadership, especially as it relates to deacons in the church. We are praying and thinking about those who might fulfill the role, looking especially at those who are already doing much of the work. Pray for us to have wisdom like the apostles had in these things.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on February 28, 2021 by Steve Brandon.

For more information see www.rockvalleybiblechurch.org.

[1] Sam Crabtree, "Practicing Affirmation," p. 46.

[2] John Piper, "Brothers, We are NOT Professionals," pp. 54-55.