

Our Division Won't Distract Us Acts 6:1-7 (22 Jun 2025)



The English reformer Hugh Latimer was burned at the stake for his faith.

Possibly his most famous work was entitled **The Sermon of the Plough**.

It was a blistering attack on the lazy, inept leadership he saw in much of the church of his day. In it he asked this question:

And now I would ask you a strange question: who is the most diligent bishop and prelate in all England; that passes all the rest in doing his office? I can tell, for I know who it is; I know him well. ... I will tell you – **it is the Devil**. He is the most diligent preacher of all others; he is never out of his diocese; he is never away from his cure; you shall never find him unoccupied; he is ever in his parish; ... he is ever at his plough; ... he is ever applying his business; you shall never find him idle, I warrant you.¹

He is right.

Read Revelation 12. When Satan failed to stop Jesus and the church began to flourish – verse 17 says he became furious and waged war constantly with the offspring of the woman – the church.

Satan has many tools at his disposal – persecution, temptation, false religions.

But one particularly fruitful technique is for Satan to find a crack in a church – any sniff of division – and fan it until it shatters good ministries.

¹ Cited in John R.W. Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, 1982 Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, pp. 27-28.

What is the answer? – Our passage this morning provides – **The Blueprint For Dealing With Division.**

Basically, the answer is appoint godly leaders who will strive to unite the church and heal divisions.

We are in the book of Acts and we have seen that the message in this book is:



We must strive to see His kingdom come, through the empowering of His Spirit, by witnessing to the nations, until He comes again.

In chapters 3-6, we see the kingdom growing and spreading throughout Jerusalem.



And the message that empowers this growing kingdom is simple.

Our King Has Come And He Alone Saves.

And:

His Kingdom Comes And It Is Unstoppable.

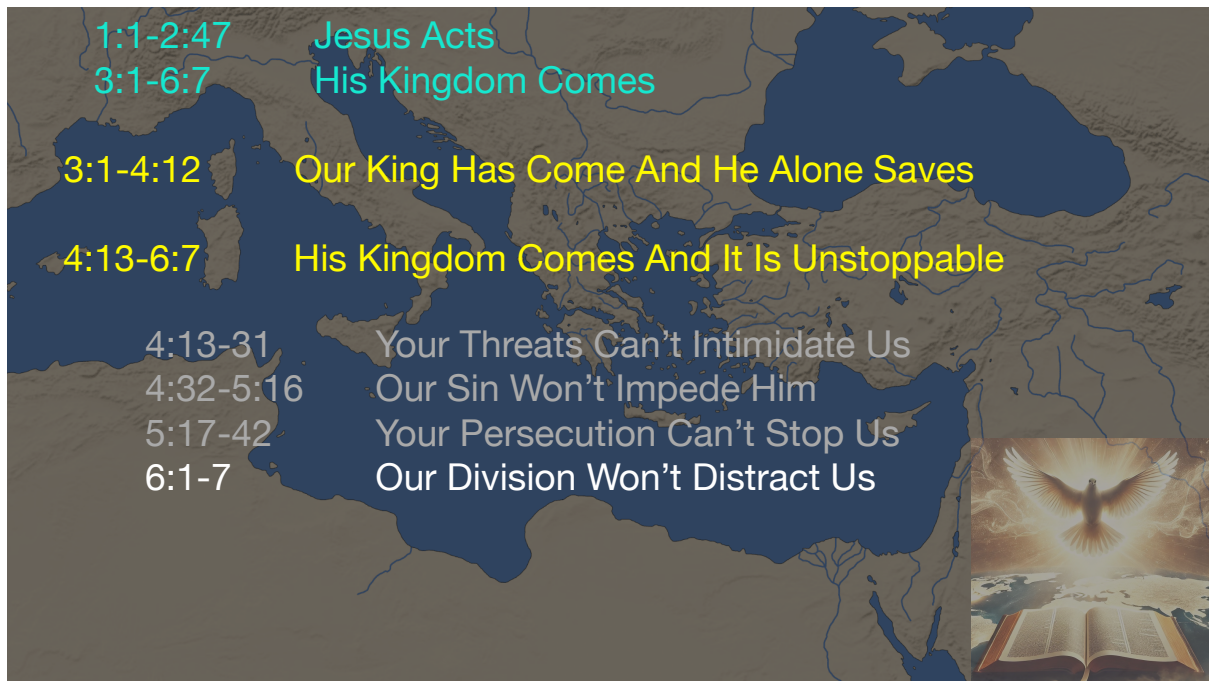
We have seen that there are dangers that seem poised to derail the growth of the kingdom.



4:13-31	Your Threats Can't Intimidate Us
4:32-5:16	Our Sin Won't Impede Him
5:17-42	Your Persecution Can't Stop Us
6:1-7	Our Division Won't Distract Us

These dangers are *both* **external** and **internal**.

This morning, we will see that:



6:1-7 **Our Division Won't Distract Us**

This morning, we come to a passage that tells us good leadership heals division.

Now, I believe this passage deals with installing a layer of leaders that became the prototype for Deacons.

However, I freely admit this idea is somewhat contentious.

The idea that our passage speaks of Deacons was held at least by the middle of the second century and has been the majority opinion throughout church history.

However, I need to acknowledge that there are many who have said this has nothing to do with Deacons.

They say this is a unique situation with a unique solution that is not meant to give general guidelines for the church.

Why do some hold this is not the establishment of Deacons?

First, the word **deacon** – **diakonos** – is not used in the passage.

We don't have ... and the Apostles appointed these seven men **as Deacons**.

That is true. But, Luke was a very accurate historian.

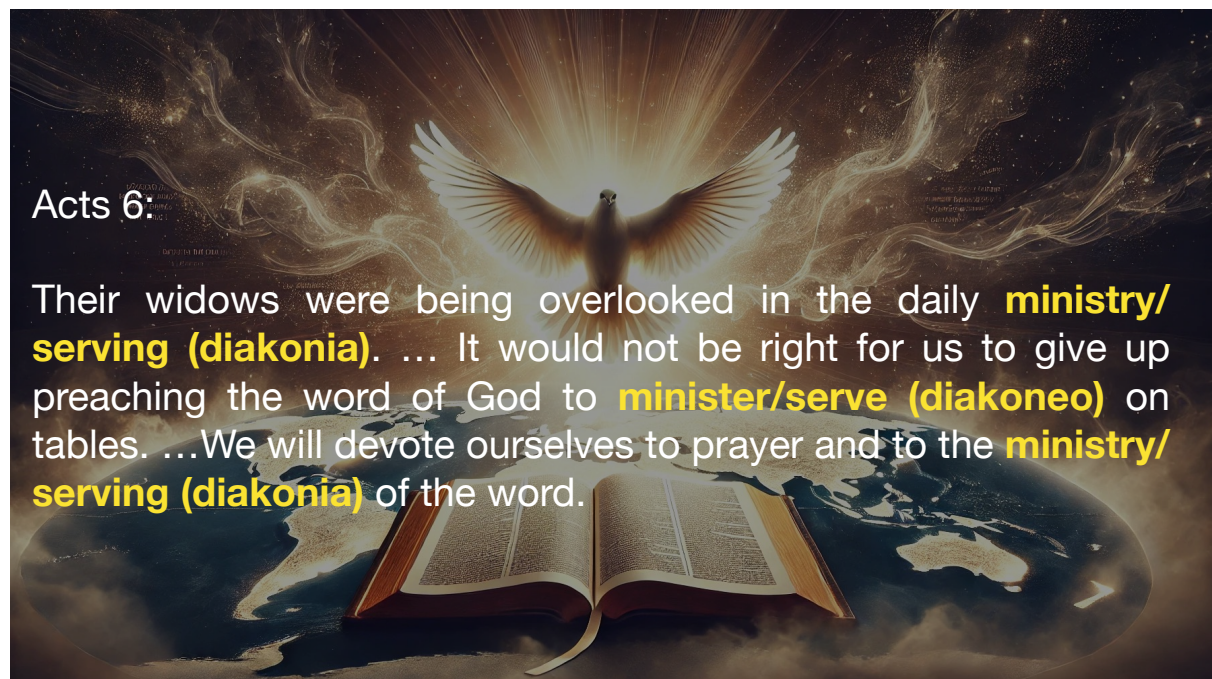
He only used titles and offices – from when they came into use.

For example, there were men leading the church before Acts 11 – but they are not called *Elders* until then.

The term deacon was not used in terms of an office until years after Acts 6.

However, the **concept** of what a **Deacon** is can clearly be found here and significantly the root word is used three times.

Acts 6:



Their widows were being overlooked in the daily **ministry/serving (diakonia)**. ... It would not be right for us to give up preaching the word of God to **minister/serve (diakoneo)** on tables. ... We will devote ourselves to prayer and to the **ministry/serving (diakonia)** of the word.

The concept of men set apart to serve the church is clearly present.

The ministry of serving in these practical areas led to the office later known as **Deacons**.

So, just as men who oversaw the church spiritually became **Elders** or **Overseers**.

So, men who served the church practically became **Deacons**.

A *second* objection is that at least some of these seven men *functioned* more as Elders than Deacons.

The argument is that they seem more than just Deacons.

Some of them preached, evangelized, ministered the word, baptised and became leaders in the church.

However, I want to argue that this misunderstands the offices of Elder and Deacon.

When you read 1 Timothy 3 the qualifications for Elder and Deacon are remarkably similar.

Just because a man serves as a Deacon does not mean he can't preach and evangelise and baptize.

Some Deacons have gifting that does not line up with being an Elder.

Some Elders may not be great Deacons.

But, many men are equipped such that they may serve as *either* an Elder or a Deacon.

Some of our Deacons preach – many have later served as Elders.

Some Elders have later served as Deacons.

The office is more to do with function and roles than in gifting.

I think the point is – don't just appoint a man as a Deacon because he is a tradie or can do a spread-sheet. Appoint him because he is godly and some will be godly and good administratively or able to preach.

Nor does this mean that all Deacons must preach and baptise. We say there can be overlap – but if you are in the office of Deacon your main function is serving the church and freeing Elders to oversee the church.

I think that having men of the quality and character of Stephen and Philip as Deacons is the point.

So overall, I do think it best to see this as blueprint that would later serve as the prototype for the office of Deacon.

Now, let's work our way through this.

Here is what we will see in our passage:



Godly deacons are trusted to oversee ministry, deal with developing disunity and free Elders to their tasks.

Let me ask you a question. What has caused the most damage to the progress of the gospel over the past 2000 years?

Persecution, threats, false religions. I don't think so.

I think sin and division take the prize and if I had to nominate a winner – I think division takes the grand prize.

If you are here this morning and have been a Christian for a decade or more – and have not seen serious division in the church – you are the exception not the norm.

And division in a church is a killer. It sucks all the energy out of our mission and the whole focus becomes the division. It destroys trust in leaders and in churches. Many Christians give up on church. Far more churches have died from division than from persecution.

And here is the real gut punch.

Very few splits are over serious doctrine. Most stem from pride – I want to be a top dog – or preference – I think the walls should obviously be painted grey – or some personal dispute that spirals out of control.

And please don't ever hear me picturing our church as one long journey of unity. We have had our divisions.

And none of them have been over something worth dividing over.

We have had divisions over issues like music, how to handle a specific situation or if someone should be an Elder.

And to our shame – some of our hottest disputes have been over some really minor issues.

Decisions 25 years ago when we renovated the kitchen.

Decisions 8 years ago when we renovated the back hall.

And yes – cue the memes – decisions over things as seemingly petty as carpet colour.

Minor disagreements became personal. Motives were questioned. Allies were conscripted. And the ministry ground to a halt.

At one point many years ago now, we basically got rid of Deacons and Dave and I took over most deacon tasks. It ended the difficulties and honestly I think we did a pretty good job – **but** our preaching suffered, the ministry suffered and the church suffered.

Without a healthy, godly diaconate – a Deacon board – the ministry and life of any church will be compromised and the opportunity for division magnified.

So how do you stop this happening?

Our passage begins with:



A church with a crack 1

Acts 6:1:

In those days, as the disciples were increasing in number, there arose a complaint by the Hellenistic Jews against the Hebraic Jews that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution.

This is the first time we have the term – disciples – those who learned from or followed the Master – Jesus – applied to the whole church.

And despite facing persecution without and sin within – the church is flourishing.

I believe it is no coincidence that as the church was flourishing – an issue arose.

I don't know how much to blame episodes like this on Satan and how much on our own sin – but I think likely both are involved.

Satan is often described as being involved in exactly these type of attacks against the church.

Paul talks about the schemes of the devil.

Peter says your adversary the devil is prowling around like a roaring lion, looking for anyone he can devour.

We have already seen Satan targeting this church – it was him who filled Ananias' heart.

So while we aren't told specifically that this crack that led to division was specifically an attack of Satan – regardless the church had a crack which made it vulnerable.

The crack was – discrimination – and it was blamed on ethnicity.

A whisper found its way to the ears of the Hellenistic Jews – those raised in Greek speaking lands – that despite the church saying – we are all one in Christ – **their widows** were being treated differently under the leadership of these Hebraic men.

Let me set the scene here. Hellenistic Jews were Jews who were born and raised outside of Israel – throughout the Empire.

Their native tongue was Greek and although they were Jews were heavily influenced by Roman culture.

We know that if a Jewish couple lived outside Israel and the husband died – it was not uncommon for the widow to move back to the Promised Land.

Women did not own property and wealth in their own name. A husband dying meant it passed not to her but to her sons – especially the oldest.

Often, they would then support their widowed mother – but we know many widows chose to go back and die in the Promised Land.

But, that meant she would be away from family.

And if she became a Christian – she would be cut off from the support offered through the synagogues and the Jewish religious system.

Widows in those days were particularly vulnerable economically and socially.

The Old and New Testament speak much about care for widows.

So, if widows became Christians and were without family – their care would become the responsibility of the church.

It seems that the 12 had appointed some in the church to handle looking after feeding and supporting the widows and it seems likely that this was under the care of Hebraic Jews – Jews who were born and raised in Israel and spoke Aramaic as their main language.

It is estimated that about 10% of Jews in Israel were Hellenistic – raised outside Israel but moved back to Israel.

We have reason to think the percentage in the church may possibly be a bit higher – but they were still a minority.

What we do know is the majority of the church were Hebraic – born and raised in Israel – and the **entire** upper leadership was Hebraic – the 12 Apostles.

So, here is the situation – the church is growing, things are going well – and then a complaint arises.

Hellenistic Jews got the idea that those in charge of the daily distribution were favouring Hebrew widows over Hellenistic widows – and it seemed to them the issue was racial.

If something is happening – we always look for a reason why.

And understand this was not just a complaint about the Jews handing out the food – this was a complaint against the leadership of the Apostles.

The money was laid at the Apostles' feet – they ran the church – they appointed the ones who handed out the food and this had happened on their watch – the buck stops with them.

What do we think about this?

I don't know if there was actual discrimination or not.

Were the Hebraic widows actually getting more or did it just seem that way?

And if it was a real problem – I don't know if it was deliberate or inadvertent.

I can't tell you how many times over the years we have been challenged about favouritism, preferential treatment, looking after the in-crowd.

At times we have prayed for those in state schools, private schools, Christian schools – but missed home-schoolers – so we obviously have an issue with home-schoolers.

Or if we missed announcing a new baby, a new engagement or the like – there must be a reason. They were from Serbia – or they were Blues supporters.

There had to be a reason for so obvious a snub – when truthfully it was an honest oversight.

At other times – I think we did make decisions that were inadvertently preferential – until it was pointed out to us.

So, I do not know if somebody looked and it just seemed like the Hebraic widows were getting an extra slice of bread and strip of dried beef – or if they actually were.

I think most likely there was an actual issue going on – because appointing seven Greek deacons almost seems an acknowledgement there was a problem and the church got it wrong.

I don't know if it was something subconscious – or if it stemmed from actual prejudice.

Churches should not have – but do have – prejudices.

At times there is favouritism – Read James 2.

However, it doesn't matter if it is real or not – deliberate or not – some believed there was an issue – so there was an issue – a crack.

What happens next is crucial.

I guarantee if I was an Apostle and this was brought to my attention – everything inside me would want to scream – Really! Really!

I mean I am an Apostle overseeing a growing church – thousands – maybe 10,000.

The admin load is horrendous – the Sanhedrin are lashing me and imprisoning me – and an angel said – too bad I have to keep preaching.

Then this group makes an appointment and says – we think our widows are getting diddled out of some food – it is discrimination.

You want me to stop everything because you think some widows might be getting a bigger serving?

You have to be thinking – what do you want me to do – personally count how many peas everyone gets?

Me? I would be seriously tempted to think: OK – 10,000 souls to shepherd – I am recovering from 39 lashes – the kingdom is coming – I really don't have the bandwidth to find out if widows with Greek accents are getting marginally less.

Here is how I think I would want to respond.

Brothers, remember those who grumbled in the wilderness – don't let that be you – you are better than that.

Look, I will send a memo to the food distribution ministry to check every plate is the same size. OK?

I feel you – but now is just not the time. We all have to make sacrifices – I get lashed – it is possible they might miss out on dessert – honestly – I just can't deal right now.

But, that would be seriously foolish.

There **is** an issue. Some are worried about favouritism in the church going all the way to the Apostles.

It calls their character into question – you **have** to address this.

Fortunately, they act wisely, very wisely – and it becomes **The Blueprint For Dealing With Division**.

They:



Acknowledge the issue 2a

Houston – we have a problem.

Verse 2:

The Twelve summoned the whole company of the disciples.

They didn't gloss over it. They didn't brush it off.

They acknowledged it publicly and openly.

They knew that even if it wasn't true – perception becomes reality.

Whether you think there is a real issue or not – there is an issue.

It is human nature to feel discriminated against, to think that others are getting a better deal.

Whispers spread – other perceived slights arise.

But I can tell you – in leadership the pressure that comes to do nothing can be profound.

You are told – it will die out – let the disgruntled leave the church – we can't stop to deal with every minor complaint.

No – acknowledge that real or not – there **is** an issue.

Take ownership of it and address it.

A little inequity in feeding widows sounds so minor – it is not fighting for the deity of Christ.

Maybe – but the Apostles know if this went unchecked it could end the ministry of the church. Small cracks quickly widen into all out warfare.

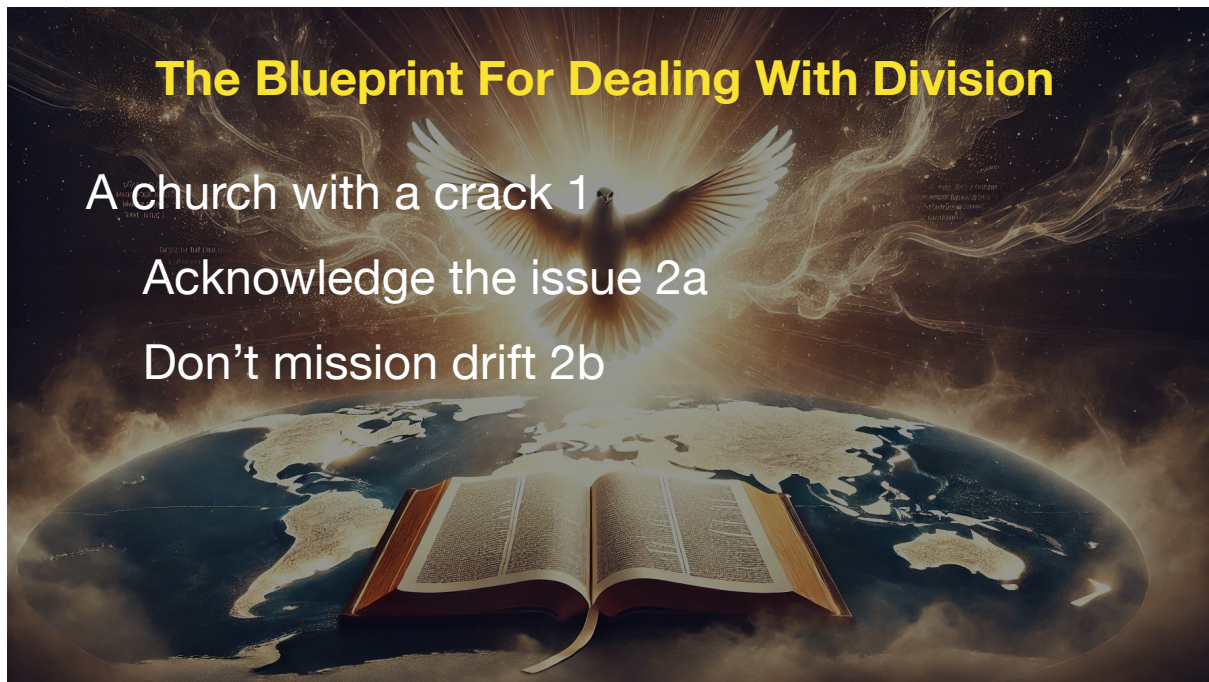
Far more churches have died over this kind of issue than over major doctrine.

It becomes **us** vs **them** – and when it becomes personal – it is serious.

This is a well-worn path to disaster.

Division – even the perception of division – **must** be addressed.

And:



The Blueprint For Dealing With Division

A church with a crack 1

Acknowledge the issue 2a

Don't mission drift 2b

Don't mission drift 2b

Verse 2b:

They said, "It would not be right for us to give up preaching the word of God to wait on tables."

It is so tempting to say – fine – since I want a job done right, I just have to do it myself.

I think the 12 were clearly gifted enough to oversee this ministry of serving the widows well.

But – that would not be wise for a number of reasons.

There is already a perception issue that Greek speakers were being overlooked – so the answer is not for 12 Hebrew men to personally sort it out.

In fact, maybe they overcompensate and the Hellenistic widows now get more – well believe me that would only create a whole other issue.

But even more – it would distract the Apostles from the task given to them.

I can assure you that when there is division in the church – you are absolutely distracted.

Sermon preparation is sidelined.

Balls are dropped.

And every other little crack in the church starts widening – and all the Pastors want to do is resign.

There are so many pressures that just come from ministering.

In 2 Corinthians 11:28 Paul talks about the daily pressure of ministry.

It adds up. Dealing with sin, opposition, a world that doesn't want to hear.

Then you add in division in the church – over things that seem minor – and everything inside you says – run – and your wife says – seriously – not again – we have done our time – and anyway I think Han is more than ready – let's just go.

The Apostles had priorities – them taking on this task would have led to greater problems.

Yes, this verse specifically refers to Apostles – but later in this book – Apostles like Paul – hand on the running of the church to Elders.

So, I think it legitimate to say – this verse also gives the priorities for Elders – they are to lead the church through prayer and the ministry of the word.

In churches – often the members have this expectation that the Elders and in particular the Pastors have direct oversight of everything and involved in everything.

You miss a prayer meeting, a workday, a church event – and people ask – so just wondering where Han or Rhoi was?

Deep sigh – well – there was a family priority – or illness – or something else.

Or I get asked to meet – and sometimes I just can't – but if I suggest another Pastor or Deacon take the meeting – I have been told – what don't you care – am I not good enough for **you** to meet with me?

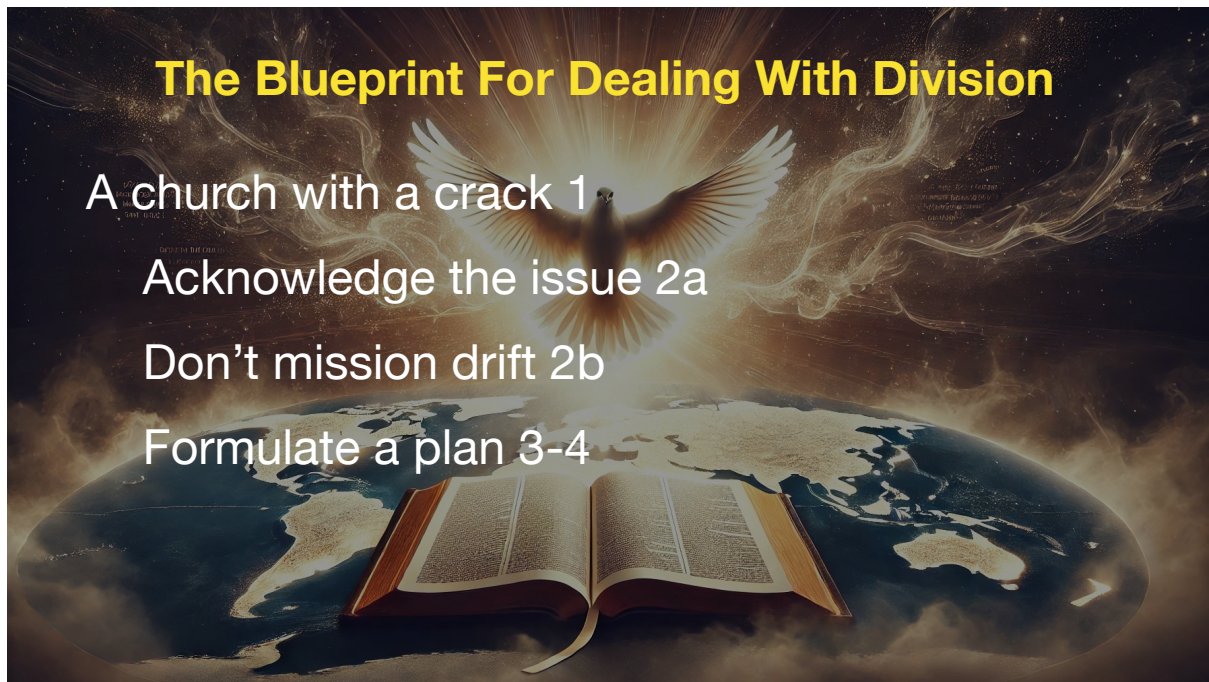
We try – but we just **can't** do it all – that is where Deacons often come in.

The Apostles understood this. If they neglected these priorities – verse 7 would not be here.

Instead, it would read:

So the word of God stopped spreading, the disciples in Jerusalem were distracted and began to reduce in number, and a large group of priests who had been tempted to join them said – no thank you.

But they did something wise:



Formulate a plan 3-4

It would have been so tempting to say – It would not be right for us to give up preaching the word of God to wait on tables – so please for the sake of the kingdom – just let this one slide.

They didn't.

Verses 3–4:

Brothers and sisters, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”

The plan wasn't:

Chose seven men who are great administrators with experience in the catering and hospitality industry.

Churches often choose administrators, businessmen, those with charisma.

But if they don't have character that is a sure path to disaster.

They said – choose seven **men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom.**

I do think this is the pattern for who to choose as Deacons.

Men. Are Deacons only to be men?

It has long been a point of debate. I believe the evidence favours men only in this leadership role. But, there is a legitimate argument that later women were also

Deaconesses – but I favour the view that in 1 Timothy the reference is to wives of Deacons not Deaconesses.

More important here is character.

Good reputation – above reproach – trusted to be godly, impartial and fair.

Full of the Spirit – saved, demonstrating the fruit of the Spirit.

Full of wisdom – able to deal with people, situations, divisions.

So, did the members choose the Deacons or the Apostles or both?

I believe the most likely understanding is that the Apostles gave the criteria and helped guide the process – and these seven were selected and affirmed by **both** the Apostles and the congregation.

I think the end result is more important than the process.

Choosing godly trusted men to deal with the administrative tasks, the issues that arise, the day to day running of the church is a pattern in the Bible.

Moses was overwhelmed, so 70 Elders were chosen to help him.

These seven men were chosen to oversee the duty – the ministry – of distributing food.

And that freed the Apostles to focus on their God-given priorities – prayer and the ministry of the word.

Notice that the same word – **diakonia** – is used of the seven **and** the twelve. They both had ministries – one is serving the church – one is overseeing the church.

Both are vital ministries but in different ways.

The effect of the ministry of Deacons is more quickly noticed. They may not serve upfront in public ways. But, believe me we all notice when they are not doing a good job.

You turn up on Sunday and the AC is out, the toilets blocked and the coffee wasn't ordered.

Very quickly people notice and ask – what is going on?

Neglect in the ministry of Elders – takes more time to be noticed.

We can knock out a quick sermon or redo an old one – and you will barely notice for a while.

If we aren't praying – it takes time to notice.

But when the church begins to function on human strength and resources – believe me it does become noticeable.

These had to be men of the highest character – godly – full of the Spirit and wisdom – and their ministry frees Elders to the work of prayer and the word – and the whole church prospers.

These are **both** vital ministries for the running of the church.

Deacon ministry is inherently practical but it **also** crucial, spiritual, ministry.

Serving tables, overseeing facilities, organising ministries is not a second-class ministry.

If you ever think that – go to a church with poor Deacons and you will change your mind very quickly.

So, is there an application for all of us?

Well yes – choose your Deacons well. Choose godly men.

But more than that – most of us won't actually serve as Deacons.

But, all of minister in one way or another. In one sense we are all deacons.

And without faithful service – the church suffers.

Sometimes we look at some ministries as functional not spiritual.

I am just cleaning the church, serving morning tea, doing hospitality.

If you learn nothing else from this passage – learn this.

Every ministry is spiritual.

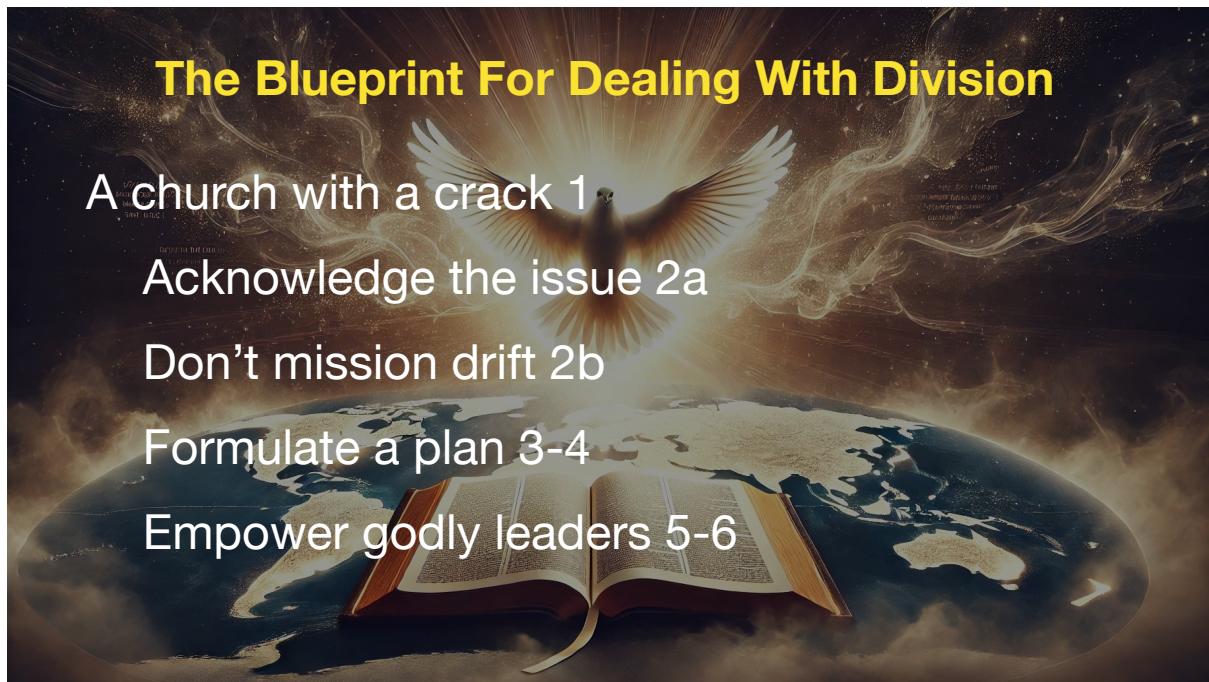
Every ministry is important.

Without your service – this church does not function.

Your ministry is a spiritual gift to the church.

Anyway, the Apostles saw the issue and formulated a plan.

Then they had to:



Empower godly leaders 5-6

Verse 5:

This proposal pleased the whole company. So they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a convert from Antioch.

First – notice who they chose.

Stephen and Philip become prominent over the next chapters. They take on the ministry of the word.

These two are shown to be top notch men of character and giftedness.

And it is fair to assume all of these men are of similar character.

These seven are godly gifted men – but significantly notice they all have Greek names.

One not only has a Greek name but he converted to Judaism.

They chose seven men – all from the minority Hellenistic group.

I find their plan remarkable – entrust the whole ministry to a minority.

We don't normally do that.

When there is an election – every candidate can ask for a scrutineer to help validate and count every vote.

What you don't find is the major parties – saying we trust a minor party – say the Abolish Education Party – to count every vote.

Because if there was a surprise election result – they would cry foul.

No – they don't trust others so everyone has scrutineers holding everyone else accountable.

This plan is different. The church says – we will trust the minority.

Honestly, I don't think I would have suggested this.

I think I might have said – fine – there is an issue so let's add a few Greek Christians in to help – the church is 70% Hebrew – 20% Greek and 10% Proselytes.

So – how about 7 Hebrew Deacons, 2 Greek and 1 Proselyte to oversee food distribution – that should do the trick?

OR – Divide the food according to ethnic percentage and each ethnic group can administer it to their own.

OR – This issue shows us that right from the start multicultural churches don't work. So, today we Apostles announce the imminent plant of Jerusalem North Hellenistic Church under pastor Stephen – and once we are all Hebrews here – there won't be any further divisions.

But very wisely, none of these are what this church does.

We will find seven men – all from the minority group – Greek speakers – chosen to administer the distribution.

First off, it is remarkable that this idea isn't howled down – we can't support this.

Everyone knows you can't trust Greeks.

Clearly they would favour the Greek widows – our Hebrew widows will be lucky to have enough to lick off a plate – no way.

No – the church recognised there was a problem – the root of it was trust – we want to restore trust with those we broke it with – so we think handing this whole ministry over to those from the discriminated against group is best.

And if we choose the right men – we can all get behind this plan.

Now, is handing a church wide ministry over to one group to be the norm?

I don't think so. This was a unique situation.

The first church could not have a multicultural leadership at the Apostolic level.

You can't just add a few Greek speakers to the Apostles. Because of the qualifications laid out in Acts 1. No Greek speakers were there with Jesus from the start of His ministry.

You can only add them in once leadership moves from Apostles to Elders.

So, I think choosing entirely Greek speaking Deacons is in part due to this unique situation.

But, the bigger point is that this plan will only work because the church – Greek and Hebrew – trusts the character of these seven men to do what is right and administer this well.

I **do** think they could have said – let's find four Hebrews and four Greeks to serve – and if they had character and godliness – likely it would have been fine.

But, I think seven Greeks is an acknowledgement we got it wrong – we want no questions about our motives and we trust and you should trust the character of these men to get it right.

OK – so what is the lesson for us?

Is it – when we have a complaint from a minority group in the church – hand control of that group to the minorities?

If you think one group in the church never feels discriminated against – you are wrong. It happens. So what are we to do?

If a few older folk say – we think the younger people on the music team are giving us too many Getty songs – we are being discriminated against – we want more of our hymns – does this mean the Elders should say – we have to focus on preaching – so the entire music team will now be over 60s and piano only?

No.

Is the lesson that in a church – every culture needs leadership representation?

No.

Years ago – I was told because our church demographic was changing we now needed an Asian Elder or two. And maybe an Indian one and a South African one.

I remember thinking – I don't find race or ethnicity in Elder qualifications.

If membership means representation – does that mean we need a Korean, a Japanese, a German and a Columbian Elder?

No – we just need godly men – whatever their race, social standing, age.

Forget quotas – I don't care where you come from – I want character.

The world calls for quotas – men, women, gay, transgender, indigenous, foreign born, Muslim – someone to represent me – and it is a complete mess.

The Bible calls for character – not quotas.

Men the congregation looks at and doesn't see race, wealth, status – just godliness.

If that means every Elder in our church is Serbian or Pacific Islander – so be it.

Character eats strategy for breakfast.

Get the right leaders – and the questions of discrimination and favouritism never find traction.

Whisper that Han is favouring Asians and everyone will think – have you met Han – how could you say that?

Whisper that Ian is favouring the grey hairs the over 60's – and everyone laughs.

Whisper that Rhoi is stacking the Elders with post-mills – and you might pause for a moment – but then realise – that is just not true.

Character eats strategy for breakfast.

Find men of character and deploy them.

By that I mean give them the authority to actually do the task.

Maybe they won't do it as well as you – maybe they will do better.

Don't micro-manage. Don't second guess.

Let the church see them as leaders.

Verse 6:

They had them stand before the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

The Apostles gathered the church and made it clear – these men are leaders.

We are commissioning them to this task. They have our blessing and authority.

We agree with your selection and entrust these men to the task at hand.

It has long been known that if a church has a pastor who does not entrust responsibility to others – if he micro-manages, takes the job back, keeps sticking his fingers in – then it all rests on him.

Most of those churches won't grow beyond 70-120. He can't handle more.

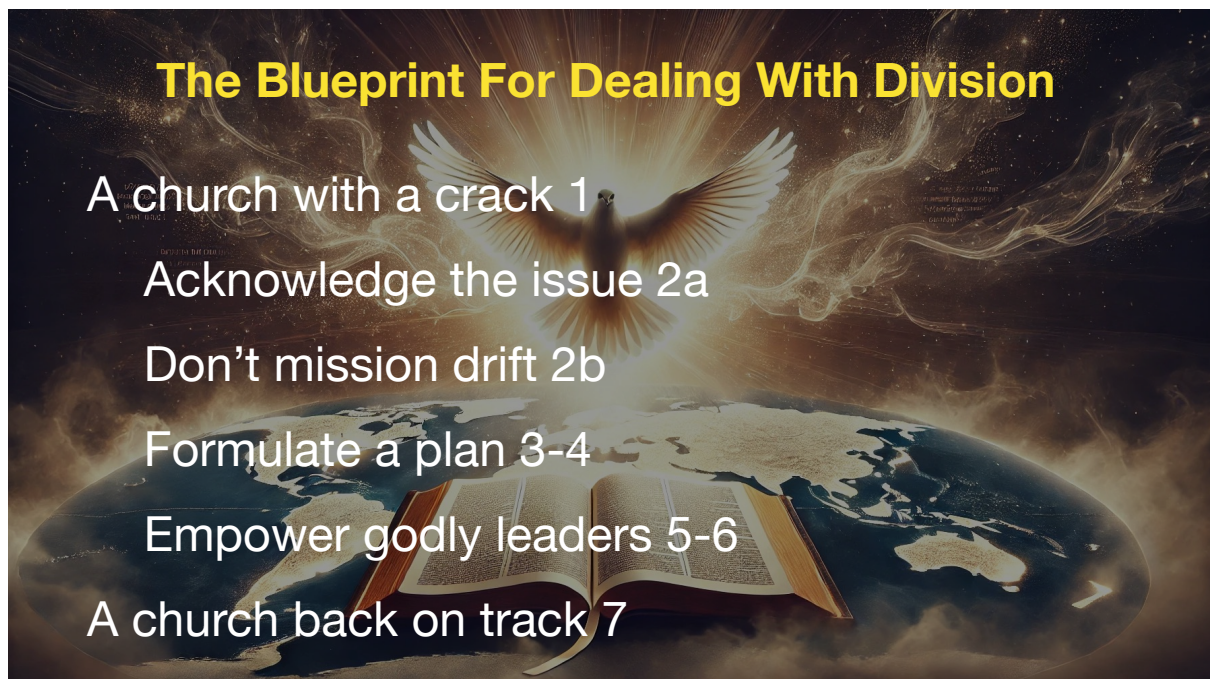
If he is incredibly gifted – maybe 180.

You have to have other leaders – Elders and Deacons to run a church well – for a church to be healthy.

They have to know their role, be approved by the church as those to do that role and be empowered to do that role.

When you have the right Elders, right Deacons, doing the right ministries – a church is healthy and growing.

And that is what we find here.



A church back on track 7

Verse 7:

So the word of God spread, the disciples in Jerusalem increased greatly in number, and a large group of priests became obedient to the faith.

Notice that it is the spreading of the word of God that leads to the growth in disciples.

True growth does not come from charismatic men and women but from the true preaching of the word.

This last statement is significant – it sets up what is to follow.

And a large group of priests became obedient to the faith.

I think crossing this line – priests abandoning the Temple for the church – was the catalyst for the persecution that follows.

It is the straw that broke the camel's back.

If priests were converting – the Sanhedrin knew – the gloves have to come off.

This group is a mortal danger to our power and authority.

Whatever restraint the Sanhedrin had from fear of the people is gone.

OK – What do we learn from this passage?

We learn that it does not take much for a healthy church to become a divided church.

If we did not learn that during COVID we were not paying attention.

There is almost no issue that left unchecked can't split a church.

And one of the significant ways division is dealt with is through good Deacons.

They understand people. They are wise. They find a way to heal division before the crack becomes a split.

This is not easy. That is why they must be gifted men.

This is not just manual work – this is spiritual work requiring spiritual men.

1 Timothy 3:8–12:

Deacons, likewise, should be worthy of respect, not hypocritical, not drinking a lot of wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. They must also be tested first; if they prove blameless, then they can serve as Deacons. ... Deacons are to be husbands of one wife, managing their children and their own households competently.

And if you have a church with good Deacons – Paul adds this in verse 13

For those who have served well as Deacons acquire a good standing for themselves and great boldness in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.

We have nine Deacons.

You might say 12 Apostles and a church of 10,000 only needed seven Deacons.

This was just the start – clearly more were added.

So, our six Elders need nine to free us up – and that is about right.

We are so blessed here – we actually have many other men who could serve in a leadership capacity.

I trust you know that our Deacons are godly men, filled with the Spirit and the word. I could not tell you how many cracks they deal with before we even hear about them.

Basically, we have great Deacons – men who serve without seeking acknowledgment – and frankly do an incredible job.

In churches you usually only ask who are our Deacons when there is an issue.

These guys deal with issues.

It frees us to pray and preach and oversee.

So, pray for our Deacons.

Maybe you don't even know our Deacons. Often in churches people only want to know who the Deacons are to complain.

Here are our Deacons.



Deacons:

Scott Wilson	Louis Baumann	George Eliades	Jeff Geertshuis
Scott Hoskins	Andrew Hughes	Sam Sim	Jarrod Vincent
Scott Williams			

I do need to be clear we don't discriminate in favour of Scott's.

And we are very biblical – we do have an ethnically Greek deacon.

All humour aside – these men serve our church so incredibly faithfully. Our church is as healthy as it is because they are doing their task – in ways you will never know.

They free us to keep preaching the gospel that in Christ – our sins are forgiven – life is found – hope is provided in a world that desperately needs hope.

And one by one – souls are added to the kingdom and the day of the return of Christ draws closer.

We all have our roles in the mission – whatever your ministry is – it is crucial. None of us can do it alone – but together – God uses us to see the kingdom come and the Day of Christ dawn.

Our Division Won't Distract Us Acts 6:1-7 (22 Jun 2025)

Main Point: Godly deacons are trusted to oversee ministry, deal with developing disunity and free Elders to their tasks.

General Questions:

1. Do you agree with our understanding that there are two offices in the church today – Elders and Deacons – or not?
2. What is the role of Deacons in a church?
3. What is the role of Elders in a church?
4. Why are the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 so similar for these two offices?
5. In what way is the ministry of Deacons spiritual?
6. Do you agree that Acts 6 most likely is a prototype for a Deacon Board or not?
7. What are the great dangers churches face? Where do you think division ranks among those dangers and why?
8. Why is it that more divisions seem to arise over minor issues than major issues?
9. When an issue arises – whether it is a real issue or a perceived issue – does it always have to be addressed or not?
10. What is it that leads us to see discrimination where none exists or to make more of it than it actually is?
11. When should a church acknowledge an issue publicly and when just deal with those affected? What are the dangers either way?
12. What is the role of Deacons in stopping Elders being distracted?
13. What qualities should we look for in a Deacon?
14. What happens to a church without good Deacons?
15. How important is it to deal with division early?
16. Why are issues like race, age, social status – easy to turn into a division? How should a church deal with such issues when they arise?

Application Questions:

1. In what ways do we all have a ministry and role in serving the church?
2. How can churches acknowledge the good standing of Deacons (1 Timothy 3:13)?
3. How can you pray for our Deacons?

What convicted me in the message?

What moved me in the message?

What will I do in light of the message?