

Everyday Leadership

Acts 6:1-7

The church in Jerusalem had many strong leadership gifts. This wasn't the preserve of the few. A church with 12 apostles is now appointing 7 other leaders.

Acts 2:46 says they met in their homes - a church of many thousands; it was a church that saw massive progress - and many people found Jesus.

God wants his church today to be filled with leaders and influencers in church, in culture, in homes, in work. Those who display Kingdom values.

Leadership is not developed in a vacuum. It is often born out of frustration.

The story starts with a mess. Racial injustice in the care for vulnerable members of the early church. Leadership is very often born out of frustration or needing to solve a problem.

Even Jesus once saw people were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd- he had compassion and so he began to teach them.

Life is messy. Mess is a leadership moment. Let God use it to enlarge your heart of compassion. And use it to find solutions! The apostles delegated. The seven got more stuck in. The believers cheered them on, glad that someone was doing something!

Do you think we have to wait to be appointed to lead, or are we free to just claim our calling?

It's not an either/or. It ends with appointment - the laying on of hands.

But leadership isn't a badge that the apostles hand out. It's not a punt they're taking. Verse 3 says the seven "were known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom". Their names get selected based on that criteria.

So a great question to ask yourself long before anyone asks you to do anything is "How is the Spirit's working being evidenced in my life? And how am I displaying wisdom in this situation?"

Wisdom is different to knowledge – anyone can have an opinion. Anyone can protest. But wisdom listens carefully and solves problems creatively and thoughtfully.

Leadership is seeing the bigger picture, not just pursuing your own vision.

These were servant leaders. They were highly gifted people. Stephen (v8) is a signs and wonders guy. Philip was an evangelist who saw many saved healed and delivered. I wonder, if

I was in their shoes, how I'd feel when the apostles said "It's a waiting job, so we can do the preaching and praying". I might have thought "I'm good at that stuff too!". But their attitude was good. From their response I learn that they had enough humility to know it wasn't all about them, it was about the bigger plan of reaching the world.

They were vision carriers of the beauty and purpose of the church. Acts 2:42, Acts 4:32 no needy persons among them. All sharing their possessions. Now it was AT RISK. Growth pressures had brought about injustice. Their overriding concern was the beauty and testimony of the church. Personal calling is always second to that.

They were well-taught leaders. The last will be first and the first last. Faithful with small things, entrusted with much. I think Luke is giving us a living example of what happens when we're faithful with the smaller stuff. They get used mightily in the future.

It's about SAYING YES. So many good things happen when we say yes. Many of my growth experiences have been a result of saying yes.

Leadership Paradox. Apostles are "simplifying" because of dangers of distraction. The seven are diversifying, which risks distraction.

1. If you feel that tension - that's healthy!
2. Apostles weren't looking for an easier simpler life - they were looking to increase the number of people coming to know Jesus. They'd happily endure the complexity of prison, beatings and death for that goal.
3. Often helpful to think what your top 3 gifts are. Simplify and Diversify on the basis of your grace gifts.
4. There will always be tasks that no-one wants to do. Own your share.

How do you keep in Step with the Spirit? What does that mean?

1. It means being filled with him. Again and again! In Christian life joy can feel like the easiest thing to lose and the hardest thing to rediscover. If you're going to lead – you'll take a buffeting. The apostles did- yet had joy in the Spirit!
2. It means being a minister of new covenant. We get to do this stuff! When we are led by Spirit in our service- people meet with God.
3. It's letting God wait on us! Joy of salvation. He serves us with his grace and love.

Questions

1. 360 degree leadership. Dan mentioned the leadership compass. We lead "down, sideways and upwards", i.e. people within our care, our peers, and those who hold greater decision-making responsibility than us. How would you define those in your own life? Which do you find hardest?
2. Messes are Leadership Moments. Do you have an experience of God enlarging your heart through a challenging situation?
3. Waiting to be asked. How can we be proactive in leadership. What does being "filled with wisdom and the Holy Spirit" look like in real life for us?
4. Bigger Picture or Own Vision? Why is it vital that we serve a vision beyond our own?

5. Is this a season of Simplifying or Diversifying in gifting for you? How often do you review this?
6. How would you rate your "joy levels" in the Holy Spirit right now? Let's pray for more of him.