

Sooke Baptist Church

Sunday, October 30, 2022, 10am
also on Facebook Live Stream and YouTube

A Different Kind of Leader

Acts 6:1-7

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.



03:00

Coffee/Question:

What three qualities/skills do you think a leader must have? Explain.

The mark of true Biblical community is not the absence of conflict, but the presence of God's reconciling Spirit.

Those who believe in Jesus Christ and receive him become a new person. The followers of Jesus have a new nature that has been born of the Spirit. However, the old habits of the life we lived before Jesus, are not immediately and completely eradicated.

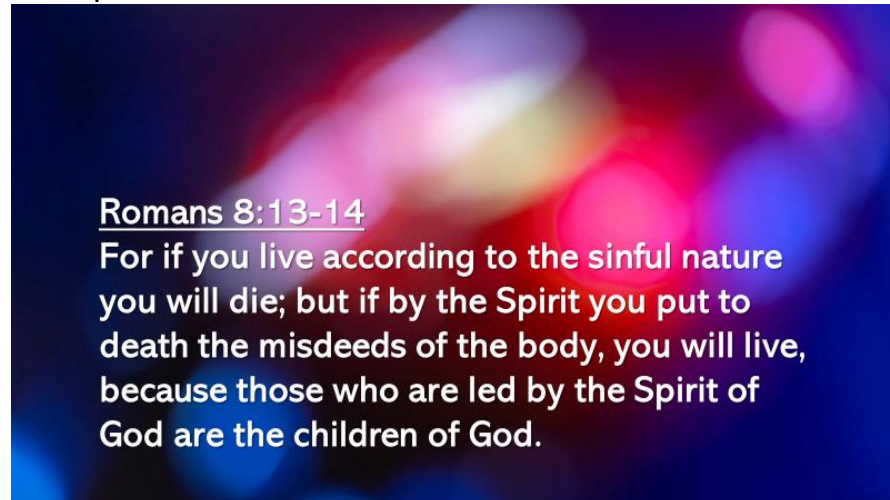
These sin habits still show up in our thoughts and feelings and reactions. The difference though between life before Christ and life after Christ... is that having been forgiven our sins by the mercy of God and the sacrifice of Jesus... the power which sin once held over us has been broken.

Galatians 2:20 says... **"I have been crucified with Christ..."**

Our bent towards sin, received a mortal blow when Christ died for our sin, and we died in him.

The followers of Jesus are no longer slaves to sin.

The Spirit who lives in us and who leads our lives... influences us to take action.



The Holy Spirit leads us to utilize his power to put to death the misdeeds of our body... and in this way he transforms us as we cooperate with him.

The Spirit is committed to making us in practice what God has declared us to be... righteous....by grace through faith in Christ alone.

With this as our background, let's read our passage for today - **Acts 6:1-7**.

At this point everyone in the church at Jerusalem... was a Jew.

In those days, if a widow didn't have a family, the church took care of her.

We are not told how many widows there were in the Jerusalem church.

We do not how the food was distributed, nor by whom.

God in his wisdom withheld this information because these details are not the most important.

What we do know, is that, for some reason, in the weeks and months following Pentecost... widows of Greek origin were being overlooked.

And as this inequity continued, it began to divide the church along ethnic lines.

Remember the church in Jerusalem had grown rapidly.

120 > 3000 > 5000+ > 10,000+

Before the day of Pentecost, it had numbered 120.

On the day of Pentecost, it grew by 3000 people.

By the time of Acts 4:4 the church numbered 5000 men plus women plus children. And the commentary of Acts 5:14 is that more and more men and women were being added to the church.

It is not an exaggeration to say, that by the time of Acts 6 the church numbered in excess of 10,000 people... which means... the number of widows would have been significant.

When the apostles became aware of what was happening, look at what they did... v.2 – they gathered the church....

- ... not to ascertain who was to blame.
- ... not to make excuses.

The church was gathered... to solve the issue.

When a proposed solution was put forward by the apostles... they were clear on what they were called to do.

Their priority was the ministry of the word of God and the ministry of prayer.

That said, the apostles in no way insinuated that the care of widows was unimportant.

In fact, the proposed solution of the apostles stressed just how important the care of widows was.

Look again at v.3.

Are you surprised that the apostles only put forward two criteria for who would be entrusted with this responsibility?

They made no mention of potential candidates needing experience in working with widows.

There was no stated requirement for possessing management skills.
No requirement to be food safe trained, nor experience in food purchasing or food preparation.

**full of
the Holy Spirit
and wisdom
and faith**

The criteria by which individuals were to be chosen... was that they were to be known to be full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, which often resulted, as in the case of Stephen, v.5, of also being full of faith.

This is not to say that skills or experience didn't matter.
But what it did say... to the early church and in turn to us today... is that skills can never take the place of a follower of Jesus being full of the Spirit and wisdom and faith.

The apostles' proposed solution pleased the church.
The wisdom of heaven was seen in the solution put forward.
The church chose seven men.
The church presented these seven men to the apostles, who then laid their hands on them and prayed for them.



The laying on of hands was an act by which heaven's authority and the reconciling power of the Holy Spirit was conferred upon the seven, in order that they might carry out the responsibility being entrusted to them.

Look at what happened when the issue that had threatened to divide the church was no longer an issue.

Verse 7a – the word of God spread

**Verse 7b – the number of disciples in Jerusalem
increased rapidly**

**Verse 7c – a large number of priests became
followers of Jesus**

When the seven deacons stepped into ministry alongside the apostles, the credibility of the gospel and its power was displayed in Jerusalem for all to see, and the result was phenomenal, beyond what anyone could have ever imagined.

Decades after this watershed moment, the apostle Paul elaborated on what it meant for a deacon in the church of Jesus Christ to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.

Look at 1 Timothy 3:8-12.

A key characteristic, stated twice, is that a deacon is to be worthy of respect.

Paul, by the Spirit, qualified what that meant.

One who is worthy of respect....

Negative Qualities

1. Verse 8c – not indulging in much wine
(in control of their appetites)
2. Verse 8d – not pursuing dishonest gain
(in control of how they accumulate financial
wealth and use it)
3. Verse 11b – not a malicious talker
(in control of their speech)

All three of these negative qualities are connected to self-control – which in Galatians 5:22-23... is identified as being one aspect of the fruit of the Spirit. The one who is full of the Spirit... who is worthy of respect... is under the Spirit's control.

Additionally, Paul detailed six positive aspects.
One who is worthy of respect...

Positive Qualities

1. Verse 8b – sincere
2. Verse 9 – keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience (not just know, but practice the truth)
3. Verse 10 – tested (no secret flaws)
4. Verse 11c – temperate (self-control) and trustworthy
5. Verse 12a – faithful to their spouse
6. Verse 12b – manage their family and home well

Deacons are not individuals who have attained perfection, but those who are pursuing obedience in a long direction... cooperating with the Holy Spirit as he transforms them day by day.

Deacons not only contribute to the advance of the gospel in a specific region, as we see in Acts 6, in serving... they also experience great blessing from God.

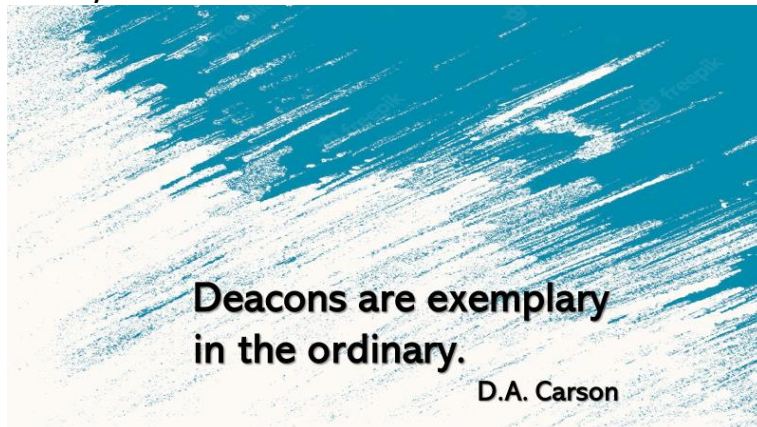
1 Timothy 3:13

Those who have served well
gain an excellent standing and
great assurance in their faith
in Christ Jesus

1. They gain an excellent standing – with the church... and with God.
2. They experience great assurance in their faith, as they work alongside of the LORD and experience the LORD working in and through them.

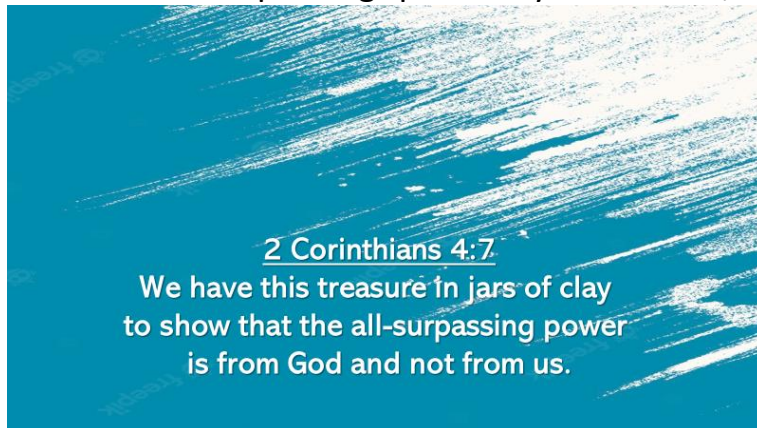
I love what D.A. Carson wrote.

He says...



This quote builds on what Paul, by the Spirit, wrote to the Corinthian church in his second letter to them.

While he is not speaking specifically of deacons, what he says applies to them.



The jars of clay being spoken of... are the lives of Jesus' followers.

The treasure... is Jesus Christ... who makes his home by the Spirit in the lives of his people... and reveals through them... his all-surpassing power... to create, and re-create and resurrect.

This leaves one last question to ask regarding our passage.

What do deacons, full of the Spirit and wisdom and faith... do?

In Acts 6, they oversaw a feeding program for widows.

In this regard...

The ministry of the deacons was practical and benevolent, and expressed mercy to the poor and vulnerable.

Two thousand years later, within the church of Jesus, located in nations around the world, deacons full of the Spirit and wisdom and faith... continue to engage in and provide oversight to ministries that are practical, benevolent and mercy-focused.

Here at SBC, two of our ministry team teams overseen by the deacons, are focused on the showering of mercy upon our community, so that people might see and experience the love and goodness of God.

Our Community Focused Serve Teams

- Grace Gardens
- Big House Breakfast

One of our ministry teams is focused on gospel proclamation.

Our Gospel Proclamation Serve Team

- Colombia Mission

Seven other ministry teams, again overseen by our deacons are focused on God's work of building up his church and its people.

Our Church-Focused Serve Teams

- **Worship**
(singers, instrumentalists, techs, greeters, gatekeepers, coffee conversation)
- **Discipleship**
- **KidZone** (teachers, helpers)
- **SYNC Youth**
- **Prayer**

- **Care for Church Property**
- **Finance (treasurers, tellers)**

As the deacons in Acts 6 took care of feeding the widows, they enabled the apostles to remain focused on spiritually feeding the church by teaching the word of God and by praying.

And when both apostles and deacons, in the power of the Spirit, carried out the responsibility entrusted to them by God, the work of Jesus flourished.

The deacon's ministry in Acts 6 was also begun to protect...

The ministry of the deacons was practical and benevolent, and expressed mercy to the poor and vulnerable.

Deacons protect the unity of the church.

It remains the same to this day.

That's why it was so important that the seven who were chosen... were to be known as being full of the Spirit and wisdom and faith.

One who is full of the Spirit... is humble.

One who is full of the Spirit and wisdom... is a peaceable person.

One who is full of the Spirit and wisdom and faith... is quick to listen and slow to speak.

Matt Smethurst says that in this regard deacons are entrusted by the church... to take the initiative to find solutions... that enable the church to function efficiently, generously and compassionately... in such a way that the only explanation for what happens in and through the church and its people... is the presence and power of God.

Lastly, the deacon's ministry in Acts 6 was begun to...

The ministry of the deacons was practical and benevolent, and expressed mercy to the poor and vulnerable.

Deacons protect the unity of the church.

Deacons mobilize the church to serve.

When you consider how large the early church in Jerusalem was... 10,000+... seven men alone could not have coordinated and carried out a feeding program on that scale.

The seven deacons mobilized the church to care for the widows. To this day deacons do the same – not just overseeing, but mobilizing teams of people... to use their spiritual and natural gifts... to serve together... in order to bless others... for the glory of God.

I believe with all my heart that the beautiful and gracious triune God... has provided in the people who make up this church... all that is needed, in natural and in supernatural giftings, in order that we might carry out God's will in the town of Sooke and surrounding areas.

To the achieving of that end, I believe some of you are called to serve as deacons.

As a church family, we want to select men and women for this position like the early church did.

And so, beginning today and up until the end of November, the church family can put forward the names of men and women that they believe are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom and faith, and who are willing to serve as a deacon.

We ask you to send such names by email to Les.

In this handout... **SHOW THE DOCUMENT**

... you will find Les's email address, which is also in the church directory, as well as the details of what is involved in serving as a deacon.

The handout also details the process that will be followed once names have been given.

The elders will speak to each individual and ask them to answer three questions in writing:

- How long have you been a follower of Jesus
- Tell us your God story
- If you are married is your spouse in support of you being a deacon

This will be followed by an in-person interview and the questions to be discussed are listed in the handout.

Following a time of prayer and consultation, the names of those who are willing to serve as deacons, who've been suggested by the church and recommended by the elders... will be presented on Sunday, January 29, 2023.

In the month of February leading up to the AGM on Sunday, February 26, 2023, these deacon candidates will share with the church their God story and why they believe God is calling them to serve this church as a deacon.

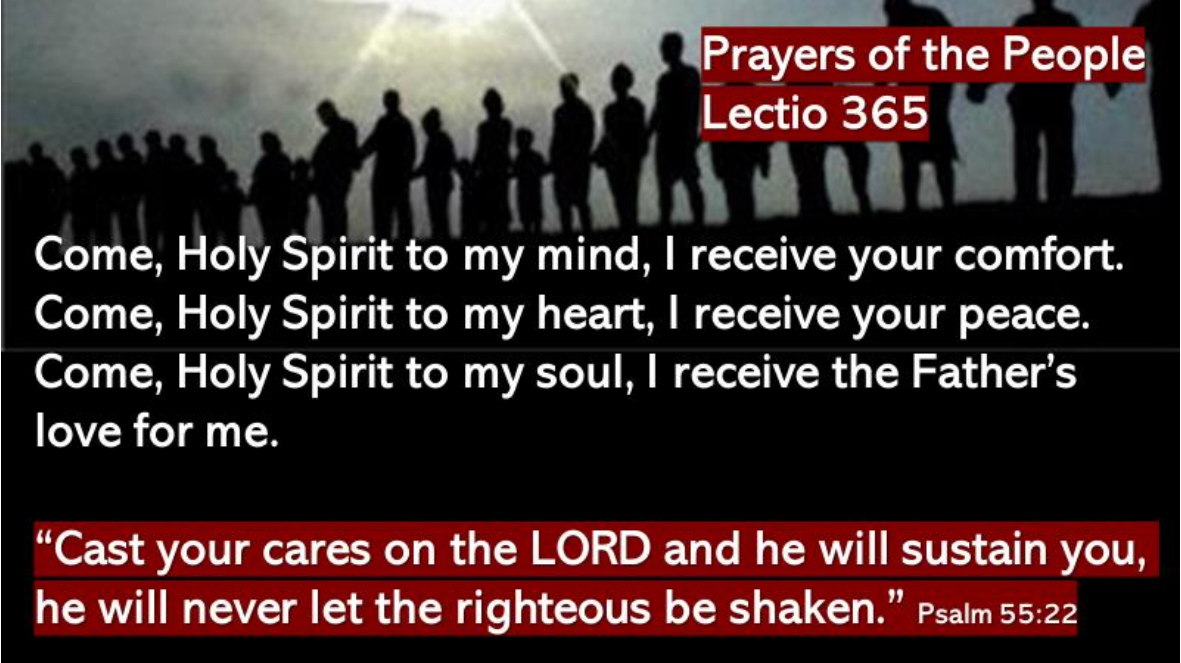
At the AGM the candidates will be confirmed by the church by secret ballot.

The elders and the current deacon's board ask you to pray as to who God is impressing upon your heart as a potential candidate to serve this church as a deacon for the next three years.

Deacons who have served a first term of three years, can also be nominated for a second three-year term.

Questions?


Prayer for the LORD to lead in the choosing of deacons for this local church.



**Prayers of the People
Lectio 365**

Come, Holy Spirit to my mind, I receive your comfort.
Come, Holy Spirit to my heart, I receive your peace.
Come, Holy Spirit to my soul, I receive the Father's
love for me.

**“Cast your cares on the LORD and he will sustain you,
he will never let the righteous be shaken.”** Psalm 55:22

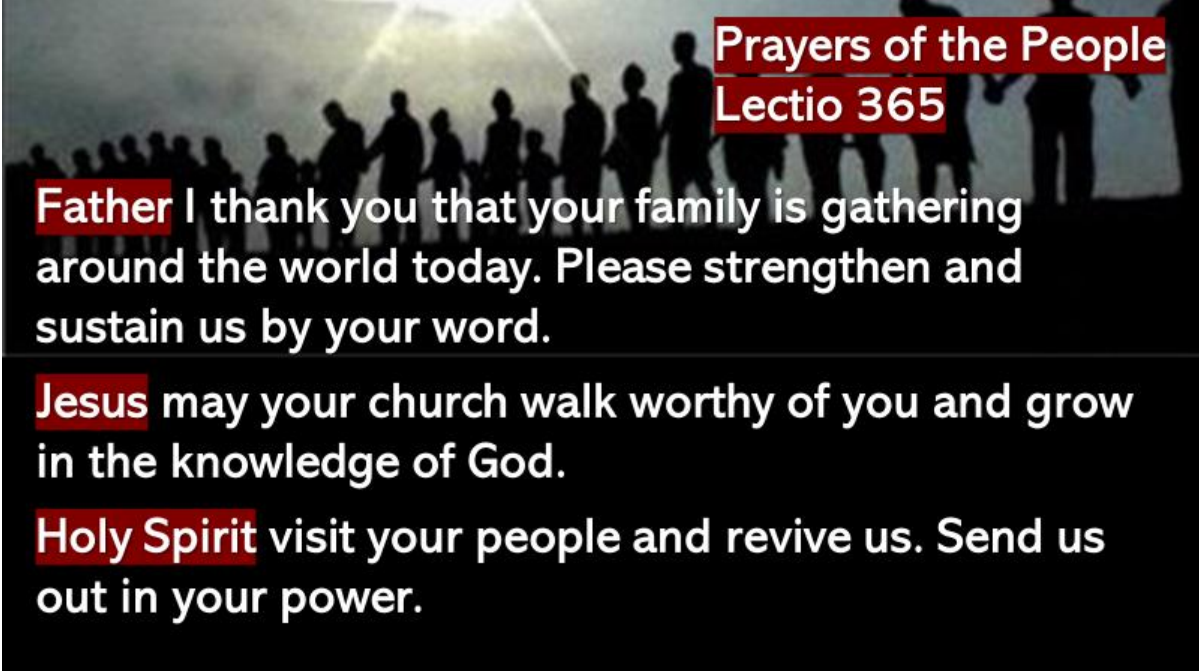


**Prayers of the People
Lectio 365**

I confess my sin – whether it be of negligence, or
weakness or my own deliberate fault.

I thank you God of grace that you nailed the
accusations against me to the cross of Jesus. I receive
your forgiveness.

**“... my unfailing love for you will not be shaken nor
my covenant of peace be removed.”** Isaiah 54:10




**Prayers of the People
Lectio 365**

Father I thank you that your family is gathering around the world today. Please strengthen and sustain us by your word.

Jesus may your church walk worthy of you and grow in the knowledge of God.

Holy Spirit visit your people and revive us. Send us out in your power.



**Prayers of the People
Lectio 365**

O Father may this day bring soul rest to your people. May the gravity of material things be lightened as we gather in your name.

May we experience your grace to grasp our smallness and lay hold of your greatness.

We ask that your Word feed us as we open and study the pages of Scripture.

Ruth Haley Barton