



What does the ordination of deacons look like, and what do they consider "success"? Pastor leads his family in today's "Hopewell @Home" passage. Acts 6:5–7 looks forward to the morning sermon on the coming Lord's Day. In these three verses of Holy Scripture, the Holy Spirit teaches us that deacons are ordained as an offering by the hands of the congregation, committed into the hands of almighty God to use, as designated by the hands of those who came before them in a succession that traces back to Christ Himself. Their success is discovered in the effectual, numerical, and miraculous increase of the Word of God.

Saturday, May 7, 2022 ▫ Read Acts 6:5–7

Questions from the Scripture text: How did the congregation feel about the instructions for deacon ordination (v5)? How many of them felt this way? Whom did they choose? How are the first and last of them described? What do they do with these men (v6)? What do the apostles do with them first? Then what? What spreads as a result (v7a)? And where do the disciples multiply, and how much (v7b)? And from what specific group (and how many) do they see new converts (v7c)? How is this conversion described?

The ordination of a deacon is seen in v6. Now, it's not money that is laid before the apostles but men who are laid before them, "whom they set before the apostles." The people's last "offering" to the apostles, with respect to "material" goods is officers who will oversee the use of all material gifts.

Then the apostles pray. It is not enough that these would be men in whom the Holy Spirit has already done work. Faithfulness and fruitfulness in their calling depended upon the Spirit's continued work in them and ongoing work through them. God uses means, and so He requires obedience and wisdom in recognizing and selecting the mean that He has appointed to the work. But they are still only means; God must use them. The work will not succeed because of how well they have been selected but because God Himself uses them.

Finally, the apostles lay hands upon the men to whom they are handing off this part of the ministry. The laying on of the hands signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit's specific empowering, calling, and helping them (cf. 8:17, 9:17, 13:2–3, 19:5–7; 1Tim 4:14; 2Tim 1:6; Heb 6:2).

The success of a deacon is seen in v7. "The Word of God spread." The deacon's goal is not merely to see the money distributed wisely but to see God's blessing upon the work that he has freed up the minister of the Word to do. The deacon hopes that by relief of those responsibilities and of the tension that can arise from administering them, the ministers are more enabled to preach and teach the Word. And the deacon hopes that by their relief of earthly suffering and of personal offense, the people are more enabled to hear the Word.

"And the number of disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem." The number of disciples, which was already a multitude (cf. 2:41, 4:4, 6:1), now multiplied greatly. Jesus had come to save the Jew first (cf. 1:8, 3:26, 5:31; Luk 24:48; Rom 1:16, 2:16). The first part of Jesus's program of redemption was being completed. The progress and success of Jesus's program of eternal redemption is the goal unto which a deacon labors in his oversight of ministry in earthly things.

"And a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith." From among those who had been arch enemies (cf. 5:17), a great many became obedient to the faith. The Lord is sometimes pleased to bless faithfulness in ministry of deeds by suddenly pouring out power upon a previously unfruitful ministry of the Word. This is one of the great hopes set before wives who submit gently and quietly to an unpersuadably unconverted husband (cf. 1Pet 3:1–5). He upon Whose power the effect of our evangelism depends is pleased to respond to His people's obedience and love with such outpourings as this.

How are deacons selected, ordained, and installed into their office? What should the response of those under them be? At what outcome(s) does their ministry aim?

Sample prayer: Lord, thank You for redeeming us and taking care of us, body and soul. Please promote the care of our souls in the church by freeing up the pastors for prayer and the ministry of the Word. Unto this end, please give us good deacons, in Jesus's Name, AMEN!

Suggested songs: ARP87 "The Lord's Foundation" or TPH404 "The Church's One Foundation"

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(The following is a machine-generated transcription. Please be aware of—and patient with—transcribing errors. If there is something confusing or obviously erroneous, you are invited to listen to the audio recording referenced above)

Acts chapter 6 verses six and seven. These are the words of God, whom they sat before the Apostles. And When they had prayed, they laid hands on them, Then the word of God spread and the number of the disciples multiplied, greatly in Jerusalem and a great many of the priests we're obedient to the faith So far the reading of God's inspired and inherent word.

So the what we have before us is the last lesson that we're going to have at least in this little miniseries on the diakonet. And in verse 6, especially we have the ordination of the diagonal and then in verse 7 we have the, the fruit or the results, I forgot what I called it in the outline of the deactivist success.

That was it the success of the diagonist. So we have the ordination of the diakonet and the success of the deaconet. So in verse 6, we have something at the beginning of verse 6, we have something that is actually pretty familiar whom they set before the apostles up until this point, the church has been setting things before the apostles, haven't they?

But up until this point it was money at this at this point however they're not setting money before the Apostles. But men, The first part of the ordination of the diaconate was the apostles as it were trained. The entire congregation they had given the entire congregation the praying and the preaching, and the sacraments in public and praying and preaching in every house and they had trained them in the the apostolic doctrine of the theology.

And life of one who belongs to the risen Christ by the work of the Holy Spirit. And so they give training not just to the select group of men. Although I'm sure that there was special discipling from here on for each of these men, They didn't cease to be discipled and the importance of their ministry to the Apostles.

Ministry would have placed a special importance on the disciples, the apostles discipling, then but the training that the men received up until this point seems to have been the same training that the whole congregation receives. We want everyone and not just men, but men, women boys and girls. We want everyone to grow in the things that that identify someone as qualified for the diagonant or later as the church has established and the apostles start to die out or the church goes spreads into different places.

We want everyone men women boys and girls to grow in the things that would qualify them. Spiritually doctrinally character-wise in the life to be a deacon or an elder. It's not like the officers should grow in Christ like this, and the rest of the church is okay, if they don't.

So, the, the training was actually given to everyone and then instruction for what a deacon looks like, was given to everyone. And that's what we heard, especially in last week's sermon. But then the whole congregation who were pleased verse 5 the saying pleased, the whole multitude and they chose and they chose Stephen.

A man full of the faith and the Holy Spirit and Philip procurus Nick nor Timon Parminas, and Nicholas across like from Antioch. So they chose them. The next step was, they set them before the apostles. They brought them to the Apostles. This has and that's background. They're bringing the money.

Now they're bringing the men Men who are up for ordination. Although it is an office of authority. We know that authority is for service. Christ is the one who is the chief authority in every home, and every state in every church, and he has given lesser seats of authority for particular service within his economy.

So, someone who has authority is not to lord it over others as they do among the nations. Jesus said, you know, the masters of the Gentiles lord, it over them but even the Lord Jesus. In his humanity said, I am among you as one, who serves the king of kings and Lord of lords has established the right method of exercising, our authority.

And yes, service sometimes means insisting upon your authority and establishing and maintaining the authority-wide because if that authority is for the service of others and you let it be disregarded, then it actually harms them. If we gave dear Sophia, the free reign to act like she runs everyone, it would harm her and the rest of the house.

And so part of serving her and all of you is for me and for mom to maintain our authority not in a way in which we lord it over you and stomp upon you as it were no metaphorically. But in a way that serves you in every way and you can usually you can use usually tell people like to rationalize.

Oh, I am just serving. Well, the manner that you have with them and whether they are being enabled by God's authority that he has put in place to give themselves fully and freely to everything that he has called them to do. That's something that may be better. Felt more easily felt than defined but you know it don't you When you're being domineered over or whether you are being served by a real authority who has your best interests in mind.

Like Stonewalls man said when the when the union investigator was interrogating him and wanted to know how in the world General Jackson was getting his men to do all these things and they're making his men do, all these things. And the soldiers said, what do you mean making us?

He's trying to save our lives. We would do anything that he said, and of course the one who has done that for us, most of all is Christ. He gave his life for us. He endured the wrath of God on the cross for us. And no one would say that his authority is small, but we know that the way that he exercises authority is to liberate us.

So the congregation sets them before the apostles, and it's good for everyone, especially in church authority to recognize that they are presented to God. And here God's servants, the Apostles are representative as it were, They are presented to God by the congregations. They are a gift from God to the congregation, but they're also an offering from the congregation to God.

This really helps us to understand what ordination to office is like so that we will not get a big head and so that we'll feel the weightiness of the privilege and the responsibility of being in church office. I very much would love it if God and his providence would continue to shape and mold the characters of you voice and give you grace to conform you to Christ.

And that you would be full of the qualifications of a deacon and of an elder. And yet it is up to God and has providence and for his people to recognize those things in you. But at very least that you would have those qualifications. But if God does cause that to be recognized by the church and you end up in church office at some point in the future, I want you to feel the wageiness of being one, whom the congregation has recognized as someone in whom God has produced these things.

And whom the congregation has offered to God for the purpose for which you would be called that you would fulfill your duty that you would fulfill your responsibility in that way. And so in our circles this happens by voting I'm not sure. You know what other logistical way this would be done, you know, secret secret nominations and you know maybe the one you get or maybe not secret but just like congregational nominations on pastoral visits and then the session compares notes and whoever has had the most nominations would be would be recognized by the session.

And yeah, that would just be like slow motion voting right? So just because you don't have voting in the Bible does not necessarily mean, voting is wrong. There needs to be some mechanism by which we follow this pattern of of God giving the church the opportunity to recognize because all have been trained and all have been instructed.

There needs to be some mechanism by which the the church recognizes those in, whom God has produced the qualifications and then offering them to God. So whom they set before the Apostles and when they had prayed, now this is, this is marvelous. It shows our ongoing continual dependence, upon God himself Here.

They've done everything exactly. According to the procedure, that is, that is laid out the Holy Spirit is helping them moment by moment. The Holy Spirit is the one who has filled the apostles to preach and to pray. And to minister the Holy Spirit is the one who has given to the people to repent and believe the gospel.

The Holy Spirit is the one who has produced the fruit in the people. And so, the, the reality of God helping this church continually is, is very patently felt. It's part of the warp and Woof of the church as a whole and especially of this particular process, they said seek out from among you seven, men of good reputation full of the Holy Spirit and then verse 5 they chose them.

Stephen a man, all of faith, and the Holy Spirit. And and yet, even though all of this is patently, obviously, to everyone involved. According to the Holy Spirit, they still before. They will lay hands on them, even pray, You know, we'll see this later when Paul and Silas at the beginning of the second missionary journey.

I think Paul when Paul and Barnabas are set apart and sent at the beginning of the first missionary journey, as well. You have this praying before there is this commissioning or sending or installing to office, and it's not just recognizing, it is recognizing that God himself must be the one who ends up using these men for their work or the work will not be done rightly.

And even if the work is done, rightly, God Himself also has to be the one who gives it fruit, who gives it results in time. And so, there is this praying. That's an example for us in everything that we do. We ought to begin each day with prayer and come to each task with prayer.

It's not just something to be said at the beginning of your meals so that you don't get poisoned by the food. Actually heard heard people say after a prayer or because of a prayer to eat or prayer at a meal. Oh, it's safe to eat now. Well, God is the one who rules and overrules, and all of those things but it is the practice of the heart of a Christian to offer up prayer unto God, before everything and it is, right and good for a church, especially in important moments, and important decisions.

And important actions that we would join in prayer and commit. All to God, that's not only looks to God, for the help. That is necessary for these deacons to do their work. Well and for the blessing, that would be upon that work. This is not only a, a calling out to God crying out to God for his help to the congregation to be led well by the deacons because it's one thing for leaders to lead, well, it's another thing for the people to follow wealth, that's often even more difficult, but what this does is by crying out to God for these things, then when God uses it, he gets all the praise and all the glory.

It rightfully belongs to him but prayers or requests in prayer. Set us up for praises unto God in prayer. If we have asked him for help for our day at the beginning, then we come to the end of the day and maybe it's been a hard day and maybe things haven't gone the way that we wanted them to.

But we began by committing the day to him. Why? Because everything happens in and according to his providence he works all things according to the Council of his will. And so we established that and and we established our hearts in that truth at the beginning of the day, then we come to the end of the day and we're praying and and we reflect upon that we realize that God has been himself the whole day long and all those events.

He has been loving. He has been faithful. He has been righteous. He has been merciful, He has been gracious, he's upheld us and born patiently with us and he's been wise everything. Everything was rightly done. So we come to the end of the day, and what do we do?

We praise him for what he's done during the day. So prayer at ordination sets us up for praising God as he blesses and establishes the work of the deacons in this case or the elders in other cases. So even though these are spirit-filled apostles to a spirit-filled congregation at the ordination of spirit-filled men, they still take the the time, make a point of before laying hands on they pray.

So we have the the previous training of the congregation, the entire previous training of the entire congregation the offering of the qualified men. So they've been recognized and offered in some way. The praying that expresses dependence by all parties involved upon the Lord and looking to him for all parties involved to be able to do their parts.

Well rightly graciously in a godly manner and setting them up to praise, then the Lord God for how he answers us prayers and then the end of the verse they laid hands on them. No. This is a phrase that can mean in other context that they they captured them to rough them up.

So and so is going and you know going along and someone came and he laid hands on him or so. And so, and and such and such were having an argument in such and such light hands on him, that's not what's being described here. Obviously, there is a laying hands on that is a welcoming into one's ministry, a transfer or sharing of authority, and responsibility, and duty.

Now, it's fine to put your hands on someone when you pray for them to to communicate care and fellowship and even perhaps as a physical indicator before God of of the connection between the two of you. And the desire that God would bless them. And and that your desire for their blessing is as strong as your desire for your own blessing.

But there is something specific about laying hands on men at ordination. That is a recognition that that the Lord. Jesus has had his officers in his church, from even his time. On the earth, The Lord Jesus picked the twelve one of whom he knew would betray him. Did I not choose you and even one of you as a devil.

So that should make us cautious about putting blind faith in the, the ordination process and blind faith in the laying on of hands, but it is the Lord Jesus who picked, then the 11 and eventually the 12 as he appears to Paul and perhaps Matthias is a stopgap until Paul is recognized as the 12th of the 12th.

It does say the 12 at one point before Paul is called to be an apostle. But the Lord Jesus is the one who has picked the 12, The Lord Jesus even after his resurrection, breathed upon them. And resaid receive the Holy Spirit in that moment displaying, how very personally, the Holy Spirit proceeds from him and so

that they would realize on the day of Pentecost.

When he pours out his spirit from glory that, he who poured out the Spirit from the throne of heaven, as the one who had breathed upon them and said, receive the Spirit while they were on earth. And so, you have this chain of laying on of hands, people want to talk about Apostolic succession.

Well, Apostolic succession is not one man to one man. To one man to one man. To one man till you get an old geezer sitting in a big chair somewhere in, in a cathedral in Rome and everything he says, from the chair goes because of quote unquote, Apostolic succession, Apostolic succession is the Lord, Jesus picking 12 and those 12 ordaining hund of elders and deacons and those hundreds ordaining thousands and those thousands ordaining tens of thousands as the as the Lord blesses the preaching of his gospel and spreads it all over the earth.

Apostolic succession takes place as as new air tribes continue to to run for their lives and and elders ordained new elders and new deacons in the spread of the church. And this is in part. What is shown by the laying on of hands? We're familiar with perhaps a little bit, maybe not so much.

We're American. We fought a war to be less familiar with it, but we may be familiar with a knighting ceremony in which someone is recognized for the qualities that have made them useful servants to the kingdom and there is that transfer or recognition of responsibility as someone is brought into service, it adds a solemnity and gives a visible representation of the sharing of duty or the pulling of someone into duty and so they lay hands on them.

After they pray note that the the praying and the laying hands on are not connected here, There's praying. And then there's laying hands on them. And at that point with the hands laid on their deacons and the apostles who had had the authority to oversee the ministry in in the use of and service in earthly, things like the money that was shared with the widows and so forth.

At that point, the apostles, no longer bother with that business. They give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word. So in the hands are laid on the deacons are the deacons, they have the authority, the deacons by the laying of on-of-hands know that they have received the authority.

The congregation by witnessing the laying on of hands knows that the deacons have that authority. And so the deacons are committed to exercising their authority for service. And the congregation is now committed to following and being submissive to subject to the deacons for for governing them and directing them in the ministry of service and the ordination is done.

Well, what is the success of a deacon? We might think that the success of a deacon is that the distribution of the, the food was went swimmingly. The Hellenistic widows were no longer neglected, everyone. Everyone was happy with the way it was done. Now, there were no more complaints.

Those were the things that that had arisen. Those were the problems that had arisen that made the ordination of deacons necessary. And yet these, this is not the terms. These are not the terms in which the success of the deaconant are described. The success of the deaconate is described in terms that correspond to the purpose of the deaconate.

The purpose of the deaconet was not just to attend those things, but to attend to those things in order that the ones who had the ministry of the word could give themselves continually to the ministry of the word and to prayer to preach Jesus, as the Christ, both in public, and in every house for each and teach Jesus, as the Christ in both in public, and in every house of the success of the DIC.

And it is not found when the deaconing work does. Well the success of the diakonet is found when the ministry of the word does. Well, so we have him. They said before the Apostles, and when they had afraid, they laid hands on them, then the Word of God spread.

And so the success of the deaconet was that the Ministry of the word went, well, and the wellness fear, the word going. Well had two big too big effects here for which we long forward to should desire. And look to God. When we, when we recognize and ordain new deacons, one is numerical.

And the other one is hard cases as it were or miracle. So we got numerical and numerical, then the word of God spread and the number of the disciples multiplied. Greatly in Jerusalem, that's pretty amazing statement. Is it compared when you consider what has been happening to the number of disciples?

This whole time, wasn't the number of the disciples multiplying. The reason they had this problem in the first place or a big part of it and now that they ordain and install these deacons and they do their work and the apostles are freed to do the ministry of the Word even more and the ministry of Prayer even more in public.

And in every house even more God blesses it and makes the Word of God spread and the number of disciples even by comparison to before to multiply greatly in Jerusalem. This is one of the reasons why it's so hard to set. Any kind of mathematical figure on how big this church was.

It's kind of like trying to set a mathematical figure on how many the Hebrews were, who came out of Egypt. You have this extraordinary multiplication of number. That is so supernatural and not out of the ordinary because that's what extraordinary means that that you can't put a number on it.

But that's something that as we look to the Lord to give us a deaconal ministry, that is according to his word that we want, we want the word of God to spread first of all, in the, in the lives, and hearts and minds, and actions, and Christ likeness of those who already believe.

But second of all, in numerical fashion, the number of multiples, number of disciples multiplied, greatly in Jerusalem and then in miracle fashion and a great, many of the priests were obedient to the faith. Now every conversion is a miracle but some miracles catch our attention more than others. Now, God has been doing miracles of conversion and God has been doing signs and wonders.

That by the hands of the apostles that attended their preaching that we're also miraculous. But what did some of those signs and wonders? Do some of those signs and wonders rather than converting priests. They upset the priests And the priests recognized the miracle. That was done in the temple and they and the high priest with all of his people.

So all of the priests which is more or less the, the sect of the Sadducees, they dragged off the apostles for doing the miracles. They didn't say, oh, look at these miracles. Jesus is the Christ. The Holy Spirit, didn't give them by means of the signs that were done to be converted to faith in Jesus Christ.

But now, as a result of the faithful ministry of the diakonet, which by the way would have been considered by the priests to be miraculous. One of the things that the Levites were in charge of was by was to receive those things that the people of God were supposed to be giving not only for the maintenance of the worship but also for the maintenance of the poor and to distribute it, the deacons aren't the first time in the history of God's people that this has been established.

But you know what? The Jews are like and you can imagine what it's like to be a non-spirit-filled man trying to organize these things. This is why government overseen charity has never gone well in the history of humanity, why private charity has always worked better. So that would be miraculous but it's not just their observation of how the diaconate by God's help and God's blessing are finally overseeing charitable deeds being done the, the better and more right way, but it's connected to this, the Word of God.

Spread. The thing that in that God, the Spirit decided to use to convince the priests. When even miracles didn't convince, the priests was this renewed vigor in the ministry of the word that the functioning deaconate had freed, the apostles unto. And so you have not just the word spreading numerically that many more are getting converted.

But even, you know, to, if you'll allow the use of the word this way, miraculously those who up until that point had been the hardest cases, and we live in a day and in a place where precious little evangelism is done and yet, it feels like everyone is the hardest cases, who would be the hardest case is here.

Those who are indoctrinated and liberalism, maybe those who are wealthy are always among the hardest cases because they feel themselves comfortable and and not needy. But I think at least in my experience, the hardest cases are all the ones who think they're already saved, because they're a part of the church.

We have a church that does not have clear preaching of the gospel. Clear preaching on justification, clear preaching on what a converted person looks like and lives. Like and so there are hundreds and thousands and millions of people who think that they are right with God because of their connection to the church and their position in the church.

Their ability to repeat a few words and point to a few deeds. That almost exactly sounds like the priesthood and what do we not? Consider it a miracle. If suddenly, in all these churches of supposedly saved people, the saved people started getting saved. And so we can look for the success of the diaconate and God's converting those who have been the hard cases, So, God helping us.

That's what we'll hear preached on the Lord's day, and you having heard it in advance will be better prepared. We hope by God's mercy to you to attend. Well, upon the sermon. And as you hear things from the passage, as the Lord Jesus addresses us in the preaching, and the public worship that you would give your heart to him.

Praise him for what you hear, ask him for your help to respond. Well, commit to your heart, to him, to learn these qualifications, grow in them. Do whatever you can to support the ministry of the word. Even if you're not a deacon ever, whatever it is from the word that you engage him and be engaged by him in the preaching.

The Lord help us. Let's pray our Father in heaven. We thank you for giving to us your son. Our Lord Jesus. Not only to be our ones for all sacrifice and our righteousness before you. But as the king of kings and Lord of lords in every one of your institutions, we pray that he would be King over this family and that those who are installed to the different places of Father and mother and children in this household that each of us would receive it as a calling, from him independence, upon him to see him glorified by producing the fruit.

That a family is designed to produce. We thank you that you have given him as king over the church. And the one who is at the beginning of this chain of succession of authority, for the purpose of service, unto him and service unto your church. Lord, have mercy on Hopewell, Grant that we would by your spirits.

Convincing us of your word and helping us to follow it. And blessing upon the following of your word help us as a church. That we would have a Diaconate that is rightly recognized ordained installed that we would know ourselves not to be functioning according to the wisdom of men and be able or think that that we would be help us not to be proud or self-satisfied for the way we go about it.

But make us to see that it is you who have given the way of doing it, you have proclaimed that way from your word, you who have worked in men. You who have helped us in the process you who have given us those deacons and then we pray O God that we might see the kind of success of your word as a function and result of the diakonet that we might see the kind of success.

We've just been hearing about that. You would multiply in number that, we would be able to have daughter churches that the gospel of Christ would be proclaimed faithfully in many places that you're worship. Would be offered simply and purely in this way that connects to heaven and genuine and glorifies you in many places that you would grant that our numbers would multiply.

So that there would be many churches and which there's a functioning deaconate and elders and ministers of the Word who preach and teach and pray lead in prayer, both in public, and from house to house and the people grow in Christ, we pray. Lord, for your church in this land, there would be conversion of the hardest cases.

Whether that's the the ones who have been in the church and think that they're fine and are irritated with faithful preaching. Like the priesthood were or whatever it is, We thank you. Lord, Jesus. That even when you recognize hard cases, how difficult it is for a rich man, to enter the kingdom of heaven.

That you also said, what is impossible with man? Is impossible with God. And so, oh our God, we come to you. And ask that you would do the impossible that we might get to look back on the history of what you have done and praise you for having done the impossible through those ordinary means that you have appointed in our day and a result as a result of our lives.

Take hold of us and help us. Oh God. We need, We need you to sustain us in moment by moment faithfulness. Not just to produce the glorious, long-term, outcomes, and results. And so, help us. We pray in the rest of this day, even for, we ask it in Jesus name.

Amen.