

Ephesians

Minsters of Grace, Part II

Acts 6:1-7

July 20th, 2025

I. Introduction – *Oikonomia*

Typically we think of *economy* as monetary. It certainly includes that. But originally, the word *economy*, from the Greek word, *oikonomia*, meant, literally, the *law of the house* (*oikos* means *house*, *nomos* means *law*). It referred to and encompassed all that went into good household management. *Oikonomia* involved how the *paterfamilias*, the man of the house, organized the resources, labor, and production within his home, including agriculture, slaves, and family matters. When this is applied to God's world, we have His household in view: how God Himself manages His home. And as we've seen, it is marked by _____. It is marked by a continual giving that results in still more giving. This is how God's household works: it is the rule of His home. If we will live in His home, this is the law we must live by. Our life ought to be a continual receiving of grace from God, through His various channels of grace, and then giving that grace out to those around us, becoming a channel ourself. In this manner is the household of God built up.

II. Text – Acts 6:1-7

1 Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. 2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. 3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; 4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5 And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, 6 whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them. 7 Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

III. The Diaconate

Under the general oversight of the Elders, the Deacons help manage the financial, physical, social, and benevolent functions of the church. This overarching task involves many things, from identifying and meeting physical needs, organizing events, managing the building and church resources, and so on. The Deacons' goal is to assist the Elders by freeing them up to focus on their God-given priorities – the work of shepherding, prayer, preaching and teaching, and so on.

The Deacons are not _____ in their work, however. By appointing these men as servants, the apostles did not simply pool all the service in the church to a group of men. While these seven men would be appointed over this business and business like this, they would not do it alone. They would take responsibility for getting it done: but it would take many hands to actually carry out the work. God has appointed the Diaconate, not in order to relieve the rest of the body from serving, but to empower and to equip the rest of the body to serve all the more effectively. The Deacons, like the Elders, have an equipping role to play. They help mobilize the body for the work of ministry. Whereas the Elders help equip the congregation to think and act rightly, the Deacons help equip the congregation for practical _____.

IV. Service in the Kingdom

A few things that ought to mark faithful service in the Kingdom of Christ.

First. Faithful service in the Kingdom involves _____. Paul writes that, from Christ “the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which *every part* does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:16). Contrary to popular thought, the Church is not an entertainment industry. We are here to worship and serve the Lord. We are here to receive of His grace, respond with praise and thanksgiving—and then, having received grace, give grace.

The Lord says: “If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat” (2 Thess. 3:10). This is true for economic freeloaders, and it is also true of Church freeloaders. The Church is a body. And a body is meant to work hard. While the body can work without its left hand, or its right leg, it is noticeably handicapped. It is not a healthy body. But this should not be. We are, after all, Christ’s body, and our health or lack of health reflects upon Him.

Second. Faithful service in the Kingdom of God is _____. Often, the ordinary week to week, month to month life of our Church runs smoothly—praise be to God. This should lead us to lift up our eyes and consider how to expand our ministry. It should lead us to consider how we can grow and mobilize our strength and efforts to reach beyond our own congregation to be a blessing to the wider community.

Just like with your family, there are seasons of intense inward upkeep. Just keeping the clothes clean, the kids fed, the bills paid, the cupboards full, the dishes done—that is enough. That is a job well done. There are seasons like this, but the goal for your family and for our church should be more. We want to have the inward life of our church strong, healthy, and joyful, needs identified and met, grace received and shared; and then from this joy and strength and gracious life, we should then seek to expand it in order to share God’s blessings with the larger community, calling them into this life. We want the grace of God we receive from God, through God, and in God to fill all of *our* life, and then for that grace to fill all of the wider community’s life.

Thirdly. Our faithful service in Christ’s Kingdom is also _____. We shouldn’t only have current neighbors in mind and the current body of believers, but the generations and generations to come after us. How can we extend the grace of God, not just outwardly, but **beyond** us?

This building up of Christ’s body was not accomplished in the Apostolic Age. It wasn’t finished in the Patristic Age, nor in the Medieval Age, nor during the Reformation; not in the Modern Age. And it won’t be complete in our own day. The Kingdom continues to build. It continues to expand. And generations and generations of our children and new Christian lineages will come after us. So how can we build something to bless them? How can we leave them with a still richer heritage, with surer ground? How can we set them up well to build on our gains, on our victories, and continue the work in their time?

V. Come & Welcome to Jesus Christ