



*May 5, 2024*

*“Service is Ministry”*

*Sunday school at 9:30, Service at 10:30.*

*News:*

Wednesday Evening Party at 6:30 – Honor Your Teachers!  
VBS June 17-21

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### **ACTS 6:1–6...**

γογγυσμός (gōn-gūs-mōs) (gone, goose, moss) ... Music to Satan's ears:

The fourth stanza of the Lord's Prayer is all about the true Manna from Heaven.

Prayer: Matthew 6:11 & Luke 11:3.

Manna: Exodus 16:35, John 6:41-58, Revelation 2:17.

Our success comes when we let God succeed through us.

God loves you. Now the difference between understanding that statement and not understanding it is this... When you hear that God loves you, who do you think about? and your lovability, or do you think about God and His loving character?

*Fill out the other side, detach this part of the page, and place it in the offering plate or the prayer/suggestion box in the lobby or with an Elder or Deacon of the church.*

*God Bless You!*

Life was tough back then.

Widows had to secure a new source of male support...

I Timothy 5:3-16, James 1:27.

The Apostles were specifically charged by Jesus Himself with establishing Christianity where Christianity hadn't existed before.

When the New Testament was complete there ceased to be a need for men to hold Apostolic Authority.

Apostles, at their most basic level, were teachers. Their first duty was to pray and to literally serve the Word. It is διακονία (dē-ä-kō-nē-ä) meaning service or ministry and gives us our word Deacon.

A disciple is a μαθητής (mä-thā-tās).

Ephesians 4:11&12.

The congregation picked 7 men with very Greek names. The Apostles then prayed for confirmation and only then "laid their hands on them."

This was an ordination. An example is in Numbers 27:18&19, and in I Timothy 4:13&14.

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Write a brief note – detach and place in the offering, or the prayer box, or give it to a Deacon or Elder.

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Name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_



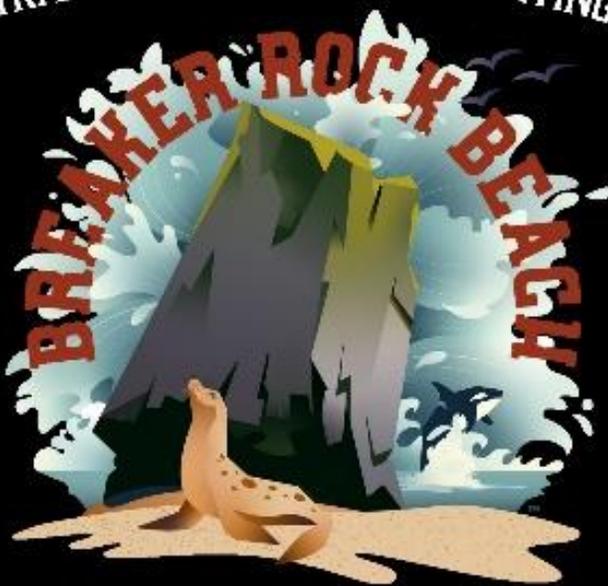
# Alêtheia

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP



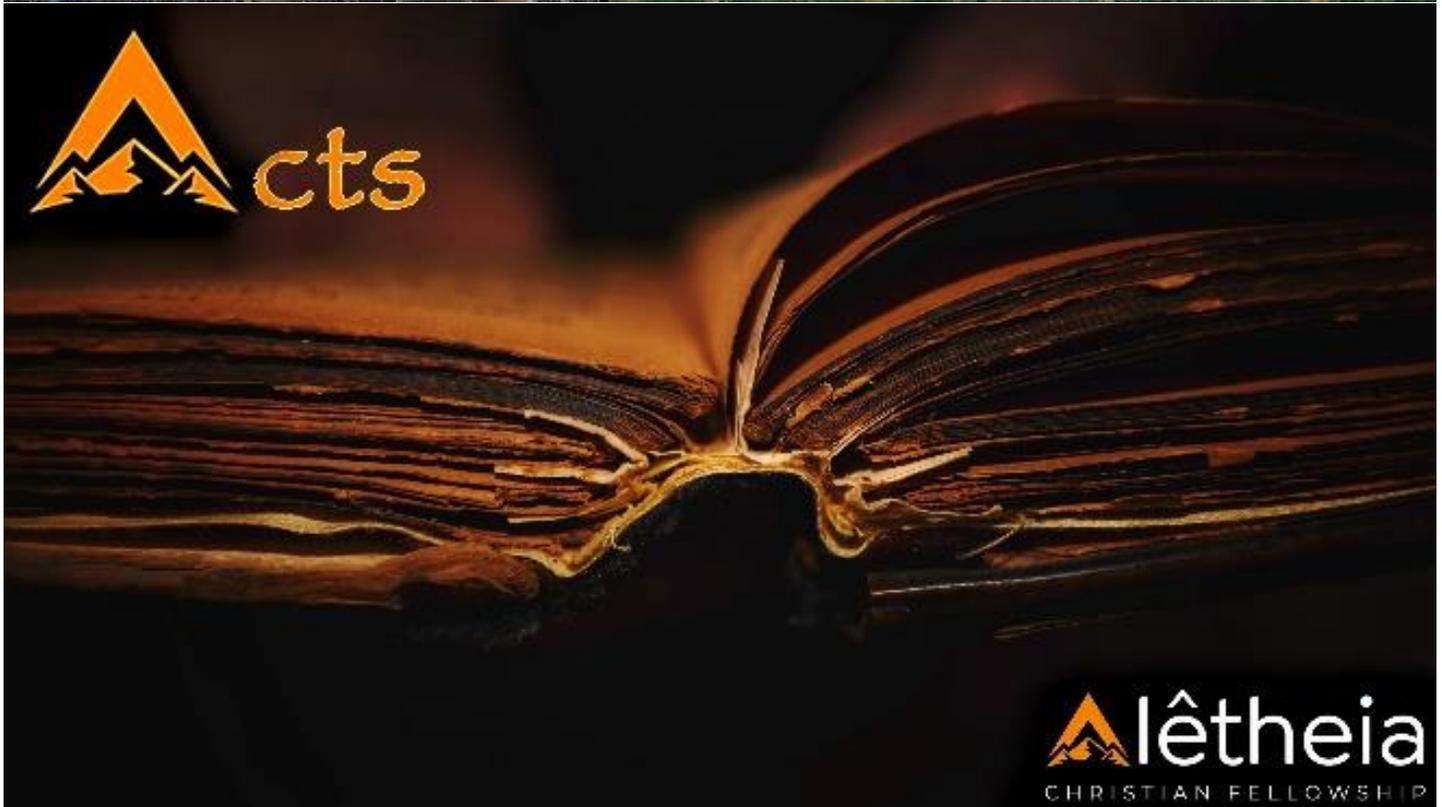
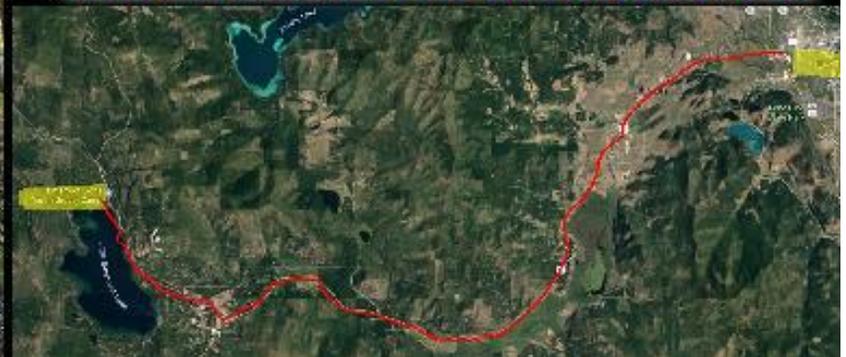
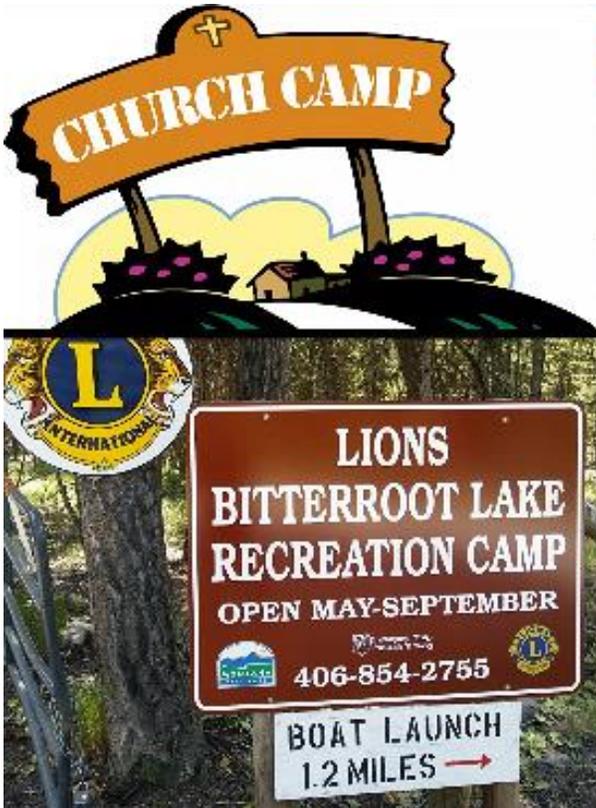
THEME VERSE: BE TRANSFORMED BY THE RENEWING OF YOUR MIND!

JUNE 17-21  
10 AM - NOON



JUNE 17-21  
10 AM - NOON

GOD'S ROCK-SOLID TRUTH IN A  
WORLD OF SHIFTING SANDS  
ROMANS 12:2



# DEVOTED to PRAYER and the MINISTRY of the WORD



Let me reread Acts 6:1–6... We'll expound on a concept or two and hit a couple of highlights that we didn't get to last week... Acts 6:1–6, 1Now at this time, as the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint developed on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. 2So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. 3Instead, brothers and sisters, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. 4But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word." 5The

announcement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. 6And they brought these men before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them.



We talked about the complaint and the fact that while there was a legitimate concern, it was initiated poorly. There was γογγυσμός (gōn-gūs-mōs) ... dissent in the ranks... The fledgling church was thriving in spite of outside persecution and in spite of inside sin against the Holy Spirit, but it could not and would not survive γογγυσμός.

The Lord of Glory hates γογγυσμός in His Body. Nothing can tear a church apart as quickly and as thoroughly as this horrifically sinful and incredibly common phenomenon of grumbling. It starts out as a recognition that something isn't the way you think that it should be and so you mention it... over and over you

mention it. Negativity spreads through the church like wildfire growing in both scope and intensity.

There is no way on God's green earth that this was the only complaint or that the complaint reached the Apostles before it had spread to most of the congregation. By the time they realized that something had to be done, there had already been a lot of negative conversations among the people.

Maybe no one left the church, perhaps everyone was appeased by the Apostle's decision, and they got over it, but each person's negativity meter was moved and the next time a murmur went through the church those meters would move a bit more.

My friends, people don't leave churches over a single issue. They leave because that single issue happens to be the last straw for them. Look, no one in the history of marriage has ever gotten divorced without negatively thinking about their marriage and then negatively talking about their marriage. It has never happened! Likewise, people leave their church because they are disgruntled and disgruntlement grows over time, as it is given thought and then as it is given a voice.

Disgruntlement always starts with focusing on what is wrong and then grumbling about it.

See how grumbling always starts when we think our way of doing things is better than the way those things are being done. I have repeatedly said that if you look for what's wrong, you will find it. What that means is that fault finding is easy. It takes no talent or ability to spot what's wrong... Any fool can stand in judgment, pointing their finger in derision, shaking their head in condescension, criticizing others. The great sage Seneca said that there are two types of people, those who, through planning, effort, and perseverance build something and those who come along after and criticize the product.

Depending on the context, γογγυσμός is translated as grumbling, murmuring, and complaining most frequently, but also as “speaking wickedness,” “saying harmful things,” “speaking maliciously,” or in the KJV as “speaking vanity.” That last one is interesting. It means to speak from arrogance and that's always the case because the complainer believes that they are correct and therefore that everyone should conform to their view. I could give hundreds of examples, but I won't. What's most amazing about complaining is that

the person doing the complaining never thinks that they are complaining, let alone arrogantly judging and condemning, they just think that they're right.

Please see that... When we cause negativity in the church, we rarely recognize it, because we simply assume that we are correct. Ask yourself, are you actually correct or do you just have a preference-based opinion? Over nearly 21 years as the pastor here, I have polled the congregation on various issues and never once has the result been unanimous... Never.

I recently asked what kind of sermon outline you would prefer. I received less responses to my request than I have fingers on one hand. Each response was unique, so which one of them was correct?

Even though the Apostles had just been flogged by Satanic forces opposing Christ and His church. Even though the Holy Spirit was incredibly active, and the church was growing, and human souls were being Saved, and supernatural miracles were plentiful, and an angel had staged a daring predawn jailbreak. With all of that, we can still have backbiting, murmuring, and grumbling within the church.

People are people, and we people love to complain. We are all susceptible to boarding the negativity-train. I see it in myself, and I hope that you see it in yourself. Seeing it, not in others, but in ourselves is the first step in combating this destructive sin.

The simple fact that this negativity issue that is called music to Satan's ears, is so pervasive, so common, so typical, is a constant reminder to me, that every one of us desperately needs the love and forgiveness, the patience and grace, the mercy and strength of Jesus, every day. That, of course, is what the fourth stanza of the Lord's Prayer is all about.



It is Holy Father in Heaven give me today and each and every day my daily allotment of Jesus the very Bread of Life – the true Manna from Heaven. I know that without my daily fill of Jesus I cannot possibly represent Jesus as I should. Without that daily supernatural sustenance, I cannot function as a beneficial member of my local church.

Jesus said in John 6:47, “Truly, truly, I say to you, the one who believes has eternal life.” The only thing required is to truly believe. Then Jesus went on saying “I am the bread of life.” I AM that which I AM, I exist as the very Bread of the Lifegiving and Life-generating force. “Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and they died.” But I AM the ultimate Bread of Life that comes down out of heaven, available for anyone to eat and anyone who does eat will not die. “The bread which I will give for the life of the world is My flesh.” Well, the Jews didn’t understand and so they complained, they grumbled. “So, Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true

drink. The one who eats My flesh and drinks My blood remains in Me, and I in him.”

This is what we celebrate with Communion. It is a symbolic way of defining Salvific Belief. If you believe in Jesus Salvifically, you not only seek your life in Him and in His purposes, but you recognize that it is impossible to do that apart from Him. Our spiritual food is Him. We must partake of Jesus every day if we are to be conformed to Him.

Another way of saying that is to say that you are what you eat. Or, as Jerry Fredericks used to say, “You are who you drink coffee with.” We spiritually survive only through our direct association with Jesus. The ancient manna that the Jews ate in the wilderness was a confirmation of man’s absolute dependence upon God for life. It was a physical type, or an historical metaphor, pointing to the same reality spiritually speaking.

Pray for your daily dose of Jesus because no person can be Godly apart from daily nourishment from God. Jesus is that daily nourishment we need in order to live for Him.



Our problem is distraction. We are like the dog in “Up” distracted by every squirrel that we see. We so easily forget just how selfish, and foolish, and hypocritical we are, and this is a reminder for us to thank God for His incredibly patient and magnanimous Grace and to pray each day that His Spirit would continue to conform us to Jesus as we go to the Father each morning and ask for our Daily Bread.

The admonishment in the Bible is for us to very intentionally allow the Holy Spirit to make us perfect as our Heavenly Father Himself is perfect. Strive for perfection in Him. Always strive for Christian perfection with all humility and gratitude.

Now, if the result seems okay, remember your relative success is because of Him in, and through, you. If the result is less than satisfactory, never for a moment forget that you are His and that He has you. He will never let you fail to the point of irretrievable ruin... So, apologize, know that He is perfectly good, infinitely patient, eternally forgiving and ceaselessly loving.



God's love is unconditional.  
Be sure that yours is too!

Saint Augustine

quote fancy

Pick yourself up and move forward again redoubling your effort. Now, please understand. Redouble your effort, not to succeed, because that's why you failed in the first place. Redouble your effort to be found in Christ, to be led by the Holy Spirit as a vessel through whom the Father works His Will. Therein lies success.

Our success comes when we let God succeed through us.

God loves you so much more than you can possibly imagine. That's a Biblical Truth that cannot be denied. Now the difference between understanding that statement and not understanding it is this... When I say that God loves you, do you think about you and your lovability, or do you think about God and His loving character?

The difference between right and wrong is oftentimes a difference in perspective. When a person with the correct perspective hears that God loves them, they think about how great and wonderful God is for loving so powerfully. They are humbled by the idea and then they are grateful to be on the receiving end of His Love. Thinking about it from my side of the equation means that I can never fully grasp the enormity of His unearned and undeserved Love. I cannot be appropriately grateful for His Love because I am not appropriately humbled by His Love



Next... Life was tough back then. Men worked very long, hard hours at relatively dangerous jobs. Women frequently died in childbirth. Famine, conquest, war, crime, accidents, pestilence, and disease all took a toll. The average life expectancy was about 38 years old. Yet, some people did live well into their 80's, like the Apostle John, and his disciple Polycarp, as examples, which means that a whole lot of other people died quite young in order to account for the average lifespan of 38.

The expectation for Jews was that they would marry and have children. Most girls were married off between the ages of 12 and 14, to men who were usually in their

early 20's. What you get from that is a very large number of widows and widowers, many of whom were still quite young by our standards. Now, in that society widowers could easily support themselves and their children, but widows could not.

Imagine a society with large numbers of single moms in their late teens and twenties... Oh, right, you don't have to imagine that. Back then it wasn't divorce, but death. Those people lived paycheck to paycheck – there was no money saved. There were no governmental safety net programs. No help from the community coffers either, no soup kitchens or women's shelters. Beyond that, there were no jobs that a moral woman could get to try to support herself.

To survive, barring nefarious endeavors, widows had to secure a new source of male support, either through remarriage, or from the patriarch of her extended family, or from some charitable means like alms at the Temple and like the church.

The Apostle Paul gave lengthy instructions for the care and treatment of widows in the church in his first Letter to Timothy. Because there were so many young widows, the Holy Spirit through Paul said that if they

were under 60, they should remarry and, until they were able to remarry, that her extended family should support her as their Christian duty.

There are some absurd interpretations regarding that passage about an official office of widow ministers, but the actual gist is that the church shouldn't be burdened with supporting widows unless there were no other options for her.

According to the Bible, "Pure and undefiled religion in the sight of our God and Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world" (James 1:27).

The Apostles, after prayer and consideration, were moved by the Holy Spirit to allow the church to choose 7 worthy men to become the very first Christian Deacons.



They prefaced their decision by saying that “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.” The Apostles were specifically charged by Jesus Himself with establishing Christianity where Christianity hadn’t existed before – that’s the role of an Apostle and why there are no Apostles of that type anymore.

Apostolic authority endowed in men ended when it transitioned into Apostolic authority in Holy Scripture. Essentially, when the New Testament was complete there ceased to be a need for men to hold Apostolic Authority. The Apostle John was likely the last Apostle when he died in around 95 A.D. Some people believe

that we still have this same type of Apostle, but if we did, they could rightly establish new doctrine... Which is exactly why the Catholic Church continues to change over time. To them, the Pope is a modern-day Apostle.



Apostles, at their most basic level, were teachers. Jesus told them to teach others what He had taught them. Their role in the church after the written Word of God was complete was taken up by Pastors. Men who could, primarily, teach the now written Word that they left to the church. The Apostles understood that their first duty was to pray and to literally serve the Word. It is  $\delta\iota\alpha\kappa\omicron\nu\iota\alpha$  (dē-ä-kö-nē-ä) meaning service. Service is a self-sacrificing effort to benefit of someone else and is also the underlying word for “ministry” in the Bible...

Well, more than 90% of the time. It is of course also where we get our word Deacon.

Isn't it interesting that the word root is used three times in these 6 verses and none of those times is it to describe the 7 Deacons? The complaint is that the Hellenistic widows were being mistreated in the "daily διακονία, service, or ministry." That the Apostles should not "διακονία, serve, or minister" at the table, but instead should devote themselves to their primary calling which was the "διακονία, service, or ministry" of the Word. Teaching all that Jesus taught.

When I use the word disciple, what comes to your mind? I want you to take a moment and think about that. We Christians are disciples of the Lord... What does that mean? What image does that evoke in your mind? The Christians are called disciples twice in these 6 verses. A disciple is a μαθητής (mä-thā-tās). It means a learner – a student – a pupil. We get the word mathematics from it because in math there is a single correct answer. You either conform to your teacher's answer or you are wrong. That is what gives us the idea of being a follower or one who obeys... A disciple learns to be just like their teacher by following closely and doing the same things that their teacher does.

The Apostle Paul in Ephesians 4:11&12, wrote, “He gave some as apostles, some as prophets, some as evangelists, some as pastors and teachers, 12for the (purpose of, to accomplish the) equipping of the saints for their work of ministry, (and) for the building up of the body of Christ.”

A pastor is a shepherd, technically an under-shepherd to the One True Shepherd. A shepherd ensures the safety and feeding of the sheep. Both of those tasks are accomplished by teaching the learners of Christ what Jesus taught His Apostles.



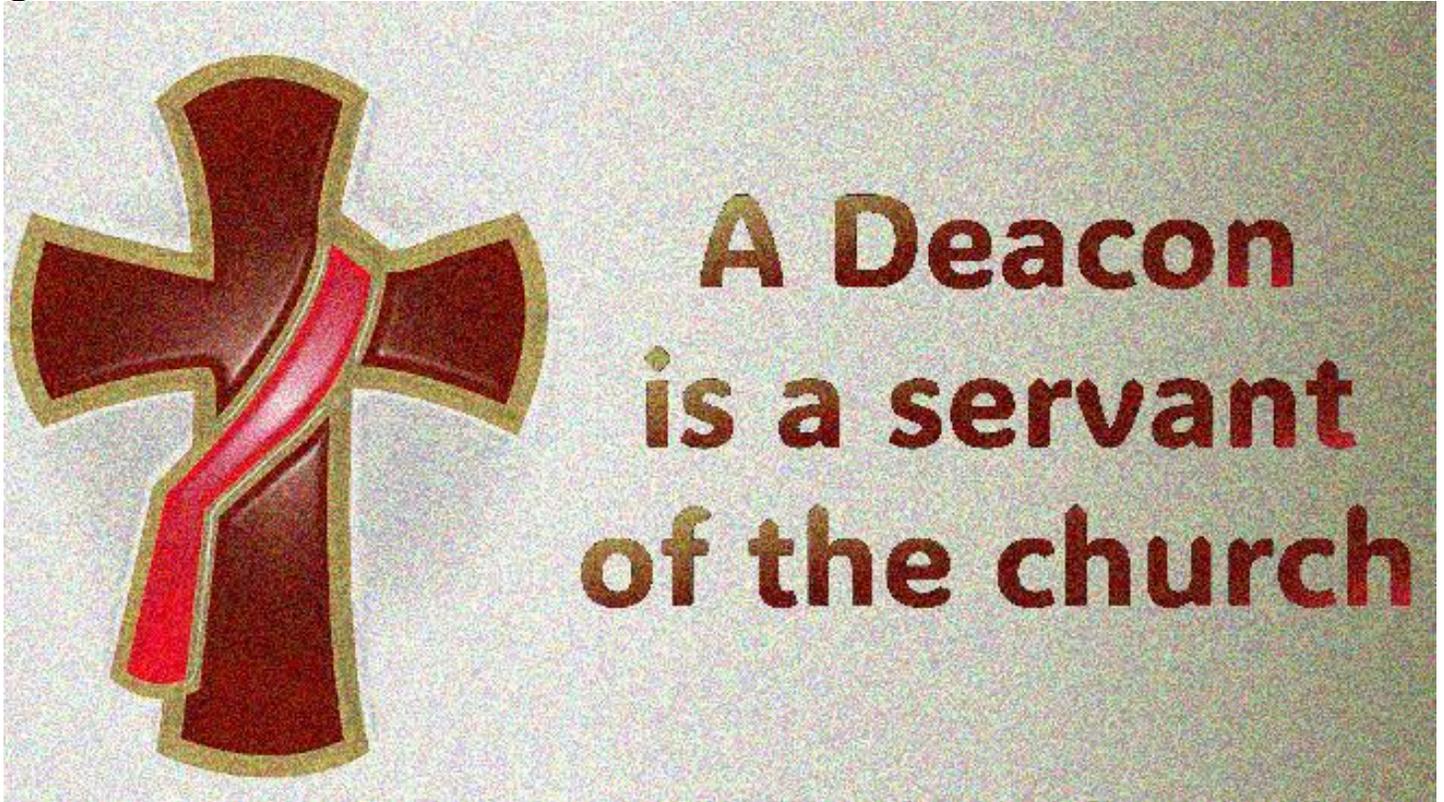
In modern American Christianity we get that so wrong! We want our pastors to do all the things that God wanted the Deacons to do and as a result, nearly every pastor in the country is a jack of a trades and a master of none, but worse, is completely unable to bring the True Word of Almighty God to the church so that the disciples may feast.

My job is to feed you. Your job is to eat. In eating you are to grow in your faith to the point that you become active ministers doing all the things that would cause me to “neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.”

The food element of the daily serving is inappropriate. It's an assumption and by assuming it, we limit what was actually going on. It was not specifically a distribution of food. The people were bringing large sums of money and laying it at the Apostles feet as they were led by the Holy Spirit. The Apostles were distributing the money to those in need. Of course, the main thing that they would have bought with it was food.

The Hebrew widows were mostly locals or were from the Apostle's home province of Galilee. The Hellenistic

widows were visitors who stayed and because they stayed, they became reliant on the church. Evidently some or all of the Apostles saw their need as less legitimate since some of them could have probably gone home and been cared for there.



Whatever the case, the Apostles agreed that they were being stretched too thin to continue the day-to-day service to the people in the church. They needed help. They needed leaders who would care for the people – that’s the role of a Deacon with a capital “D.” To care for the people in every way, from collecting and distributing the offerings, to checking on the sick and poor. From organizing the meeting place to encouraging the congregation. They lead the

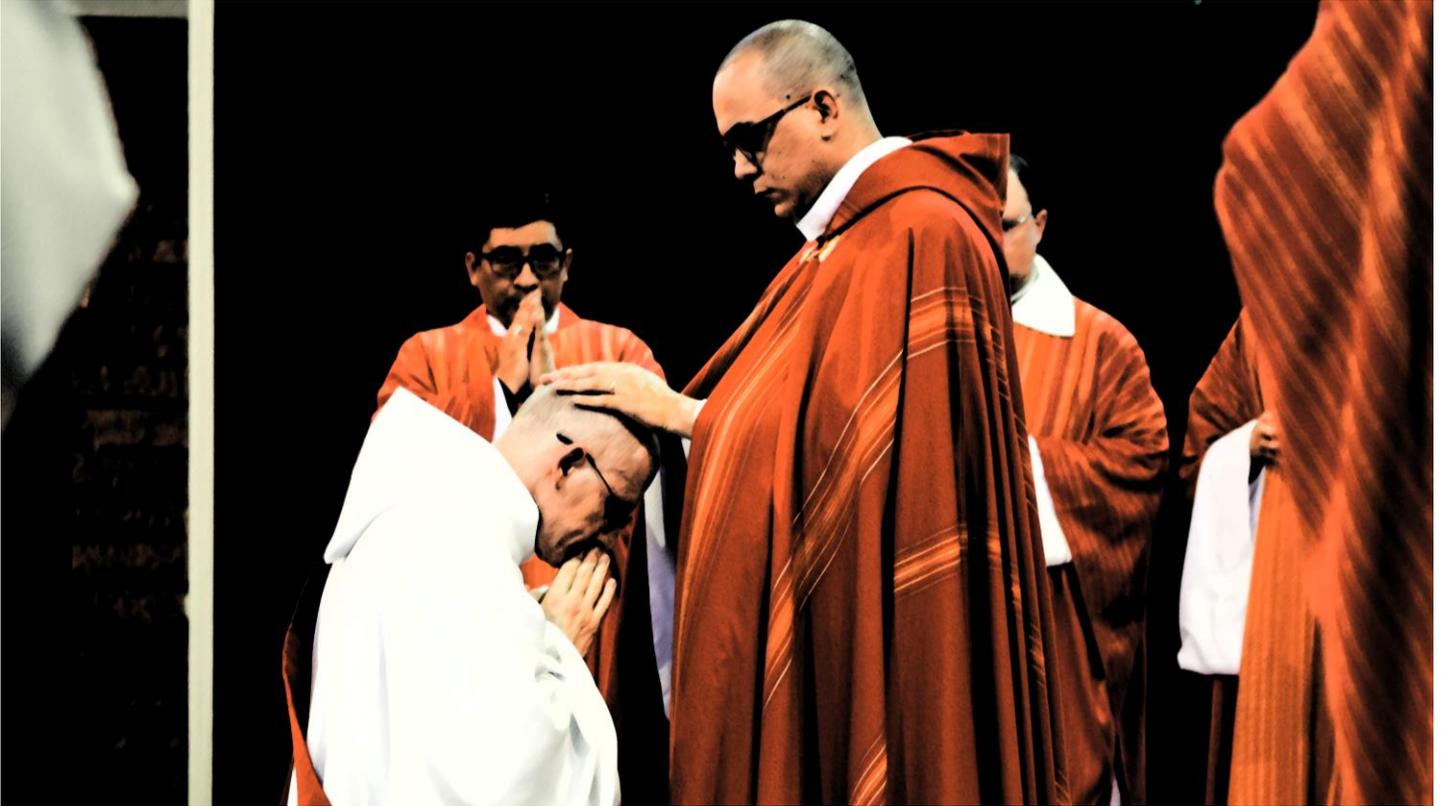
congregation in serving each other and serving those beyond our group.

The congregation picked 7 men based on the criteria the Apostles laid down. All 7 have very Greek names. We can't be certain that all 7 were from the complaining Hellenistic group, but none of them carried a Hebrew name. Stephen was mentioned first and most prominently because his story is coming up next. Same with Philip being named second. We will see him again as well. To show that callings can evolve, it is church tradition backed up by hints in the Scripture that Philip went on to be an Apostle himself – we know that he was an evangelist.



We don't know much about the next five guys except that the last dude, Nicolas, was a proselyte from Antioch. Antioch was where disciples were first called Christians. It was a city on the Orontes River near the Bay of Iskenderun 50 miles west of Aleppo Syria, near Paul's hometown of Tarsus (stars: Ephesus, Tarsus, Antioch, Damascus, Jerusalem). That means that he wasn't Jewish or at the very least that his mother wasn't Jewish. He was a Gentile convert to Judaism who then became a Christian.

The Disciples, no doubt prayerfully and through negotiations, came up with their nominees and presented them to the Apostles, who then prayed for confirmation and only then "laid their hands on them."



This was an ordination. An early Old Testament example is in Numbers 27:18&19, “So the Lord said to Moses, “Take Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the Spirit, and lay your hand on him; and have him stand before Eleazar the priest and before all the congregation, and commission him in their sight.”

A later New Testament example is in I Timothy 4:13&14 where the Apostle Paul was encouraging Timothy. “Until I come, give your attention to the public reading, to exhortation, and teaching. 14Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was granted to you through words of prophecy with the laying on of hands by the council of elders.”