

Spiritual Influence

Acts 6:1-7

You were made for spiritual influence. Find God's place for you, get going, and watch His Spirit change others' lives through your life.

You were made for something; others around you were made for something. Let's look at how this worked in the first century church and in our lives as well.

READ Acts 6:1-7

1. Influence others in God's direction

- Lists of most influential leaders always includes men like...
 - Hitler, Stalin, Polpot; great leaders but a terrible influence on world
 - Your life will influence others. In what direction?
- Disciples were given a vision: Make more disciples
 - Great Commission; more in following weeks
 - Student, learner, follower; committed to Jesus and His vision
 - Jesus has chosen to build His Church little by little, life on life
- Raising up next generation leaders to reach our world for Christ
 - Define “leadership” = influence
 - Not just large organizations or large crowds of followers
 - Ex – Moses selected leaders
- Pursuing God's vision changes lives forever
 - Success
 - 3000 on first day; each day more added; 5000 men (4:4)
 - “We don't like the mega-church movement.” You would not have liked the church in Jerusalem post-resurrection
 - We are starting a third campus (Creekside). Why? Because of crowding? NO.
 - Why south College Station?
 - Challenges/threats/Satanic attack
 - Suppress it by force (persecution), corrupt it through hypocrisy, disorganization and distraction of its leaders from their calling
 - external/internal; spiritual/physical
 - 1. Neglect of certain widows; imperfect tense (becoming a pattern) – 6:1
 - Widows – 1 Tim 5 (“widows indeed”)
 - Unable to work; no family to provide
 - Family: provide for your own
 - Widows: work if you are able
 - Old Testament/Jewish value – care for the defenseless
 - 2 groups of widows in Jerusalem church
 - Hellenists; Grecian Jews
 - Hebrews; Hebraic Jews
 - Separated by language; geography; culture; but all were Jews racially; long rivalry between these groups

- Hellenists overlooked
- “grumbling” (same word used of Israelites grumbling against Moses); Apostles had the donated money
- Not deeply embedded social hostilities; could become a bigger problem
- 2. Apostles distracted
 - Ignorant of the problem; could take it on themselves
 - Would not equip God’s people effectively
 - Ex 18:13-23. Moses wearing out self and God’s people
- Solution – Acts 6:3-4
 - Administrative solution – we focus on this, you focus on that
 - Solution was pragmatic; not result of a strategy session
- Why was solving this so important? Not “spiritual,” just food!
 - About to launch large-scale evangelism among gentiles; the house must first be put in order.
 - Bitterness, resentment, dissent; sign of health = care for vulnerable
 - Healthy communities of believers can do amazing things.
 - Healthy church is like well-oiled machine; each part in proper place working in harmony with other parts
 - Unhealthy churches don’t make disciples

2. [Learn to exercise] Influence alongside of others – Acts 6:3-5

- Hellenists raised the problem; Hellenists called in to solve it
 - 7 names are Greek; one was not even a Jew
- Plurality
 - 12 Apostles; equally shared authority; some had more prominent gifts
 - Apostles role would be taken on, at local church level, by elders
 - Servants role would be taken on, at a local church level, by deacons
 - Always a plurality – appoint “elders” (plural; Titus 1:5)
 - I hated group projects in college; I always carried the load for the group
 - My entire life is a group project – family, staff
 - Who you work with is more important than what you do or where you do it
 - Synergy
 - Better ideas than mine
 - My ideas are improved; I am better
 - Abundance of counselors there is victory
 - Accountability
 - Gift from God
 - Lack of accountability is dangerous
 - Sanctification
 - “Ministry would be great if it were not for the people.”
 - Ministry is people!
- Qualified (Acts 6:3)– simple terms
 - Good reputation
 - Full of Spirit
 - Full of wisdom. Administrative? Compassionate?
 - Not perfect people but WILLING
- Elder governance
 - Plurality – authority resides in group, not individual
 - Qualified
 - Senior pastor does not rule; I’m not an elder. I am accountable to the Elder Board.
 - GBC Elder Board reorganization for a growing church – now 4 teams

- Find a team, a group, a family to serve alongside

3. Influence as you were made – Romans 12:3

- Some tasks were made for us
 - Barnabas sent to encourage
 - Paul found to teach
- Some tasks we all do
 - Stephen and Phillip preached
- Some tasks don't suit us
 - Friend with no mercy
 - Made with limitations – Luke 4:40-44
 - Could do it, but shouldn't
 - 12 didn't care about the widows?!
- All tasks valuable and necessary – 6:1, 2, 4
 - Ministry (serving) of the table
 - Ministry of the word

READ Acts 6:7

- 6 progress reports; each given after a significant event
- Attack thwarted; potential crisis averted
- GREAT growth continues (imperfect tense)
- Least likely were influenced for Jesus
- Caring for those in need did not hurt evangelism; it helped evangelism

Application

1. How has God designed you to influence others?
2. Who are you called to influence this semester?
3. Where will you begin?
4. Invitation to prayer/connection