



THEMES IN THE BOOK OF ACTS

WEEK THREE: SERVICE

For many of us the concept of ‘service’ is a negative one. We think it means having to put ourselves out for people, do menial tasks, not achieve much. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Throughout the Old and New Testaments, we read about the importance of service, whether it be for God or for others, which really amounts to the same thing. Our primary example is that of Jesus himself who said in **Mark 10:45** “*For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.*” **John 12:26** “*Anyone who wants to serve me must follow me, because my servants must be where I am. And the Father will honour anyone who serves me.*” **Joshua 22:5** Here, Joshua tells the people of Israel: “*But be very careful to obey all the commands and the instructions that Moses gave to you. Love the Lord your God, walk in all his ways, obey his commands, hold firmly to him. And serve him with all your heart and all your soul*”.

Acts 6 and 7

(Note: Hebrews were natives of Palestine and spoke Hebrew, or Aramaic, rather than Greek. The Hellenists were natives of the Greco-Roman world and spoke Greek.)

It is true today as it was in chapter 6 that when the Holy Spirit starts working enabling the growth of individuals and the church, it doesn’t mean an end to problems. In one sense that doesn’t matter: IT IS THE WAY PROBLEMS ARE HANDLED that is important.

Acts 6:1-7:

- What were the Hellenists complaining about?
- What was the solution to the problem?

In these first seven verses we see how the twelve Apostles were beginning to act out what Paul later wrote about in **1 Corinthians 12**. The Church is often described as the Body of Christ and a body consists of many different parts. Some people think because what they do is in the background and seemingly small, that they are not as important as others. Paul makes the point by saying (v.15) “*If the foot should say, ‘because I am not a hand, I am not part of the body’, is it therefore not part of the body? (v.17) If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling*”.

In this passage Paul is emphasising how much we depend on each other because it is the only way a body, and the Church, can function. We tend to look at leaders, preachers and musicians for example, and think they are so important. Keeping the church clean, handing out the hymn books, moving the chairs, making the tea and coffee, welcoming people, and so on, are of equal value. We can't do everything, we have to do what God asks of us and that is usually through someone in the church asking us undertake some task.

If we can begin to understand our interdependence on each other, we would see our roles in a very different light. It wasn't that the Apostles thought they were above doing 'ordinary jobs', but God had called them to preach the Gospel and heal the sick, and as we all find out, we cannot do everything and do it well.

We talk about ministers as if they are in a different class to everyone else, but the word minister means a servant. The dictionary defines the word minister as: *one who acts under the authority of another, a subordinate, an instrument; a servant*. It is like the role of men and women: different in many ways, but equal.

Read [Matthew 21:5](#) (This was foretold in Zechariah 9:9) and [John 12:3-17](#)

- What does the first passage tell us about Jesus and his humility?
- Normally in a household, it was the job of a servant to wash the feet of guests. What can we learn from this about our attitudes and our actions?
- Write down ways in which you have learned to serve and the resulting blessings.

The Apostles of Acts 6, with the exception of Matthias, had been with Jesus on the night of the Last Supper when Jesus washed their feet. They had learned so much that night and were to experience so much more before the night was over. The one who had washed their feet was now a condemned prisoner.

- An important thing to note about these men is, they didn't allow their past failures to get in the way of God moving through them. Are there things in your life that are holding you back? Remember if we come in repentance, God will always forgive and then as Psalm 103 says, he removes our sins as far as the east is from the west, never to be remembered again. If God doesn't remember your past mistakes, then you have to let go and be prepared to move on.

The Apostles will no doubt have remembered what Jesus had to say about service to others. ([Matthew 25:31-46](#))

There are two crucial things to remember in this passage. Our Christian duty is to feed the hungry, give water to the thirsty, look after the strangers, clothe the naked

visit the prisoners. There are no let-out clauses. The second is this: *"..inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to me."*

God does not expect us to be able to do everything, even if we are the 'Minster'. Church members should do all they can to help and to recognise where their giftings lie. Notice in Acts 6:3, the Apostles wanted men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. And whatever we are asked to do, we should do it as unto God and to the best of our ability.

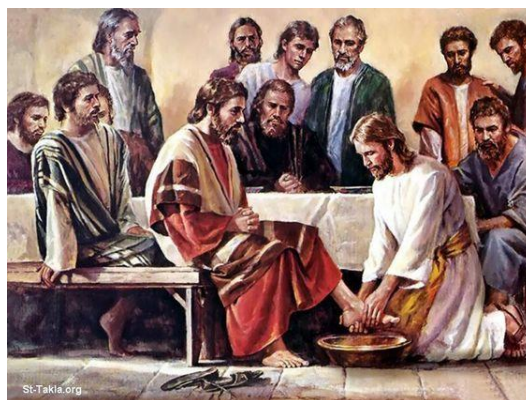
- Notice what verse 7 of chapter 6 says: *"Then the word of God spread, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith."*
- Do you want to see the word of God spread in Hull from the Minster? Pray about what you can do to enable this to happen.

Sometimes, even today, there is a high price to pay for serving God. Read [Acts 6:8-15 and Chapter 7](#).

Notice what caused Stephen to be accused of blasphemy. He was full of faith and power and did great wonders and signs among the people.

- What was the basis of Stephen's response?
- Note how he use the Scriptures, and as Jesus did with the Pharisees, he charged them with disobedience to the law of God.
- It is enlightening to look up online what is happening to Christians around the world who are being persecuted for their faith. Let us remember to pray for them.
- Stephen paid the ultimate price for his Christian faith and service. Pray that we would have the courage to stand up for Jesus when the opportunity arises.

CHOOSE YOU THS DAY WHOM YOU WILL SERVE (Joshua 22:15)



Prayer as We Continue Serving. Lord, you call us to your service and continue your saving work among us. May your love never abandon us.