

Ministry of the Word, Ministry of the Table

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[0 : 00] Acts chapter 6 verses 1 to 7. Now in these days, when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, It is not right that we should give up preaching the Word of God to serve tables. Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicholas, a proselyte of Antioch. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. And the Word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem. And a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith. This is God's holy and authoritative Word. A pastor and Bible commentator, Kent Hughes, tells the story of a certain Dallas church that decided to split a number of years ago.

[1 : 29] Each faction had filed a lawsuit against the other to claim the church property as their own, because they had a building. A judge decided, this is a secular court, a judge decided that the matter had to be settled by the denominational court.

And so they sent it back to deal with it on their own. And the denominational court assembled to hear both sides of the case. And the eventual losers in the case withdrew and formed another church in the area.

And during the hearing, it sadly came to light that the conflict originated during a church potluck, when a certain elder received a smaller slice of ham than the child seated next to him. I'm sure the small slice of ham wasn't the only thing that caused the offense. Likely, that ham was a petty expression of the resentment and conflict that was already brewing within the church. But nonetheless, that division brought dishonor to Christ and discredited the church. Sometimes, when the smallest sparks land on prideful hearts, an unflattering comment overheard, an invitation not received or not responded to, a service unnoticed or unrewarded, even the smallest sparks when they land on prideful hearts can start wildfires that burn down entire churches.

[3 : 13] The apostles were facing a potentially explosive situation in Acts 6, verses 1-7 that threatened their gospel ministry, but by responding humbly to the complaint and wisely diffusing the tension between two factions, they preserved the unity of the church.

The main point of this passage is that the church grows when the priority of prayer and the ministry of the Word is preserved. First, let's talk about the priority of prayer and ministry of the Word in verses 1-4, and then about the necessity of the ministry of the table in verses 5-7.

It says in verse 1, Now, in these days, when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

We were just told, if you remember, in chapter 4, verses 32-37, that the early church shared everything in common within one another so that there was not a needy person among them for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold and laid it at the apostles' feet.

And it was distributed to each as any had need. So there was no one with need. Just two chapters earlier. Chapter 4, verses 34-35. So what's happening here in chapter 6?

[4 : 35] Has the church's love for one another already grown cold? No, that's not what's happening. The answer is given in verse 1. Now, in these days, when the disciples were increasing

in number.

That's the context of this complaint. It's not that the church didn't have enough resources. People were still giving generously to the church. It's that there's a gap in their daily distribution due to the growing number of disciples.

It's an administration problem, not a generosity problem or a lack of love. The word distribution is a translation of the Greek word diakonia, from which we get the English word diakonite and deacon. The word means service or ministry. But depending on the context in which it is used, it can refer more specifically to table ministry, waiting on tables, as it does here.

In Luke chapter 10, verse 40, the same word is used to describe Martha, who was distracted with much serving, serving, being hospitable, hosting Jesus and his apostles. Later in Acts 11, 29, and 12, 25, the same word is used to refer to the financial aid, the relief that the church in Antioch collect and then deliver to the church in Jerusalem affected by famine.

[5 : 55] So we could characterize this as a diakonal ministry. And in this particular context, this ministry or service referred to the distribution of food among widows.

We know that from verse 2, where the apostles speak of serving tables. So they're talking literally about getting food out to the widows. The fact that this was a daily distribution, I think, also confirms this.

If they were giving out allowances of money, they could do that on a weekly basis or even a monthly basis. But it's because they're giving out perishable food, they have to do it on a daily basis. 1 Timothy 5, 3 to 16, provide detailed instruction on how to care for widows in the church, and they were likely following these principles.

Among other things, in 1 Timothy 5, it says that for a widow to receive care from the church and to be enrolled in the list for the distribution of food, she must be, quote, truly a widow left all alone, who has set her hope on God and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.

So this means she must not have relatives who can take care of her. If she does have relatives, the responsibility for her care falls on them. And Paul says, quote, let the church not be burdened so that it may care for those who are truly widows.

[7 : 16] So that gives you a sense of what this ministry of daily distribution of food to the widows in the church was like. So these widows who are in need have no biological family to care for them, only their spiritual family.

And remember, this is a time when women could not readily work. So the widows getting neglected in the daily distribution is quite a serious problem. This is literally their lifeline.

In particular, it was the Hellenist widows who were being neglected. Verse 1 says, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

The Hebrew widows were not being neglected. It was the Hellenist widows that were being neglected. Hellenists does not refer to Greeks or Gentiles. There are different Greek words for those.

It rather refers to Greek-speaking Jews, Grecian Jews, Jews who have been Hellenized, possibly people from the Jewish diaspora who after living in other Greek cities for a time decided to return to Jerusalem to live among fellow Jews.

[8 : 26] Hebrews, on the other hand, refers to Aramaic-speaking Jews, their native tongue. At this point in the life of the church in Jerusalem, the vast majority of converts were Jewish.

The Gentile mission really hadn't taken off by this point, so there is no ethnic division here between the Hellenists and the Hebrews. However, there is a cultural and linguistic difference between them. In a similar way, there would be between a Chinese international living in the U.S. and Chinese American who is politically and culturally Americanized. They share a common ethnicity, but linguistically and culturally, there is a significant difference.

This fills out the picture a little bit more. The Hebrew Jewish Christians and Hellenist Jewish Christians in the first century were likely less well-connected relationally, even if for no other reason than this cultural and linguistic barriers.

And as the church grew exponentially from 3,000 in chapter 2, verse 41, to 5,000 in chapter 4, verse 4, to more converts than ever before in Acts 5, verse 14, the daily distribution of food to widows became increasingly complex as an administrative task.

[9 : 45] And cracks were beginning to appear. And the first people to fall through those cracks were the least connected people of the minority Hellenist widows because the apostles and others who were put in charge of the distribution were Hebrews.

Thankfully, these Hellenist widows had brothers and sisters in the church, fellow Hellenists, who were willing to speak up for them. And they brought a complaint against the Hebrews that their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.

Recall from chapter 4, verses 32 to 37, that it was the apostles themselves who were ultimately in charge of distributing the proceeds that people generously laid at their feet.

So they could have tried to save face by being defensive or denying that the problem exists, but they don't respond that way.

They humbly acknowledge that there is a problem, that they did miss something, that the Hellenist widows have been overlooked.

[10 : 55] So verse 2 says that the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples. They bring the whole church together to address this issue. So there's a secondary lesson here on Christian leadership as well, that leadership requires humility, a recognition that we are weak, fallible, and sinful people, and therefore need constructive criticism and feedback.

It also requires faith to be a leader, to trust that God uses such criticism to sanctify and strengthen us in our ministries. The apostles did not view themselves with such self-importance and self-satisfaction to be above error or criticism.

So they humbly acknowledge that the Hellenist widows have been overlooked. Likewise, Christian leaders, and if you are in leadership positions anywhere, you should be quick to confess sins and admit failures, such as breakdowns in communication and oversight as here.

But the neglect of the Hellenist widows is not the only problem that the apostles see. they foresee another problem. And they say this in verse 2, it is not right that we should give up preaching the Word of God to serve tables.

In other words, being in charge of the daily distribution of food is now a full-time job. And we cannot do this job well without neglecting the preaching of the Word.

[12 : 31] because it takes time to teach and it takes time to prepare to teach. And it is not right, they say, to neglect the preaching of the Word to serve tables. In fact, it is not right for any other reason for that matter to neglect the preaching of the Word.

The phrase, it is not right, is literally, it is not pleasing. But this is not an expression of personal preference by the apostles. Well, ministering tables is beneath our dignity as the twelve apostles. That's not what they're saying at all. Given the explicit commission that they had received from the Lord Jesus earlier in Acts 1a to be His witnesses, to bear witness to the life, death, and resurrection and ascension of Jesus for the salvation of all of God's people, the apostles likely mean that neglecting the ministry of the Word to minister tables is an unacceptable solution because it is displeasing to God, to their Lord and Savior.

Humans are bodily beings, so providing for our bodily needs is important. But we are not merely bodies, we are souls destined for eternity.

For this reason, it is imperative that we proclaim the person and work of Jesus who alone can save us. for whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it.

[14 : 07] For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? For what can a man give in return for his soul? It's therefore nearsighted to care for the people's temporal needs while neglecting their eternal needs.

There's so much wisdom in the apostles' response because we are human beings, we are finite, and we have inherent limitations of time as well as physical and emotional energy.

For this reason, every time we choose to do something, we are also, by default, choosing not to do something. because we can't do everything.

And that requires prioritization. The apostles were faced with the dilemma either the daily distribution of bread was going to be neglected or proclaiming the word of God, the bread of life, was going to be neglected.

And they conclude that it is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables. This statement does not mean that providing food for the church's widows is unimportant.

[15 : 21] The apostles' following actions show that they thought that it was very important. In Galatians 2, verse 10, Paul says that when the twelve first gave him and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship and encouraged them to go and preach the gospel to the Gentiles, they specifically, the apostles, asked Paul and Barnabas, asked them to remember the poor, the very thing that Paul was eager to do.

So the apostles clearly believed in the importance of caring for needy members of the church. But even when you're faced with important things to do, not all things are equally important. Nevertheless, even when confronted with the pressure of genuine ministerial need, a need that requires people who have good reputations and are full of the Spirit and of wisdom, to meet, the apostles stand firm on the ground that no matter what, preaching the Word of God must not be neglected.

John Piper writes in his book, *Brothers, We Are Not Professionals*, quote, most interruptions and most of our busyness are ministry-related, not worldly.

The great threat to our prayer and our meditation on the Word of God is good ministry activity. The apostles are not being asked here to organize a Fortnite video game tournament for the church.

[16 : 55] They're being asked to provide for Hellenist widows who have no food to eat. And even then, they insist that they must attend to the ministry of the Word.

This reveals the utmost priority of the ministry of the Word. Apostle Paul adjured his protegee Timothy in 2 Timothy 4, 1-2, I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead and by His appearing in His kingdom preach the Word.

It's difficult to imagine a more solemn charge except that this charge is still intensified by what preceded it in 2 Timothy 3, 16-17 that the sacred writings are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

All Scripture is breathed out by God and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction and for training in righteousness that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.

Unless you preach the Word, unless we share the ministry of the Word, people will not be made wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ.

Unless the Word is ministered, the church will not be complete, equipped for every good work. It's no wonder then that Charles Spurgeon described the pulpit as the thermopylae of Christendom, the place where the fight will be lost or won because it is the chief means by which people's souls are fed.

[18 : 35] However, the ministry of the Word doesn't refer only to the formal preaching of God's Word during corporate worship. The word preaching in verse 2 is actually not there in the original Greek text.

It simply says it is not right that we should give up the Word of God to serve tables. As we see throughout Acts, the apostles ministered the Word of God to people in various contexts.

Yes, definitely in the corporate context, but also in private context in people's homes. So this refers not only to the preaching of the Word, but also to the ministry of the Word in personal ministry, counseling.

As a church, we have many opportunities for good ministries. Many. But we must never forget to prioritize the ministry of the Word.

We must together ensure that the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ continues unbroken. And it is by remembering that priority that we avoid the mistake of Martha in Luke 10, 38 to 42, when she was distracted with much serving, while Mary sat at the Lord's feet to listen to the Word.

[19 : 58] So faced with the necessary work of ministering the table and the essential work of ministering the Word, the apostles decide to delegate the ministry of the table. In verse 3, it says, Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.

There are helpful secondary lessons in this verse on church governance and structure as well. The apostles wisely involve the rest of the congregation in this selection, since they presumably do not know everyone in the congregation equally well.

Notice the insightful interplay between church leaders and the church. The brothers, it says, the brothers, the church, pick out from among them seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we, the apostles, will appoint to this duty.

So the apostles provide leadership by delineating the criteria that the men chosen for this responsibility must meet. then the selection is left to the congregation. It only mentions brothers and not sisters because the men likely represented their respective households in this decision. And finally, the actual appointment or the authorization is done by the apostles themselves.

[21 : 21] Biblical church polity or governance should incorporate these dynamics, this interplay between church members and church leaders. Let's look a little more closely at the qualifications of these men that will be chosen for this duty.

They must be of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom. First, why is good reputation important? Because if the officers of the church have a bad reputation among their communities and among unbelievers in particular due to their, it brings disrepute to the church.

Of course, good Christians can have bad reputation among unbelievers because of their faithfulness, but that's not what this is talking about. If a Christian is known as irresponsible or lazy in the workplace, or if a person is known as a drunkard, or as being domineering or abusive in the home, or if a person is known for selfishly taking advantage of his neighbors, or if a person is known as a philanderer who has been in serial divorces and marriages, unfaithful, then such people should not serve as church officers.

They must be of good repute. Second, they must be full of the Spirit and of wisdom. In order to be useful in Christian service, one must be full of the Spirit because without the enabling and empowering work of the Spirit, our ministries are ineffectual.

If we serve out of our own fullness, out of our own determination and intelligence and willpower and strength, we will very soon run out of gas and run on fumes.

[23 : 13] similarly, they must be full of wisdom because caring for needy folks in the church requires wisdom so that they might take care, they might have tact and sensitivity in ministering to them so that the right kind of help can be given in right proportion at the right time, considering the complexities of each person's life and relationships.

ministering in the church requires wisdom from above, wisdom from God. And so this is the solution proposed by the apostles, appointing seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom to take charge of the daily distribution.

But, the apostles continue in verse 4, we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. It's interesting that in verse 3, the apostles only mentioned preaching the Word of God or the Word of God, but then here they mention both prayer and the ministry of the Word.

This is because the effective ministry of the Word and prayer are inseparable. This is now the third time in the book of Acts that we are told of Christians being devoted to prayer.

Acts chapter 1, verse 14, these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer. Acts chapter 2, verse 40, they devoted themselves to, among other things, the prayers.

[24 : 48] Acts 6, verse 4, we will devote ourselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Pastor Leonard Ravenhill puts it provocatively in his book, Why Revival Tarries.

Quote, No man is greater than his prayer life. The pastor who is not praying is playing. The people who are not praying are straying.

The pulpit can be a shop window to display one's talents. The prayer closet allows no showing off. People could preach for selfish motives, but no one's going to go into a closet where no one is looking to pray unless they mean it, unless they believe it.

It's possible for preachers of God's Word to leverage their biblical knowledge and speaking skills and effective branding and charismatic personality to gain a following and make a name for themselves without, for one moment, depending on the power of the Holy Spirit in prayer.

But that kind of ministry is like a growing apple tree that is tall and full of leaves and yet year after year it fails to produce fruit due to lack of cross-pollination.

[26 : 16] Unless the wind of the Spirit blows upon that tree, it will never bear fruit. in Andrew Bonar of Puritan Ministers' Journal, there are many entries that speak of the connection between power in preaching and prayer.

July 16, 1842, I feel that unless the soul be saturated with prayer and faith, little good may be expected from preaching. August 4, 1842, past six hours today in the church in prayer and scripture reading, confessing sin and seeking blessing for myself and the parish.

February 22, 1846, God will not let me preach with power when I am not much in Him. More than ever do I feel that I should be as much an intercessor as a preacher of the Word.

June 4, 1848, it is praying much that makes preaching felt. December 29, 1849, my chief desire should be to be a man of prayer for there is no want of speaking and writing and preaching and teaching and warning but there is need of the Holy Spirit to make all this effectual.

May 12, 1888, look at how much time has passed and yet he is writing the same things. Found time to give the whole of this day entirely to prayer and meditation.

[27 : 56] There will be fruit of it to me and my people. This is why the apostles say in verse 4, we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word.

To devote oneself to something means to stick to it, to pay attention to it, to be faithful to it, to persevere in it over many years no matter how hard it may be to persevere in it, to be busily engaged in something.

The pastor's primary task is not only to preach but it's also to pray because truly the time spent in our own strength ministering is never as well spent as time spent seeking God's strength for our ministry in prayer.

As it says in 1 Samuel 12 23, ask for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you.

The ministers of the Word must be devoted to prayer and as we try to raise up people to be elders in our church, that's what we should look for. Prayer from them.

[29 : 10] That's the priority of prayer in the ministry of the Word. Let's now look at the necessity of the ministry of the table in verses 5 to 7.

It says in verse 5, And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicholas, a proselyte of Antioch.

In verse 2, the apostles said it is not right, or literally, it is not pleasing to neglect the preaching of the Word to serve tables. But now it says in verse 5, what they said pleased the whole gathering.

The church found a way to reconcile those two priorities, to preserve both of those priorities, to minister to the needy widows without neglecting the ministry of the Word.

And that's the kind of satisfactory solution that local churches should seek when faced with decisions regarding ministry prioritization, when they're faced with important things, necessary things that the church must do.

[30 : 17] The first of the seven men named is Stephen. All seven men presumably meet the qualifications of verse 3, of being of good repute and full of the Spirit and of wisdom.

But verse 5 singles out Stephen as a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. This introduction sets Stephen up for the prominent role that he will have in the following passages.

Philip is mentioned here and again later in chapter 21, verse 8. He's called the evangelist, one of the seven in chapter 21. He's the evangelist who is instrumental in bringing the gospel to Samaria in chapter 8.

He is the one through whose ministry the Ethiopian eunuch is converted in chapter 8 as well.

Nicholas, who is mentioned last on this list, is described as a proselyte of Antioch.

That means he was a Gentile who converted to Judaism and eventually to Christianity. So the fact that he is singled out as a proselyte means that the other six men were born Jews.

[31 : 19] We don't know much details about the other men mentioned, but what is notable is that all the men, all of the seven people appointed for this task have Greek and not Hebrew names, which suggests that they were likely all Hellenist Jews, with the exception of Nicholas, who was a converted Jew, proselyte, Gentile proselyte.

This is a brilliant solution to the initial problem that they had. Since the Greek-speaking widows were falling through the cracks by appointing leaders who know them and can speak to them in their native tongue to ensure that the underrepresented minority in the church is not neglected. Verse 6 says, These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them. In the book of Acts, the laying on of hands is frequently associated with the impartation of the Holy Spirit.

Probably for that reason, later in Acts chapter 13, verse 3, when the church in Antioch is commissioning Paul and Barnabas out on a missionary journey, they lay their hands on them and then send them off.

Similarly, in the pastoral epistles, for example, in 1 Timothy chapter 4, verse 14, and chapter 5, verse 22, the laying on of hands is used as shorthand for the ordination of elders.

[32 : 59] So when the apostles pray for these seven men and lay their hands on them, they are commissioning them for an official task, recognizing their role and ministry publicly for the church to see and investing them with authority peculiar to their work so that they might execute their charge.

the apostles were not self-important people who believed that nothing will be done to their satisfaction if they don't do it all themselves.

They readily ceded authority in certain areas for the upbuilding of the church. So in this passage, at this stage of the church's life, we see the twelve, and we see the seven, and we see the full number of the disciples in verse 2.

That's kind of the structure that they have at this moment in the church's life. There's no mention of the offices of elders and deacons in this passage. They have not yet been formalized.

However, we do see here the structure and organization of the church beginning to take shape. The twelve are given to the ministry of the word and their responsibilities correspond well to the ministry of elders.

[34 : 13] 1 Timothy 3, verse 2, says that the elders must be able to teach. 1 Timothy 5, 17, speaks of elders who labor in preaching and teaching. So the seven were given to the ministry of the table and their responsibilities correspond well to the ministry of deacons.

who are not required to be able to teach the faith but are instead required to hold the faith with a clear conscience in 1 Timothy 3, 9. 3, verse 9. The seven's role is not yet set in stone and later in Acts it does seem like some of them take on more of an elder-like role especially among the Greek-speaking population.

For example, we see Stephen preaching Christ throughout the Greek-speaking synagogues of Jerusalem in Acts 6, 9. However, the dominant usage of the word deacon in its various forms throughout Scripture as well as the later formalization of the office of deacons and their ministry evidenced throughout church history suggests that diaconal ministry of the table comprises any ministry of service that meets the temporal, physical needs of the church in order to relieve and release the elders for prayer and the ministry of the word.

Matthew 25, verse 44 encapsulates what this ministry of service might entail. It speaks of the ministry, ministering to people, to a person who is hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison.

The diaconal ministry entails such things as feeding the hungry, housing the stranger or visitor, clothing the naked, caring for the sick, and visiting the imprisoned members, hopefully due to persecution and not for some criminal behavior of the church family.

[36 : 06] this doesn't mean that elders care only about people's spiritual needs and deacons care only about people's physical needs.

Of course, the elders and deacons both care for both, but there's a differentiation of roles so that neither is neglected. And when the deacons of the church effectively discharge their duties, the priority of prayer and the ministry of the word in the church is preserved and the church grows as a result of their humble service.

It says in verse 7, And the word of God continued to increase and a number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.

The initial problem of neglected widows in the distribution stemmed from the church's growth and the appointment of the seven allows that growth to continue. the word of God continued to increase because the apostles ensured that the word of God is not neglected.

So then, deacons are exemplary members of the church who love the word of God. They serve so that the word of God might not be neglected.

[37 : 32] they serve because they love to see the word of God increasing. If the eldership is like a quarterback on a football team, the deaconship is like the offensive line that defends the quarterback so that he doesn't get pummeled to the ground and so that he has the time and space to throw the football forward.

forward. The football cannot advance without either. Can't help but think about the last Super Bowl as I'm talking about this.

If you saw, you know exactly what I'm talking about. a great quarterback being helpless, totally being unable to do anything because he's just getting beaten down to the ground every single time.

No time and space to throw the ball anywhere. Likewise, it's when both the elders and deacons are faithfully ministering that word of God, that faithfully ministering and discharging their duties that the word of God continues to increase and the number of the disciples multiply greatly.

That's a wonderful expression. The word of God continues to increase. It personifies the word of God as if it's a living thing, like a seed that is planted and continues to grow.

[39 : 09] That's because the word of God is living and active. Luke uses this expression again and again throughout Acts. It says in Acts 12, 13, but the word of God increased and multiplied.

Acts 19, 20, the word of the Lord continued to increase and prevail mightily. It's almost as if the word of God itself has agency. Because as Paul says in 1 Corinthians 1, 18, the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the power of God.

The word of God declares that Jesus' death and resurrection on behalf of death and damnation deserving sinners brings forgiveness to debtors.

It brings restoration to rebels. It brings adoption to orphans into the family of God. It's because of that gospel that is so precious to us that we cherish, without which there is no salvation for anyone in this world, that we must preserve that priority.

Lord. We're not appointing our deacons today. We had planned on doing that today, but for logistical reasons we've delayed it, but you can be praying for our deacon candidates whom we will appoint, Lord willing, on June 8th.

[40 : 44] Let's get to work together in proclaiming the word as a church and preserving its priority in our church. so we might be faithful witnesses of Jesus Christ.

Heavenly Father, we acknowledge that we cannot do this without your help. We are so prone to wonder, to be distracted. We need you to help us to have an eternal mindset of biblical priority.

Lord, we need humble men and women to be raised up to serve, to preserve the priority of prayer and ministry of the word.

Help us to be a church that is devoted to the apostles' teaching and to the prayers and to the fellowship and to the breaking of bread. Make us, Lord, devoted to these precious things.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.