

# The Ministry of the Word and Table

By Mary Kane

When I was in college, I worked for a couple of years at a little Hungarian restaurant called Bruno's. Despite the name, the restaurant was actually owned by a man named Geno. Geno had escaped from Hungary at the beginning of World War II. Eventually he made his way to



America and took a job working in a restaurant. After several years he had saved enough money to buy a restaurant of his own. When I came to work for Geno, his wife and sons worked along with him. I loved the family atmosphere that permeated the dining room and ... I loved Geno's cooking! He took great pride in the

delicious dinners that he made. Many of the regulars had been coming to Geno's for years and ordered the same thing year after year. Geno definitely had a way with food. One might even say that food was his ministry!

In order to prepare for today's study, please spend a few minutes in prayer; ask God to cleanse your heart from any sin and to fill you with His Holy Spirit.

Please read Acts 6:1-7. We will be concentrating on verses 4 and 7.

**What good thing was happening in the church according to verse 1?**

The New Testament church was expanding, evidenced by the growing number of new disciples! Then, as today, when the church begins to get serious about growing in Christ, problems can begin to surface.

**What problem surfaced in the new church?**

We see the age-old problem of discrimination arise in the church. I wonder who was behind that? Satan loves to cause division in the

church. The Hellenist believers were upset with the Hebrew believers because the Hellenist widows were not receiving any food in the "daily distribution." The Hellenists were Jews who were born in foreign lands and spoke Greek. Jamieson, Faussett and Brown state that the Jews who were born in Israel and used their native tongue "were wont to look down on the "Grecians" as an inferior class." The elitist attitude displayed by the Jewish believers is surprising because prior to this point in scripture, the disciples were meeting and praying in "one accord" (*BLB* Matthew Henry).

**What wise and prudent course of action did the Twelve undertake in verses 2-3?**

I appreciate the fact that the Twelve were not micro-managers. They were willing to delegate responsibility so they could focus and use their gifts, time and energy on their own calling.

**What was the main calling for the Twelve Apostles?**

**Please write verse 4 in the space provided:**

**To what things did the Twelve give themselves to continually?**

Wisdom and insight can be gained from a deeper study of some of the words in verse 4. Let's dig in!

The original Greek word used for *give ourselves continually* is *proskartereo* which means to:

- To give unremitting care
- Be devoted to

- To persevere and not faint
- To show one's self courageous for
- Be constantly ready
- To wait on constantly
- Mighty with great power, force, strength

**Please go back and check the definitions that are most meaningful to you.**

**Now, please record why the items you checked are significant to you.**

**Why might we need to be *courageous* in prayer?**

**When would we need *great force* or *perseverance* in prayer?**

The word used for prayer in this text is *proseuche* which translates as "prayer addressed to God, earnest prayers, worship, or prayers that include some of the personal wishes and will of the one praying."

**If you were one of the Twelve, what personal prayers would you have brought before God at this time?**

Now let us turn our attention to the word *ministry*. I learned something surprising when I looked up the original meaning of this word! *Diakonia* is the original Greek word used for *ministry* in verse 4. *Diakonia* translates as "service, ministering, especially those who

execute the commands of others." This word is derived from another Greek word, *diakonos* which means "the servant of a king, an attendant, a waiter, one who serves food and drink" (BLB emphasis mine). The final part of this definition made me curious about verse 2.

Please go back and read verse 2 again.

Luke wrote that "it is not desirable that we should leave the word of God to *serve* the tables" (emphasis mine). As I had suspected, the same Greek word that was used for *ministry* in verse 4, was used for *serve* in verse 2. Prior to this discovery, I had assumed that the tone of the second half of verse 2 was slightly sarcastic; as if waiting tables was far beneath the dignity of the Apostles of Christ. Now, however I believe the Apostles were simply making a point that their main focus needed to be the ministry Christ gave them, not the ministry that Christ had appointed to another. Both ministries were important; the feeding of stomachs and the feeding of souls!

**In verse 5 and 6, what proof do we see that the ministry of food was important to the Apostles?**

Verse 6 states that they brought the men who were chosen to oversee the ministry of the tables before the Apostles and they prayed for them and laid hands on them. The phrase *laid hands on them* means to "fix, establish or ordain." Usually when hear the word *ordain* I picture a priest or minister receiving his acceptance into the ministry through an elaborate ceremony. Obviously, God was and is serious about His church ministering to the poor.

Please read verse 7 again.

**List three things that happened in this verse:**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

The first thing that happened in verse 7 was that the word of God *spread*. We must take a closer look at this word to learn as much as possible from God's Word! The original Greek word in this verse transliterates as *auxano*. *Auxano* means "to cause to grow, to augment, to increase, to become greater." It also means "of inward Christian growth." So not only was the church growing in width, it was growing in depth as well. The Word of God always brings life and growth!

**Name ways in which studying God's Word has helped you to grow this year.**

Next, we notice that the "number of *disciples* multiplied greatly in Jerusalem." I would like to pitch something out to you at this point. There is a big difference in being a *believer* in Christ and being a *disciple* of Christ. I have been a believer in Christ for about 27 years, but I have been a serious disciple of Christ for only about 11 years. For the 16 years of my Christian life, I lived pretty much as I wished. God had made some definite inroads in my character but I still lived according to my feelings. You see I had given God my heart, but I



hadn't given Him my *life*. Finally, God showed me the error of my way through the mentoring of coworker and I turned my *life* over to Jesus as well. I believe that there is some proof of my theory in scripture. The word used for *believer* in the New Testament is *pistis* which means "true, faithful, trusting...one who believes that Jesus has been raised from the dead" (BLB). The word

used for *disciples* in Acts 6:7 is *mathetes* which means "a learner, a pupil, to be increased in knowledge, to learn by use and practice, to be in the habit of, accustomed to." The *disciple* of Christ takes his belief to a deeper level than a *believer* of Christ.

Finally, we see that a great many priests, who were formally obedient to the Law are now "obedient to the faith." The meaning of the word *obedient* in this verse is interesting; it translates as "to listen, to harken to a command, to be endowed with the faculty of hearing, to get by hearing, to give ear to a teacher" (*BLB*). There seems to be a connection, then, between our ability to hear and our ability to obey! If we are able to hear, then we are able to obey! Heeding the Word of God is a choice we must make everyday.

**Please go back and read verse 7 one final time.**

Notice please, that as direct result of the church biblically settling its issues:

1. The church refrained from gossip.
2. The church remained unified.
3. The believers effectively served according to their calling.
4. The Word of God spread.
5. The number of disciples in Jerusalem greatly increased.
6. Many former enemies of the church (priests) became believers!

They will know we are Christians by our love.

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