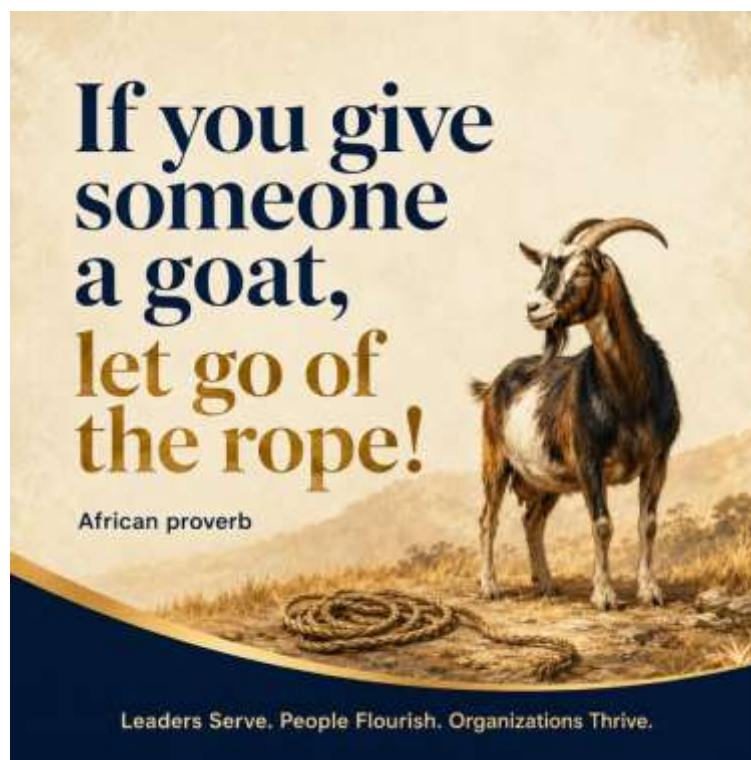


Delegation

Lessons from Acts 6



By Jon Byler

About the Author

Jon Byler has a passion to serve the body of Christ by using his gifts of teaching, writing and encouragement. He especially enjoys serving the leaders who build the church. He lives with his wife, Nyambura, in East Petersburg, PA. Together they pastor an emerging church and are the parents of three adult children.

Jon served in Kenya for 13 years and in different capacities in the church including pastoral ministry and leadership development, then another 15 years of international training with church leaders and 5 years of training within business organization. He has authored several books including *7 Keys to Financial Freedom*, *The Heart of Christian Leadership*, *The Art of Christian Leadership*, and *Signposts for the Journey*, Vol. 1, II, and III and several booklets on other topics. He writes a bi-weekly e-Zine *Reflections for Serving Leaders* which is distributed by email in English, Spanish and Chichewa. (Sign up to receive a free copy on his website.)

Jon is available for speaking and consulting especially in the areas of leadership, church growth, and missions. For more information see his website, www.LeadersServe.com.



The following is a compilation of a biweekly email newsletter series about delegation from Acts 6. These “Reflections for Serving Leaders” were written for serving leaders around the world to learn what it means to lead like Jesus. The issue number and date used are the dates for the original publication.

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Delegation: The Why Not

Issue #424, June 3, 2026

Nearly all leaders know they should delegate tasks to others, but knowing and doing are two different things! In this series, we'll examine delegation by reflecting on a time when the early church leaders learned to delegate.

¹In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ²So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." ⁵This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. ⁷So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith (Acts 6:1-7, NIV).

The church leaders faced a problem with the distribution of food and they chose to delegate that work to seven others chosen by the people. Their delegation was not 'dumping' tasks on others; it was a deliberate attempt to release responsibility and power to others so that others would grow and the work would multiply.

Before we look at other elements of delegation, in this issue we'll look at why we don't delegate!

Delegation is hard work.

Delegation is not easy. The Twelve had to call for meetings, take time to select other leaders, give them guidance on their new assignments and check back with them to make sure things were going well.

Some leaders take the easy path and do the work themselves. But serving leaders are willing to do the hard work because they want to see others grow and the work expand.

Delegation is risky work.

The apostles had no way of knowing how successfully the new leaders would accomplish their task. Delegation of a new task always involves the risk of failure.

Some leaders refuse to risk failure, so they don't delegate. But serving leaders recognize that while delegation is risky, it is best for long-term impact.

Delegation is painful work.

The process of deciding to delegate can be painful. Before this incident, the Twelve Apostles were in charge of everything! They were acknowledged as the leaders, and it felt good to be in charge! Their first impulse, when they recognized the problem, could have been to work harder and longer hours to get the job done. Some of the apostles probably enjoyed the work of food distribution. It may have reminded them of the times they helped Jesus distribute food and some likely loved the logistics involved. Letting go of control and tasks that we enjoy can be painful realities in delegation.

Some leaders avoid the pain of delegation by doing all the work themselves. But serving leaders sacrifice their own preferences for the good of their team and the organization.

For further reflection and discussion:

- What has been my experience with delegation, either in receiving tasks delegated to me by others or in my own delegation? Has this been a mostly positive or mostly negative experience? How have these experiences impacted my own ability or willingness to delegate?
- In what ways is delegation hard for me to do? Am I so busy that I don't have the time to invest in helping others succeed? If so, how does that impact my leadership capacity?
- In what ways is delegation risky for me in my current role? What are the fears that might keep me from delegating to others on my team? What does that indicate about my belief in the potential of the people around me?
- How painful is it for me to let go of control? In what ways is my own ego wrapped up in my leadership? How does this impact the growth of my team?
- What tasks are most painful for me to release to others? Why is it hard to allow others to do these tasks and what does it say about my own leadership?

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll look at why we should delegate.

Delegation: The Why

Issue #425, June 17, 2026

If delegation is hard work and doing the work myself is easier, why should I delegate tasks to others? Consider the story from the early church:

¹ In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ² So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³ Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." ⁵ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶ They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. ⁷ So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith (Acts 6:1-7, NIV).

We can learn several things about delegation as we reflect on this story.

Delegation strengthens people.

As the seven men who were selected picked up additional responsibility, they developed greater administrative skills, sharpened their communication ability and grew in their thinking and problem-solving capacity. Their leadership potential was developed because the apostles believed in them and were willing to delegate responsibilities that brought growth.

Some leaders delegate simply to get the work done and help the organization succeed. But serving leaders delegate because it helps people grow. They look for tasks that will help that person grow into their full potential.

Delegation strengthens the organization.

"So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly..." The work that was delegated by the apostles allowed strengths to function more effectively and improved the quality of the work. At the same time, it increased the impact of the early church in terms of quantity. When leaders are developed, organizations are strengthened.

Some leaders seek to strengthen their organization by adding more people to the team. But serving leaders strengthen their organization by investing in their team. They recognize that God's design is not for only one person to excel but for teams to function effectively as tasks are delegated to the right individuals.

Delegation strengthens the leadership pipeline.

When the apostles added seven people to their leadership team, they now had a team of nineteen instead of twelve! Several became leaders that took the gospel out to new locations, especially when persecution broke out later. They were developing a strong leadership pipeline that would meet the current needs but also ensure that there were leaders ready to succeed them in the future.

Some leaders focus only on present needs and delegate work that needs to be done. But serving leaders delegate work to prepare others to take up leadership in the future. They recognize that there is no success without a successor.

For further reflection and discussion:

- When I have delegated tasks in the past, was it primarily to get the work done or to develop people? What would change on my team if I focused more on developing people?
- On my team, who is ready for an opportunity to take on more responsibility? What can I delegate to them to help them grow and develop their potential? When will I do it?
- Is there a current role I have been considering filling by finding someone outside of my organization? If so, is there anyone already in my organization who could be developed to take that role? What would be required for that to happen?
- What is the current strength of my leadership pipeline? Do I have leaders ready to step into any role in my organization? Are there changes that should be made to strengthen my team in this area? What does my pipeline strength indicate about my leadership?

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll examine *what* we should delegate.

Delegation: The What

Issue #426, July 1, 2026

Of the many things I'm doing, what should I delegate? Effective leaders learn which responsibilities they need to strategically move from their plate to others on their team. Again, we can learn important lessons by observing the actions of the apostles in the early church.

¹In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ²So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:1-4, NIV).

The passage indicates that the apostles delegated the task of distributing food. What can we learn about why they decided to delegate this work instead of something else?

Delegate tasks that are not priorities.

The apostles said they would delegate the work of food distribution so they would not "neglect the ministry of the word." Both tasks were good, but they recognized that if they continued doing both, the 'ministry of the word' would suffer. Others, at this point, could do the food distribution, but they were the only ones who could faithfully carry out the ministry of the word. And it was the ministry of the word that brought the greatest impact for the church. Every leader benefits from identifying what tasks bring the greatest return.

Some leaders delegate items they don't enjoy doing so that others will do them. But serving leaders delegate tasks that are not priorities so they can focus on things which bring the greatest impact to their organization.

Delegate tasks that are not strengths.

The scripture passage doesn't say what each apostle's strengths were, but in a group of 12 they surely were not all gifted in the administration required for providing food to the widows. The result was that the job was not done well, and the complaints revealed the need for a change. The apostles found persons who were better suited for this work and delegated it to them. Like many leaders, when the work began, they needed to do it all themselves, but as the work grew, they needed to identify the strengths of others and focus on the things they did best—in this case, teaching the word.

Some leaders hesitate to delegate to others things they don't do well assuming that others will also do it poorly or not enjoy it. But serving leaders humbly acknowledge that they are not gifted in every area and that God has designed others to do well in these areas. They identify those strengths and delegate tasks that fit the giftings on their team.

Delegate tasks that strengthen the team.

The seven leaders who were chosen had undeveloped potential that was not being used to the benefit of the church. They were ready and willing to do more, they just needed to be empowered by the leaders! This is true in many churches, businesses and non-profits.

Some leaders look for tasks that need to be done and find people to do them. But serving leaders look for people to develop and delegate tasks that will grow them.

For further reflection and discussion:

- In the past, how have I decided what to delegate? How well did it work? What can I learn from the early church leaders about how they chose what should be delegated?
- What tasks are highest priority for my leadership? (List at least 10 tasks that you do regularly and reflect on which ones bring the greatest return to your organization. Rank them in order of what impact they bring the organization. The ones on the bottom of your list are key items to delegate.)
- What tasks am I currently doing that someone else on my team could do better than I can? For each task, identify the person(s) who would do that task well.
- Reflect on two or three key members of my team. For each one, identify a task that would take them to the next level of growth and development. Develop a plan to delegate that task to them as soon as it is practical.

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll look at how we decide to whom we delegate tasks.

Delegation: The Who

Issue #427, July 15, 2026

When you're ready to delegate, how do you decide who should receive delegate tasks? That's the focus of this issue and again, we look to the example of the apostles.

¹In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ²So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." (Acts 6:1-4, NIV).

In this situation the apostles were ready to delegate the task of distributing the food and asked the group to choose 7 men for the work. But in verse three they specified criteria for the selection process that can help us choose the right people for any delegated task.

Delegate to people that you know.

The apostles requested the group to choose people "who are known." They wanted people who were not strangers but were well known by everyone involved. Some attributes, especially skills that are obvious might be known quickly. But deeper issues of the heart like integrity, motives, attitude towards authority, response to conflict, etc. will only be known over time. Before you delegate, ask, "How well do I know this person?" The level that you know them can help determine the level of delegation. The less you know them, the more cautious you should be about giving them responsibilities.

Some leaders quickly give significant responsibilities to people that seem capable but whom they don't really know well. But serving leaders take time to get to know people especially before they delegate significant tasks to them.

Delegate to people that are aligned.

The second criterion the apostles mentioned was that they be "full of the Spirit." This was critical because they would need the guidance and power of the Spirit in their new role. But it was also important because it meant that they were aligned with the vision and mission of the apostles and moving in the same direction or in the same 'spirit'. Before delegating to someone ask how closely they are aligned with you. Are they aligned with the vision, mission, values of your organization? Do they understand the way you do what you do? This is especially important when people have come to you from another organization. Don't delegate to misaligned people, no matter how gifted they are!

Some leaders delegate to people who are qualified to do the task with little assessment of their alignment with the organization. But serving leaders look for alignment of vision, mission and values before selecting someone for the task.

Delegate to people that are experienced.

The apostles wanted people who were "full of the Spirit and wisdom." This role required wisdom, knowing what to do in a challenging situation. These leaders would be stepping into a situation already marked by dissatisfied members who were complaining. The people selected would need wisdom to navigate complaints, cultural expectations, communication,

logistics, and the opposition they would soon face. This was not a place for people with no leadership experience. The principle here is to delegate tasks in proportion to the experience that someone has. The new task may stretch their capacity and help them grow to the next level but should not be completely out of their realm of experience.

Some leaders delegate tasks far above a person's experience and capacity. But serving leaders match the person's capacity to the task at hand.

For further reflection and discussion:

- Reflect on your experience with delegation, especially a time when you chose the wrong person for a task. What can I learn from that experience from this story of the apostles?
- Consider three or four people on your team. Evaluate each one by asking these questions: How well do I know them? How aligned are they with our direction? What level of experience do they have? After you evaluate them, identify a task that you should delegate to that person. If your assessment reveals that you should not yet delegate a task to them, what will you do to help them move in the right direction?
- What can I do with someone who has potential for growth but has little experience?

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll examine how to delegate effectively.

Delegation: The How

Issue #428, July 29, 2026

We've answered several questions about delegation from the story of the apostles in the early church. We looked at *why we don't* delegate, *why we should* delegate, how we determine *what to delegate* and *to whom* we should delegate. Now, how do we delegate?

¹ In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Hellenistic Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. ² So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. ³ Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them ⁴ and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." ⁵ This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. ⁶ They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. (Acts 6:1-6, NIV).

This passage doesn't give many details of how to delegate but it does provide guidelines that can help us learn how to effectively delegate tasks to others.

Delegate by clarifying the task.

"We will turn this responsibility over to them." The apostles made it clear that the task they were handing over was the work of the distribution of food to the widows. The desired outcome was also clear—to solve the complaints about inequitable distribution. The limits of the task were also identified. The apostles were *not* turning over the "ministry of the word" to these new leaders.

Some leaders delegate a task without being crystal clear about the expected outcomes and limits of authority being granted. But serving leaders take time to clarify exactly what is being delegated, what outcomes are expected, and what levels of authority are being granted.

Delegate by releasing responsibility for the task.

The apostles said they would "turn this...over to them." They deliberately released responsibility to the new leaders who would now be fully responsible for the distribution of food. Since the men chosen were "full of the spirit and wisdom" they were released to do the task. I love the African proverb about delegation, "If you give someone a goat, let go of the rope!"

Many leaders assign tasks to others but don't actually release them to do the work. They constantly check on progress or micromanage the way the work is being done—or even step back in and do it themselves. But once serving leaders have clarified the task and the level of authority granted, they release the person to do the work!

Delegate by establishing accountability for the task.

"They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them." This was a public act that demonstrated the trust and authority granted by the apostles. At the same time, it showed that while the new leaders were trusted and released to work, they were still accountable to the apostles. Releasing responsibility does not eliminate accountability.

Some leaders release tasks to others and then don't establish clear accountability for the work. But serving leaders clarify accountability when they release authority. They proactively establish appropriate methods of reporting and assessment from the beginning.

Delegation is a powerful tool to multiply leaders in your organization. It's not easy to do well, and every leader makes mistakes along the way. But you can learn to do it and the results will be worth the effort! (See below for a free resource that can help.)

For further reflection and discussion:

Identify a task that you should delegate to someone you lead. Then work through the questions below to develop a plan of how you will delegate the task.

Clarify.

- What is the task?
- What is the goal of delegating the task?
- What level of authority am I granting with the task? (Do I expect the person to follow my instructions, recommend a plan of action for my approval, or use their own judgment to complete the task?)

Release responsibility.

- When will I release the responsibility for the task to this person?
- Who else needs to know about this change of responsibility?
- What will I do to resist the urge to step in and take the work back?

Establish accountability.

- When will I plan to meet with the leader and review progress on the new task?
- What will I do if corrections need to be made?
- Have I clearly communicated this plan to the person you want to take on the new task?

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

*For a framework to help you delegate tasks and provide the needed training and accountability for the assignment, you may find the LeadersServe DELEGATE Tool helpful. Download it [here](#).