

Study 2 – Strategic Care

As a church grows bigger, the problem of caring gets more and more difficult. The fact is, it gets hard to even know people's names – let alone their needs. So what can a church actually do to "help caring happen"? Let's take a quick tour of the New Testament and find out.

Read Acts 6:1-7

These are the very earliest days of the surging growth of Christianity... and right from the start, the brand new "church" had problems.

What was the issue people were complaining about?

What underlying causes does the passage suggest?

Up to this point, people were bringing their financial contributions directly to the Apostles, who presumably organized distribution to the needy members of the fellowship. (See Acts 4:32-27) Now, however, there are simply too many disciples to keep up with!

What are the priorities of the Apostles? (v2 and v4)

What system do the apostles organize?

Who co-ordinates the caring, and what qualifications do they need?

What can we learn from the solution the Apostles proposed?

The problem of caring for a fast-growing church family presented two dangers – division, and diversion. **Division**, because if care wasn't wisely managed, there was potential for bad feeling between groups. And **Diversions**, because if the apostles stopped teaching the word to "wait on tables," the work of the gospel would grind to a halt.

What was the ultimate outcome of the Apostles' strategy? (v7)

What's in a Name?

There's no concrete evidence that the strategy the Apostles came up with for the care of the Jerusalem church became the "rule" for every church – and there's no record in this account of any official "name" for the group. Later, in 1 Timothy 3, Paul tells Timothy to appoint Overseers, and male and female **deacons** to care for the church. The word "deacon" simply means "servant," and wasn't necessarily intended to remain as an official title. More essential, though, is the quality of life these "servants" are to demonstrate.

Bible Study - Introducing the On-Call Care Team

Read the following list of qualities that Paul says should be evident in these “servants.”

Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons.

In the same way, deaconesses are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus.

As well as being “worthy of respect,” what key qualities will mark the life of a ...

Male deacon

Female deacon

Paul says these “servants” must first be tested.” What type of testing do you think he would have had in mind?

Why do you think these “servants” would gain such good standing and great assurance? (Look back to John 13:34-35, and 1 John 4:7,11-12)

The MPC On-Call Care Team

Because God has demonstrated his love to us in Christ, our goal is to be a church that cares. The answer to the question “Who Cares?” should be a resounding “We do”... from everyone! But like the Jerusalem Church in Acts 6, the logistics of care management need to be carefully worked out. That’s why we’re appointing the “On-Call Care Team” to act as our “deacons.” It’s not intended that the team will do all the “caring” – on the contrary, (as in Acts) – they’ll help co-ordinate the “distribution” of our time, energy and finances so that those who need help can receive it in a timely way.

The goal of the Care Team isn’t just to help you... but to help you help others!

What resources do you think our On-Call Care Team should have access to?

Are there ways that you can help the Care Team to help others? What practical helping skills do you have?

If you haven’t already volunteered your time or skills, please let your growth group leader know!

We plan to fund our care-team activities with our Christmas and Easter offerings. The care team would then have the ability to distribute these discretionary funds through the year to whatever needs arise. Please plan ahead, so you can contribute to this fund.

Bible Study - Introducing the On-Call Care Team

Showing our Faith by What We Do...

In John 13:35, Jesus says "By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." The way we put love into action is the public advertisement of the fact we are followers of Jesus. James says much the same. We should put our faith on display by what we do...

¹⁴What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him?
¹⁵Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. ¹⁶If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? ¹⁷In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. ¹⁸But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and **I will show you my faith by what I do.** (Jam 2)

That's a thought captured by the following mpc core commitment... which our On-Call Care Team will be working hard to put into action. Please pray for the team, and offer as much support as you can.

Our MPC Core Commitment on Caring

We are committed to practical love, demonstrated in the way we care well for all age groups within our church family, and help one another through all of life's ages and stages. (1 Tim 5:1-4, James 2:17)



Need help? Or know somebody who does? Call the team any time for practical help, or an encouraging chat... or to let us know about someone in our church family who needs a hand.

On-call Care Team 04009 32009