



**LEADERSHIP
EDGE INC.**

Managing for the Glory of God

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.

Acts 6:1–3 (ESV)

In every organization, whether it is a family, a business or a church, there are processes to manage and people to lead.¹ Knowing the difference between the two is crucial for performing either effectively. Managers aim for consistent operation of processes that consistently accomplish reliable results. Examples of this can be a family's weekly laundry or a company's weekly production of widgets. Along with good leaders, all organizations need good managers who manage reliable processes that produce consistent results.

According to Acts 16:1–3, the early church had a process that needed management. The process was the daily distribution of resources to the poor members of the church. Unfortunately, the apostles were not managing it well, and a whole group of people was not being served well (Acts 6:1–3). The apostles' profile of who would best manage this process gives qualifications that are not technical but are spiritual and virtuous. There were no requirements given for prior experience in operations or distribution. But the candidates needed to be of good repute, full of the Spirit and wisdom. Why is that?

When we began the search for the person who would take my place as President of Leadership Edge, I sought the advice of a seasoned and godly corporate executive. He told me that the next president could develop any missing technical competence on the job and that we should hire for character. By this, he meant that character and competence are both needed and need to continue to develop—but that in an executive hire, you must be sure that their character is sound from the outset.

The seven men chosen in Acts 6 would have time to learn how to manage best the distribution process—and it was vital for them to do so. Their godliness and integrity must be clear from the outset, for these would guide them in managing this process in a God-honoring and people-serving way. And in this small part of the church's overall mission, the church would move forward.

So back to the weekly laundry and weekly production of widgets. These, too, are areas where we should strive for excellence guided by our godliness and integrity. As God's man or woman, every process we manage provides us an opportunity to serve His purposes for His glory. This God-centered perspective on managing keeps us from demeaning managing tasks as menial and unimportant. Christian author Os Guinness illustrates this point by appealing to historic examples of Christian leaders who encouraged the pursuit of excellence in everyday practices for the glory of God, stating, "[Martin] Luther declared that God and the angels smile when a



man changes a diaper. [Likewise,] William Tyndale wrote that if our desire is to please God, pouring water, washing clothes, cobbling shoes, and preaching the Word 'is all one.'ⁱⁱⁱ

For Martin Luther, the importance was not the nature of the task but that it was done in faith. In other words, were diapers changed out of faith in and obedience to God? Doing it in faith elevates anything we deem as menial or meaningless to important and significant.

Whatever form of diaper changing, pouring water, washing clothes, cobbling shoes, or preaching is before us today, may we find in it a process to manage to the glory of God. In doing so, may we use everything He has built in us to do it well by our faith and obedience. And may God and His angels smile. Yes, and forevermore may they smile.

For Reflection

1. What are the tasks to manage for you today? What is your perspective or attitude toward these tasks? If others are involved with you in managing these tasks, what is their perspective or attitude toward them?
2. How might you do these tasks in faith—trusting in God and doing the work for His glory and honor?
3. Today's meditation reminded us: "As God's man or woman, every process we manage provides us an opportunity to serve His purposes for His glory." So, pray over your processes to manage today, devoting them to God and asking Him to build in you a heart that longs for Him to be glorified through your service in these contexts.

ⁱ Dr. John Kotter's perspective on the difference between management and leadership has been a great help to me for decades. His thoughts are captured in his book, *A Force for Change*.

ⁱⁱ Os Guinness, *The Call*, Rev. ed., p. 65. Here's a fuller statement from Martin Luther in *The Estate of Marriage*, Part 3: "Now you tell me, when a father goes ahead and washes diapers or performs some other mean task for his child, and someone ridicules him as an effeminate fool, though that father is acting in the spirit just described and in Christian faith, my dear fellow you tell me, which of the two is most keenly ridiculing the other? God, with all his angels and creatures, is smiling, not because that father is washing diapers, but because he is doing so in Christian faith. Those who sneer at him and see only the task but not the faith are ridiculing God with all his creatures, as the biggest fool on earth."