

April 21, 2024

God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing

The Book of Acts Pt 9 - Acts 6:1-7

Growing Pains & Blessings

Subtitled: Serving God's Way

Our theme for 2024 is God's Good News Story, Continued... ***"The Church Alive & Growing"***. For the past few weeks, we have been looking at the basic descriptions and the **true call & purpose of the Church**... ***To be powerful Witnesses of God's Good News Story, motivated by love, empowered by the Holy Spirit.***

Today's passage found in Acts 6:1-7 again gives us a example to follow and a model emulated by the Church of the 1st Century that we can learn from and apply as the Church in the 21st Century era.

If you remember from previous passages the early church modeled three distinct characteristics:

Continuous Devotion & Worship

Common Care & Concern

Courageous Obedience & Faithfulness

Last week we focused on the 3rd characteristic: Courageous Obedience & Faithfulness. Where we saw Peter and the other Apostles choosing to Stand For God's Truth over Human Traditions and laws.

Today's passage details an issue that arose based on the 2nd characteristic; **Common Care & Concern**. It appears that they were continually ministering and serving one

another by collecting and distributing food and other items need by those in need (particularly those who were widows). A problem or should we say an "oportunity for growth" came up.

Let's read it from Acts 6:1-7...

Acts 6: 1-7...Now at this time, as the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint developed on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving (<1248> διακονία diakonia) of food. ² So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the Word of God in order to serve (<1248> διακονία diakonia) tables. ³ Instead, brothers and sisters, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. ⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry (<1248> διακονία diakonia) of the Word." ⁵ The announcement found approval with the whole congregation; and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch. ⁶ And they brought these men before the apostles; and after praying, they laid their hands on them. ⁷ The word of God kept spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.

Someone has said, “If you ever find the perfect church, don’t join it because you will spoil it!” One Pastor often tells the new members class, “I promise that if you join this church, we will at some point disappoint you.” Or, as someone else said, “To dwell above with the saints we love, O that will be glory! But to dwell below with the saints we know, well, that’s a different story!”

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Every church has issues, just like every family, every business, etc. We are imperfect humans and thus, occasionally we will run into conflict with others. So the reality is not “IF” we will have conflicts or issues, it is “WHEN” we will have conflicts and issues. Therefore, it behooves us to plan ahead and be ready WHEN conflicts or issues arise.

A key point to state is that as Christians we are to **Love God and Love One Another** (our church motto and purpose statement). If we truly Love God we will Love One Another. But practically and humanly speaking, it is not always that simple and precise. Our human nature sometimes overrides our spiritual nature and we respond in ways that do not please God or build peaceful relationships with one another. Like anything else in this life, you need to prepare and practice to be loving and encouraging. We must be Intentional, Deliberate and Consistent in our desires and actions of love and peace.

Let’s look at our the early church dealt with their “ISSUES” and what ‘Conflict Resolution” principles we can glean from them.

A Point to make is that Luke in his writing style records events on a dual focus level. He records events that are inward focused issues concerning the church itself, and alternates them with how the church relates to the world around them. Last week we looked at how Peter and the Apostles dealt with the political and religious leaders outside the church. Today, we deal with another internal church matter. It appears that Luke is trying to show us that the church must balance our ministry between both internal ministry as well as outward or world impact ministry.

What Was & Was Not Done:

- Ministry & Growth Was Taking Place
- A Problem or Issue Came to Light in the Midst of Ministry
- Those who brought forth the issue were not shunned or looked down upon. Their concerns were taken into sincere and prayerful consideration.
- The Leaders brought the issue before the congregation and clarified their roles and the priority of the leaders.
- They suggested a plan of action. (We can deduce that they spent some time in prayer and wise consultation among themselves to agree upon a singular solution to propose)
- The congregation was consulted and asked to bring forth qualified men of faith and the Holy Spirit.

- The chosen ones were presented and approved by the congregation.
- The Leaders prayed and laid hands on the selected men. (i.e. Ordained and authorized them for the task)
- The Priority of Preaching, Teaching and Sharing the Good News was emphasized and put into practice and there was great growth, harmony and obedience.

Practical Lessons We Can Glean From This Passage:

1. Problems and conflicts will come therefore, it is imperative that both leaders and members communicate clearly, pray fervently and respond lovingly.
2. The Church should seek harmony, unity and peace; thus, we need to be intentional peace-seekers and peace-makers.
3. Everyone is valued and cared for equally. No respecter of persons or favoritism should be a part of the Church.
4. **As the Church,** leaders and members need to know and agree upon the main purpose of the Church, i.e. ***To be powerful Witnesses of God's Good News Story, motivated by love, empowered by the Holy Spirit.*** Every believer has a spiritual gift and as a Church, we should strive to let people serve according their gifting and calling. There are people who are called to be in positions of leadership, and they need to be faithful, spirit-filled individuals whose main task is to make sure the Word of God and the Good News Story is a Priority. Note these verses: *Acts 6...² So the twelve summoned*

the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables."³ Instead, brothers and sisters, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.⁴ But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

5. **The Church,** both leaders and members, need to be people of "***good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.*** (vs.3) Moral and spiritual character are vital.

6. Church leaders and members alike are called and commissioned to serve under the authority of the church. The Church should acknowledge and support the work and ministry of its leaders and lay ministers alike.

7. We can expect God to bless and grow His Church if we are faithful to His will and plan. ***Acts 6:7... The word of God kept spreading; and the number of the disciples continued to increase greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were becoming obedient to the faith.***

In Summary: To solve problems in the local church, both leaders and people must be spiritual people in submission to God's Word and His Holy Spirit! <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-16-solving-problems-church-acts-61-7>

With a commitment to Loving God and Loving One Another we can make a impact in the world for God's Kingdom and fulfill our calling ***To be powerful Witnesses of God's Good News Story, motivated by love, empowered by the Holy Spirit.***

