

Acts 6:1-7

The Church Gets Organized

Intro: How many of you like yard work - Therapeutic

A) How many of you like weeds?

B) Hate Weeds - Adam – Stupid Adam

C) Ignore Weeds? Grow – Weeds that look like small trees - where did that come from.

D) Of all the plants in my backyard – weeds grow the fastest!

Whether you are talking about a home, your own heart, marriage, a friendship or even a Church – Weeds left unattended will cause problems

A) One of Satan's strategies to weaken the Church or a home is he tries to plant weeds in there.

B) If they are not dealt with they will over run everything and bring destruction.

1) **Seen attack by Persecution –**

C) Seen Satan try to attack the church through corruption Hypocrisy – Ananias and Sapharia

D) Now we see he is trying to attack the church through the Weed of Dissension

E) That is what we see taking place here in Acts 6 – the weed planted is murmur!
One of the deadliest kinds.

Read V.1-7

Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was **multiplying**, {Note} there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists, because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution

Set the Scene: We have seen that the Church was growing – Some of them were living communally by necessity. Explain

A) Group meal times - That is where this problem arose. There arose a complaint.

B) There were in the early church in Jerusalem two kinds of Jews who had become Christians.

Grecian or Hellenist and Hebrews – Difference?

C) During the days of Alexander the Great, Greek culture, style of dress, and philosophy of life permeated the then-known world.

D) Known as Jews of the Dispersion

E) From one of the invasions – they were sent fleeing

They were dispersed throughout the Middle East

The Jews who were dispersed into these other regions had adopted Grecian ways.

A) They were the group today – Hipsters – up on the culture of the times. –

B) They spoke Greek not Hebrew

1) These were Known as Hellenist

C) The Other Jews, referred to as Hebrews, remained true to the old ways and traditions of Judaism.

1) Traditionalist – they had stayed in Jerusalem

D) Over time “The Hebrew Jews” looked down on the Grecian Jews as compromising, **“second-class” Jews.**

Now it seems that at least a perception of that attitude had crept into the early Church.

A) The Hellenistic Jews had felt that their Widows were being slighted or neglected in the daily

B) There arose a Complaint = **A Murmur – A secret displeasure not openly avowed.**

C) Murmur – Usually Starts as a secret – over coffee – *can you believe...*

“You know what really bugs me.... I just don't understand how”

A) That is how it starts – and like a weed – it begins to grow ! – Not dealt with it grows

B) Note this was a perception – that the Hellenistic widows were being neglected –

1) Not sure it was a reality.

C) But the murmur is spreading – dissension is building

D) Crazy -Something so simple as an extra piece of bread or a larger helping of mash potatoes

1)had the possibility to destroy something so sweet and precious that God had begun.

E)The early church is suddenly not unified – no longer together in One accord –

1)With all things in Common

Murmuring is always wrong. Always unhealthy.

A)Murmuring brought the judgment of God upon the children of Israel in the wilderness, in OT days.

B)Murmuring is usually the mark of cantankerous, discontented, unhappy spirit

1)It is the indication that there is a problem with the heart.

One hot day a family traveling down the highway between Johnstown pa and Jamestown pa stopped at Farmer Jones's place to ask for a drink of water, which he gladly gave them.

He asked them **"Where are you headed?"**.

They told him "We are moving from Johnstown to Jamestown to live,"

"Can you tell us what the people there are like?"

Farmer Jones asked "Well, what kind of people did you find where you lived before?"

To which they replied - "Oh, they were the very worst kind!". "They were gossipy and unkind and indifferent. We are glad to move away."

Farmer Jones replied "Well, I am afraid you will find the same in Jamestown,".

The next day another car stopped, and the same conversation took place. These people were moving to Jamestown, too.

They asked "What kind of neighbors will we find there?"

"Well, "Farmer Jones, asked "what kind of neighbors did you have where you lived before?"

The couple responded "Oh, they were the very best! **They were so kind and considerate that it almost broke our hearts to have to move away.**"

FJ replied "Well, you will find exactly the same kind again,"

What is going on in your own heart will play a part in how you see others

A)When believers are unhappy and begin to murmur, **the first place to look for the problem is in their own hearts.**

B)**Note: This problem Ch. 6 we are not sure – legit problem or just a perception -**

Know this if You see a problem –

A)Chances are it has been revealed to you because God wants you to be a **part of the Solution.**

B)See a problem what Should you do first – **Pray** – ask the Lord – what can I do to make this situation better? **How can I be used to fix.**

1)See a hole – How can I be used to be a plug?

D) See a person struggling – How can I be used to come alongside of them.

When you pray – God will speak to your heart !

A)Then you can come with a solution to a problem.

B)They didn't pray or go to the apostles for counsel –

1)Note - there **arose** a complaint – a rumbling

C)the implication from the text is the murmuring had become so loud –

1)Became so loud the Apostles heard about it! -

D)And When they heard about it – they dealt with it right away.

1)You got to pull that weed – Leader can't run from confrontation –

E)1st Pray and then talk to the **RIGHT people!**

The Church get organized

A)The problem that existed was fixed by the Holy Spirit leading the **leaders to organize** the church in a different format so as to solve the problem.

B)Important to note- because sometimes in the church people think that organization is bad.

1)Organization somehow quenches the Holy Spirit

C)We just like to go with the flow bro!!

God is a God of order!

A) I read my Bible, I discover my God is a very organized God.

B) He instructed Paul to write in the book of Corinthians about the gifts of the Holy Spirit - *let everything be done decently and in order, in an organized fashion.*

C) God is organized there is a precise order to how the Earth revolves around the sun each day!

1) We can chart a sunrise and sunset every day!

D) There is a precise order to the universe!

Any study on human anatomy quickly reveals that God designed the body in an organized way.

A) The body of Christ is no different – there has to be order.

B) The church is a BODY – a living organism

1) It's living, moving, expanding. But unless you organize an organism, you have a problem.

C) The Church is both a organism and an organization

D) And the more people you have, the more organization is necessary.

Now you can organize things to the point where you do quench the Holy Spirit.

A) So wisdom is needed. –

B) In this passage we can learn three things from the how the early church approached this situation

C) Also see – 4 positive results to this situation

Their organization involved:

#1 A Determined Priority Acts 6:2-4

2 Then the twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. 3 Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; 4 but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

Now, it would be very easy to read that as though the apostles were saying, We are too good or important to wait on tables –

A) So Chose 7 guys who are not as important as us

B) That was not the case at all.

1) Remember: Jesus had washed their dirty stinky feet – do likewise

C) Jesus taught them – Greatest among you must become the servant of all.

1) Jesus had modeled for them – **Servant leadership.**

D) They were not, in any sense, downgrading the ministry of serving tables

Their response was a matter of Priority rather than Preference.

A) They simply understood – we can't do everything – and we must **give** our priority to Preaching and prayer.

B) It was a matter of Calling rather than an issue of need.

C) Here is what the apostles were saying: **Our calling is not the distribution of food.**

1) Our calling is the distribution of the Word.

It is interesting that the same word used in v.2 for serve is the same word used in V.4 for ministry.

A) So in essence the Apostles were saying: We will serve the word –

B) You appoint men who can serve the food!

C) The Apostles wisely understood that they couldn't do everything – if tried something would suffer.

1) Their priority was to serve the word

Ephesians 4:11-12 says that "the Lord gave to the Church apostles, teaching pastors, and evangelists to perfect the saints so they could do the work of the ministry."

A) It is interesting to think about the fact that they didn't have the NT as we know it today.

B) It hadn't been written yet - so what were they teaching?

1)The teachings of Jesus – they had been taught by him for 3 yrs

C)So they were no doubt teaching the things they had learned from Jesus

D)As well as what the Holy Spirit was imparting to them.

1)James gave us the book of James – Peter 1-2 John 1-3

One of the things that we need to learn from this today is that God's word has a priority in the church

A) **Paul's instructions to Timothy:**

“Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, **rightly dividing** the word of truth.” 2 Timothy 2:15

B)1 Timothy 4:13 "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine."

C)That refers to reading the text, explaining the text, and applying the text--**a good definition of expository preaching.**

D)In verses 14-16 Paul says, "**Neglect not the gift that is in you . . . Meditate upon these things; give yourself wholly to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine.**" 1 Timothy 4:14-16

E)Homiletics professor Dr. Nathaniel Van Cleave – “**if you preach for 1 hour to 100 people and you are ill prepared – you just wasted 100 hrs of God's time.**”

Living by priorities requires total commitment.

Note The phrase "**give ourselves continually**" that stresses the disciples' commitment.

A)Living by priorities requires a total commitment

B)The calling of a Pastor is one of Saturating yourself in the word of God.

C)One of the first things I ask a guy who says he feels called to Pastoral ministry

1)is tell me about your devotional life.

D)Tell me where are you reading – studying – what books are you reading right now.

1)The guy who has that calling will be one who has a strong desire and discipline to get into the word.

So Their organization involved that the Apostles Determined a Priority.

#2 Proven men were chosen

A)Had the apostles done everything – no one else would have grown or had an opportunity to develop their gifts.

B)The Apostles want them to be a part of the Solution – Choose 7 men

D.L. Moody used to say that “it was better to put ten men to work than to try to do the work of ten men.”

C)Why seven men? – They were probably following an organizational structure – they saw in Judaism

1)In a Jewish community all of the public affairs were overseen by 7 Elders.

Notice the Criteria of the Proven men

A)They were to be "**men of good reputation**," i.e., they were to have a good witness in the congregation.

B)They were to be men of good character who could be trusted, men who had already won the confidence of others.

C)From Among you - Already stood out – Guys who were already doing the work

1)Never be surprised – that Guy!

#2 They were to be men full of the Holy Spirit.

A)In Scripture, to be “full of” means “to be controlled by.” **These were to be men who were controlled by the Holy Spirit.**

B)Men who were spirit led -

1)They were not controlled by their passions

C)They were not controlled by ambition – want of Power

D)These were men who reflected and radiated the Holy Spirit – Gentle – loving

Full of the Holy Spirit also would refer to men who were empowered by the Holy Spirit

A) In other words they were not doing the work in their own strength!

B) They were to chosen men who were spirit led and spirit empowered.

1) Men who were characterized by their Dependence upon God more than anything else.

Full of Wisdom:

A) Wisdom is knowledge applied –

B) Someone who is full of wisdom is one who knows the word of God

1) and knows how to apply it to practical situations.

C) I like this – they had to be men who were Proven – Spirit filled and who had scriptural knowledge.

D) Interesting that their primary job was to hand out food. - Seriousness of service –

A But a bigger reason- they were going to be serving people- needed to be men full of the word

A) Full of the Spirit – men of integrity

B) Men who would have a spiritual sensitivity to see needs

C) Men who knew the word enough to bring counsel and wisdom to meet those needs with the word.

Acts 6:5-6 **And the saying pleased the whole multitude. And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit, and Philip, Prochorus, {Pra/ko/ross} Nicanor, {Na/ku/nor} Timoan, Parme/nas, and Nicolas, a proselyte from Antioch, 6 whom they set before the apostles; and when they had prayed, they laid hands on them.**

There is something noteworthy in this list: All of these names are Greek names.

A) That means they were probably chosen from among the complaining party,

B) They were part of the Hellenistic - Greek-speaking Jews.

C) Their organization involved #3 Practical wisdom involved in the solution

The Church BODY said: The problem is the greek widows feel like they are being neglected –

A) Lets choose guys who will have an extra sensitivity toward those who are Greek widows

B) Really smart – Nehemiah – positioned the men on the wall – closest to their homes

1) Wasn't a matter so much of convenience as it was INTEREST.

C) These guys are going to work harder more diligent more precise – on the area of the wall that protects their home.

Their organization involved

#1 A determined priority

#2 Proven men

#3 Practical wisdom

Three Powerful Results Acts 6:7

1st Then the word of God spread,

A) What does it mean when it says "the word of God spread or increased"?

B) This phrase is used several times in Scripture and every time it means that the word of God abounded more, i.e., it was more widely proclaimed.

C) Obviously the apostles now had more time to speak, to utter the words of God,

1) Second, as a direct result of that,

2nd and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem,

A) Note Disciples – not believers – people going deeper – becoming more committed

B) That is always the effect of the abounding of the word of God.

1) Believers become disciples

C) People grow in their faith!

3rd Surprise and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

A) Think about this Any priest walking into the temple on the first Good Friday, seeing the veil rent from top to bottom,

B)Knowing – something something miraculous had taken place.

C)Veil was massive – 10 inches thick – and it took 100 priest to hang it

D)God opened the door – Holy of Holy

1)Access through the blood of Jesus

Four Powerful Results to this new organization

V.7

1st the word of God spread

2nd the number of disciples multiplied greatly

3rd Many Priest were obedient to the faith

4th Two of the seven were raised up to greater ministry. – Naturally happens sometimes

A)Stephen – preacher – led to Paul's conversion

B)Philip became an evangelist

C)But 5 stayed Deacons – unknowns

Behind the scenes

1)Don't hear much about any of these other guys

D)Oregon – Let Deacons be Deacons

Don't be afraid of Organization – it is necessary and important – helps the word go forth

See a problem – Be a part of the solution

- **Don't add to the burden – be a burden lifter**

Delegation is Essential in Organization

- **Helps others grow – discover their gifts**
- **Gives others and opportunity**
- **Helps everyone use their gifts and do what they are called to do the most**