

Acts 6.1-7

Risen Savior in the House

LARGE Church in BIG CITY had BIG, BAD, FIGHT – Not too LONG Ago

SO Bad > Different FACTIONS filed LAWSUITS against One Another

EACH Side CLAIMED Right to Church's EXTENSIVE & EXPENSIVE Property

JUDGE in STATE Court sent case to CHURCH'S DENOMINATIONAL COURT

WHOLE CITY followed DAILY PROCEEDINGS with INTEREST

HOW did this BEGIN Anyway?? – CHURCH DINNER – Highlight of Church

1 of ELDERS got SMALLER SLICE of HAM than CHILD Seated NEXT to him

Christ is Risen! But did you see the Way that Elder Looked at Me?

Christ is Risen! But that Small Group Leader called me by the Wrong Name Again!

Christ is Risen! But here I am stuck working with those Sunday School kids Again!

Christ is Risen! But that Pastor's comments always make me so mad!

Christ is Risen! But those People in THAT church are a bunch of HYPOCRITES!

TINIEST EVENT in CHURCH LIFE > Can be HUGE and UNFORGIVABLE!

WE Gather almost 2000 yrs AFTER Jesus ROSE from the DEAD

Surely those who WITNESSED the RISEN LORD were BETTER Christians!

EARLY Church SAME POTENTIAL for Difficulty as MODERN Church: People!

1. Problem 2. Possibilities 3. Proposal 4. Principle 5. Progress

1. Problem

v. 1 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.

a. Background

1) Diaspora > JEWS OUTSIDE of Palestine v. 1 ...the Grecian Jews...

2 EXILES in OT History – Israel > Assyria / Judah > Babylon – MOST Stayed
 Several Dispersions in INTER-TESTAMENTAL Years – Egypt, Greece, Rome

NT Time – 10% ROMAN Empire JEWS – 4 Million OUTSIDE Palestine,
 3 Million IN Palestine, 1 Million in EASTERN Roman Empire

JEWISH PILGRIMS to JERUSALEM for FEAST of PENTECOST...

...Parthians, Medes and Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and
 Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya
 near Cyrene; visitors from Rome...Cretans and Arabs... Acts 2.8-11

For Moses has been preached *in every city from the earliest times* Acts 15.21

v. 1 lit. Greek-speaking Jews...the Hebraic Jews > BOTH Living IN Jerusalem

CONTRAST > SPEAKERS of Greek AND Hebrew, very like ARAMAIC

CAPITAL CITY of their FAITH > HOME of TEMPLE, PRIESTS, FEASTS

SYNAGOGUES were SEPARATED by LANGUAGE // Early CHURCHES

APOSTLES had OVERALL LEADERSHIP of ALL CHURCHES

2) Distribution > Jewish LAW Required Community Support of WIDOWS

Bring all the tithes of that year's produce and store it in your towns, so that the...
widows who live in your towns may come and eat and be satisfied, and so that the
 LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands. Deuteronomy 14.28-29

Administered by TEMPLE AUTHORITIES > Relations NOW STRAINED

REVENGE on Apostles by REFUSAL to CHRISTIAN WIDOWS, esp Greeks

MANY ELDERLY JEWS > Come to Jerusalem for BURIAL

One Palestinian RABBI > Dead will Rise ONLY in ISRAEL

Righteous DEAD Buried in OTHER LANDS > Unpleasant FUTURE

Rabbi: Will ROLL UNDERGROUND all the way BACK to Jerusalem > 1st BTJ??

EARLY Church TOOK Up this RESPONSIBILITY and CARE for WIDOWS
 JAMES – Jesus ½ Brother > PASTOR of the FIRST CHURCH of JERUSALEM
 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: *to look after
 orphans and widows in their distress...* James 1.27

Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need...1 Timothy 5.3

10 Verses of DETAILS HOW to Perform MINISTRY of MERCY to Widows

b. Physical > WIDOWS were HUNGRY > Creates Sense of URGENCY

All the believers were together and had *everything in common*. Selling their
 possessions and goods, they gave to anyone *as he had need*. Acts 2.44-45

Now APOSTLES – Must DROP what they're DOING and HELP NOW!

Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If 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? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not
 accompanied by action, is dead. James 2.15-17

c. Organizational > TOO Much WORK > TOO Few LABORERS

MINISTRY Leadership ALL in HANDS OF APOSTLES

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching... Acts 2.42

Name PETER Occurs 24 times in first FIVE Chapters of ACTS

120 in Ch 1 > Now 5000 and GROWING + Preaching, Persecution, Prison

1980's > Dayna and I trained PASTORS of the Church of UGANDA

PASTOR over PARISH > 7 to 10 Churches > SMALL Church = 200 Members

d. Spiritual > FRICTION of Cultures, Traditions, Nationalities, Languages

v. 1 the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews

FRUSTRATION and MISUNDERSTANDING > Very COMMON

DIFFERENT Kinds of People LIVE and WORK Together

EASIEST Way to AVOID Misunderstanding > SEPARATE and ISOLATE

Very LIKELY – NO Doctrinal DIFFERENCE – Believed SAME Gospel TRUTHS

DEEP Differences > Tastes in FOODS / MUSICAL Styles / LITERATURE

HEBREWS > characterized by ISOLATION and ETHNO CENTRISM

GRUMBLING Against APOSTLES // Israelites GRUMBLED Against MOSES
 Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "...in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, because he has heard your grumbling against him. Who are we, that you should grumble against us?... You are not grumbling against us, but against the LORD"
 Exodus 16.6-8

Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe... Philippians 2.14-15

CHURCH of Jesus > From its Beginning on Pentecost > INTERNATIONAL
 NO 'CHRISTIAN SEPARATION' > Sign of DISOBEDIENCE and DEFEAT

2. Possibilities

a. Throw Out Complainers > Churches of Different Languages would Form
 Second Apostolic Church of Jerusalem > OPEN Across Street from FIRST
 Sad REALITY > Sunday morning at 11 is the most SEGREGATED hour of the
 American week > Blacks, Whites, Browns, Yellows, and Reds in CHURCHES

b. Shunning > Let them STAY – but make them MISERABLE

“Let them SIT BY THEMSELVES and SEE HOW they LIKE IT”

Let them FIND they're OWN FOOD – AND We Will NOT have to BOTHER!

c. Outvote the Dissenters > DEMOCRATIC Churches

OPERATING MANUAL > Roberts Rules of Order

“Holy Spirit speaks thru vote of 51%” > 49% DISGRUNTLED, DRAGGING

d. Separate > “We will start a PURE CHURCH > Pure Get SMALLER”

Harold Camping of Family Radio: All true Christians - abandon their churches

e. Form Committee > Discussion, Delay, and Problem may DISSOLVE

SAD EXAMPLES > SEEN ALL!! Often Taken in Churches Today

3. Proposal

Ananias & Saphira > DIRECT REVELATION Given to SOLVE PROBLEM

HERE > Apostles make Administrative Decision, Guided by SPIRIT & WORD

a. Walk in the Light

v. 2 the Twelve gathered all the disciples together...

v. 3 seven men from among you who are known to be...

v. 5 This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose...

v. 6 They presented these men to the apostles...

NO Back Room POLITICAL DEALS > NO SECRET MEETINGS

WORST ENEMIES in Church > Are UNSEEN COMPLAINERS ‘They’

‘They’ Don’t Like Ministry – ‘They’ Don’t Like Preaching, Family, FACE

ANY CHANCE I Could MEET ‘They’ and TALK > Oh, No! They’re Afraid!

LINGERING Doubts – Who is THEY? – 2 people or 200?? Here or Gone?

If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin. 1 John 1.7

LUKE > No HINT of WHO is WRONG/RIGHT either GREEK or HEBREW

b. Empowering v. 3 We will turn this responsibility over to them

Response > Prompt, Patient, Non-Defensive > Apostles NOT CLING to Task

Did NOT Feel like they NEEDED to CONTROL EVERY AREA of Church Life

Some churches cannot TIE your Shoes w/out PERMISSION from PASTOR!

GAVE Them TASK and LEADERSHIP OVER the Details of the TASK

MORE Aramaic Speakers in Church than GREEK > But Church wanted BEST

NOT Power Game to MAINTAIN MAJORITY or CONTROL the OUTCOME

ALL SEVEN > Grecian Jews > HELLENISTS Not HEBREWS

Stephen... Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas

Stephen and Philip – See LATER > Other 5 NEVER Again Mentioned in NT

v. 5 Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism > GENTILE PROSELYTE

Usually POLITICAL POWERS Repress COMPLAINING MINORITIES

Here WHOLE SYSTEM is HANDED OVER to OFFENDED MINORITY

1st Recorded Example of AFFIRMATIVE ACTION in HISTORY

ANTICIPATES Discussion on ROLE of NON-JEWS in CHURCH

c. Character First > Priority on SPIRITUAL QUALIFICATIONS

ANYONE Can Wait on TABLES > Boring, Undignified, Monotonous WORK

Just PICK UP Some Guys sitting in BACK ROWS and PUT them to WORK ?

v. 3 Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom.

v. 5 Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit

Church was BORN by Spirit / GUIDED by Spirit / Leaders FILLED w/ Spirit

Both HEAVENLY Minded AND EARTHLY Good

WISDOM > PRACTICAL, UNDERSTANDS Situation, DOWN to EARTH

Character of MESSIAH – Characteristic of MESSIANIC COMMUNITY
 The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him -- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD
 Isaiah 11.2

ONLY God can FORM CHARACTER > Man can Acquire & Refine SKILLS

PASTORAL Selection > Smile, Style, Suit, Spouse, Schooling, Sense of Humor

1980's TAUGHT > Theological College / Highest Level Church of Uganda

Faculty Appointed by BISHOPS of Dioceses > GET RID of BAD APPLES

HIGH Education > LOW Character – Drinkers, Womanizers, Financial Corrupt

PLUS – I was also TEACHER THERE!

SURPRISE! SURPRISE! College Graduates > Drinkers, Womanizers, Corrupt

Few years LATER Evangelical Bishops > CLEANED House RETURNED to God

College had 300 Theological Students // Now 7000 in VARIOUS Faculties

Dayna and I going there in JUNE > M Conf. UGANDA Christian University

God alone has the wisdom, power, and grace to weave the tangled threads of different people, with different cultures, customs, and languages, into a single tapestry of glorious beauty. But he does it through the self-giving love he has placed in his children and the Spirit-guided wisdom he has given to the leaders of his flock.

Dennis Johnson

4. Principles

a. Ministry is Duty of All v. 2 So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together

APOSTLES admitted THEY were CAUSE of PROBLEM > Did TOO Much

LACK of Perspective ? Of Trust? Of Delegating Skill? Of Willing Workers?

Not DOING Ministry > Not Really Stake-Holder in Church / Just Spectator

Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms. If anyone *speaks*, he should do it as one *speaking the very words of God*. If anyone serves, he should do it *with the strength God provides*, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To him be the glory and the power for ever and ever. Amen. 1 Peter 4.10-11

Different LISTS of Spiritual GIFTS > Romans 12, 1 Corinth 12, Ephes 4

Here Peter DIVIDES Ministry into 2 Categories > SPEAKING, SERVING

ROLE of LEADERS is to MULTIPLY – Not MONOPOLIZE – MINISTRY

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, *to prepare God's people for works of service*, so that the body of Christ may be built up Ephesians 4.11-12

Church BEGAN with 12 Leaders > Why NOT 7 Servants from BEGINNING?

BORN out of MINISTRY NEED > ALL COULD SEE and RESPONDED

Early Days > Some MAY ACCUSE 12 of LAZINESS or BUREAUCRACY

CONFLICT between CHURCH STRUCTURE and MINISTRY NEEDS

Ministry DESTROYED when CHURCHES Refuse to CHANGE

Success is last year's nest from which the birds have flown. Henry Ward Beecher

b. All Ministry has Dignity

v. 6 They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them.

OT SYMBOL > SOLEMN CONSECRATION > Public Dedication TO GOD

SERVING was NOT DEMEANING > DIGNITY Seen in High Qualifications

SAME Word used for MINISTRY of WORD and SERVING of TABLES

v. 2 'serve tables' (Greek – *diakonein*)

v. 4 'service of the word' (Greek – *diakonia*)

There is no hint whatever that the apostles regarded social work as inferior to pastoral work, or beneath their dignity. It was entirely a question of calling.

John Stott

Don't Like People? – Don't Like Service? NORMAL SELFISH SINNER!

ONLY JESUS Can Make us SERVANTS > Against our NATURE

DIGNITY given by JESUS > GOD came to Earth to SERVE

For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to *serve*... (Greek – *diakoneo*)
Mark 10.45

Pastoral Training at KECS > Began with SERVING > 1 Month WORKING

Some Teaching – More Working: Painting, Clearing, Cleaning, Washing, etc.

HANDS can't Touch HUMBLE BROOM, Not ready to teach HOLY BOOK

The greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But *I am among you as one who serves.*

Luke 22.26-27

c. Ministers must Distinguish their Duties > TEAM Ministry, ALL PLAY

Every Member Ministry > PRIESTHOOD of ALL BELIEVERS

...(He) has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father - to him be glory and power for ever and ever! Amen. Revelation 1.6

Cannot SEPARATE Love for God and Love for Man > Physical from Spiritual

But MUST DISTINGUISH Which AREA is ONE'S Focus of MINISTRY

Plurality of Leadership > 12 Apostles, 7 Deacons, Elders

Balance, Accountability, Creativity

FIND AREA of CALLING and GIFTING > SERVE in that AREA Faithfully

v. 2 It would not be right for us to neglect the *ministry of the word of God* in order to *wait on tables*.

APOSTLES commanded by ANGEL to PREACH the GOSPEL

"Go, stand in the temple courts," he said, "and tell the people the full message of this new life."
Acts 5.20

BOTH VITAL and NEEDED Ministries > Eternal and Immediate NEEDS

If you are not in Full-Time Ministry before you go into Full-Time Ministry when you go into Full-Time Ministry you will not be doing Full-Time Ministry.

Charles 'Tremendous' Jones

d. Ministry Demands Dilligence Whether in WORD or DEED

BALANCE > Urgent MATERIAL Needs, Eternal SPIRITUAL Needs HARD!

v. 4 and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.

PREACHING Ministry > Hard Work, Not Just ONE HOUR a Week JOB!

Christianity Today survey: Average PASTOR spends 3 Minutes a Day in Prayer

Perhaps FEEL attend EVERY Meeting and Ministry > COMMANDER of Church

CHURCH belongs to JESUS – He is HEAD, CHIEF Shepherd, LORD & Master

TESTIMONY of Man who PREACHED DAILY for Most of Ministry!

Anyone who has been called to teaching should apply himself wholly. We find it all too easy to fall into sluggishness.
John Calvin

There is really nothing in the whole world quite like the labor of expository preaching. It is utterly consuming. It may sometimes be utterly exhausting, sometimes utterly exhilarating, but it is the most glorious privilege in all the world. From time to time in the course of the years, I have found myself getting up from my study desk and walking around saying to myself, 'Fancy being paid for doing this!'
Eric Alexander

No man is ever going to be able to fill the pulpit adequately unless he spends thousands of hours year after year in the study of God's word. Donald Grey Barnhouse

e. Ministries defeated by Despair

Increasing NUMBERS > More DIFFICULTY to DISTRIBUTE Food to WIDOWS

DIVERSITY Blessing & Curse > MISUNDERSTANDING Language, Culture

Today's Pastor is more like CEO of Corporation / TITLE: Senior Pastor = OLD

Every year 17,000 American Pastors LEAVE the Ministry

Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.

1 Peter 4.8

Where there is SHORTAGE of LOVE > Expect that MINISTRY to be SHORT

By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.

John 13.35

WORLD will be Convinced of TRUTH of Jesus when they REALLY SEE IT!

5. Progress

EASTER SUNDAY > FOUNDATION Book of ACTS > Jesus is ALIVE!

After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave *many convincing proofs that he was alive.*

Acts 1.3

SELECTED 12th APOSTLE > PRIMARY REQUIREMENT Seen Risen Jesus

For one of these must become *a witness with us of his resurrection.* Acts 1.22

DOMINANT THEME of PREACHING > Jesus is ALIVE!

God raised him from the dead, freeing him from the agony of death, because it was *impossible for death to keep its hold on him.*

Acts 2.24

With great power the apostles continued to testify to *the resurrection of the Lord Jesus*, and much grace was upon them all.

Acts 4.33

the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead.
Acts 4.2

The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead--whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree.
Acts 5.30

If Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead... And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. *But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead!*

1 Corinthians 15.14-20

Ch 2 - PENTECOST Proclamation > RISEN Jesus is NOW LORD and CHRIST!
ATTACK on WORLD'S RULE > World's UNSEEN RULER – Satan

ENEMY Hurls THREE ATTACKS on EARLY CHURCH

1. FORCE – Threats, Beatings, Death > from Religious/Government Authorities
2. HYPOCRISY – Ananias and Saphira > from OWN Members
3. GRUMBLING – Accusation of Unfairness > from Church WIDOWS

LORD who Died to PURCHASE Church Lives to PROTECT His Church

WIDOWS Fed, APOSTLES Preaching, Praying > CHURCH GROWS

v. 1 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing...

AFTER God-Honoring, People-Pleasing SOLUTION to Problem...

v. 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.

Est 18,000 Priests and Levites > ROTATED for 2 Week Duties in TEMPLE

EFFECT of Changing APPOINTMENTS > INCREASE in WITNESS and WORD

Among HEBREWS and HELLENISTS

AS MOSES' MINISTRY was Coming to END....

The LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him..." Numbers 27.18

Joshua's Ministry EXTENDED BEYOND Moses, Even Beyond PROMISED Land

SEVEN will LEAD Church into WIDER SPHERE than the TWELVE

SPREAD of Word > GROWTH of Church > SERVICE of ALL Members

Risen Savior in the House

The Lord announced the word, and great was the company of those who proclaimed it
Psalm 68.11

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things. For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

Colossians 3.1-3

Acts 6:1-7 1 In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian 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, 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.