

Acts 6.1-7

Growing Pains

KZ Today – Almost 60% Kazakh – About 30% Russian – 10% 50 Ethnic Gps
DIVERSITY Blessing & Curse > MISUNDERSTANDING Language, Culture

EASIEST Way to AVOID Misunderstanding > SEPARATE and ISOLATE

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

Jesus: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
John 13.34-35

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 (both Jews and converts to Judaism); Cretans and Arabs...
Acts 2.8-11

JAMES Half Brother of Jesus > Pastor of Church in Jerusalem...COUNCIL:
For Moses has been preached *in every city from the earliest times* and is read in
the synagogues on every Sabbath. Acts 15.21

James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, To the *twelve tribes*
scattered among the nations... James 1.1

PETER Apostle to the JEWS...

Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world,
scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia...
1 Peter 1.1

v. 1 the Grecian Jews...the Hebraic Jews > BOTH Living IN Jerusalem

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
Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens, the
fatherless and *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
Will ROLL UNDERGROUND all the way BACK to Jerusalem > 1st BTJ??

EARLY Church TOOK Up this RESPONSIBILITY and CARE for WIDOWS

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

People – 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

Last Month in BJ – Gospel Church – ‘SECRET’ > 800 Members?

11 Meetings EVERY WEEKEND > Scattered ALL OVER the CITY

PROFESSIONAL CHRISTIAN SINGER in USA...Email Letter....

Acts 6 addresses infrastructure—the business of the early church. There was much to do...I've just ministered at a megachurch...So that my presentation would be in sync with the 4-part sermon series, I was pressed into the church's infrastructure for weeks. Wide-eyed and open-mouthed, I was privy to the inner workings that enable this wonderful fellowship to “pull it off” 52 weeks a year.

I was astounded at the church's underpinnings, of which most attendees are unaware...numerous "agencies" phoned me, met me, and emailed me. The Sunday service production team alone numbers 40 full-time employees... What I wore had to be discussed because of filming, the music had to magnify the presentation, and every effort was made to show forth excellence so that people would desire to be in a relationship with God. The infrastructure provided a team to make sure I was comfortable and could operate well in my calling. No detail was left out. The three Sunday services were seamless...

Bring her to ICF we will make her... Wide-eyed and open-mouthed!

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

There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

Acts 4.34-35

GRUMBLING Against APOSTLES // Israelites GRUMBLED Against MOSES

Moses and Aaron said to all the Israelites, "...it was the LORD who brought you out of Egypt, and 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

NO ROOM for GRUMBLING Christians in STAR'S CLUB..

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

The temptation to segregate ourselves into distinct, homogeneous fellowships, each at home in its own comfort zone, is very strong. Dennis Johnson

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”

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”

End of Life > Only Church for A.W. Tozer met with WIFE > Not Sure of Her

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

SAD EXAMPLES > REAL ACTIONS 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. 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

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

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

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 Guy sitting on SEFULIN Street LOOKING for 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 > Bishop Tucker Theological College / Highest Level C of U
STAFF 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

We do God a great injury if we accept an unsuitable person to govern his household. Therefore the greatest care must be taken that nobody is chosen for this sacred office in the church unless he has already proven himself.

John Calvin

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?

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*.

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

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

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!

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

5. Progress

Ch 2 > Church of RISEN Jesus BORN on PENTECOST > SPIRIT Filled ANNOUNCEMENT > Jesus is RISEN! Jesus is 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 JEWISH 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

Christian WIDOWS Fed, CHURCH Serving, 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 APPOINTMENT > INCREASE in WITNESS and WORD
Among HEBREWS and HELLENISTS

AS HIS MINISTRY was Coming to END....

Moses said to the LORD, "May the LORD, the God of the spirits of all mankind, appoint a man over this community to go out and come in before them, one who will lead them out and bring them in, so the LORD's people will not be like sheep without a shepherd." So the LORD said to Moses, "Take Joshua son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him..."

Numbers 27.15-18

Joshua's Ministry EXTENDED BEYOND Moses > PROMISED Land
SEVEN will LEAD Church into WIDER SPHERE than the TWELVE

SPREAD of Word > GROWTH of Church > SERVICE of ALL Members
Next chapters in Acts > FOCUS SHIFTS from Apostles to Ministry of All

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

Psalms 68.11

Acts 6:1-7

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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.

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