

In Service to Each Other

- This chapter begins the third major topic in Acts, the witness of the Hellenistic Jews.
- Acts 6:1-7 – “Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number...”
- Luke, an educated physician, and a disciple, begins, (Acts 6:1a) “Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number.” We do not know exactly how much time had elapsed since Pentecost; however, this seems to point to a very early date within the Church, according to some commentators, possibly as early as a few weeks or months from Pentecost¹.
- The Church was in its early stages of development and growing fast despite persecution; there are at least 5000 members in this church.
- (Acts 6:1b) “a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.”
- The word “complaint” gogysmos (Strong’s 1112), literally means to murmur, mutter, grumble, or complain. Also used in John 7:12, Philippians 2:14, 1 Peter 4:9.
- Grumbling almost always pulls others into the situation and often leads to likeminded discontentedness.
- The word “Hellenistic,” or Hellēnistēs. According to Strong’s (Strong’s 1675) this simply means “Greek speaking Jew.”
 - The exact meaning of Hellenists versus Hebrew is unclear but seems to infer the underlying issue was tension between the Jews born in Judea and Galilee, and the Hellenists, Greek-speaking Jews who were descendants of the diaspora (the Jews exiled during the Babylonian exile) and born outside of Palestine.
- Diakonia (Strong’s 1248) literally meaning ministry. This word comes from the same root as the word Diakonos (Strong’s 1249) where we get our word for Deacon.
 - A literal interpretation of the text does not bestow the title of Deacon
 - The text does show certain individuals were appointed to deal with the task at hand
 - Lends support in validation of the office of deacon.
- Some translations include the words “of food,” these words are actually not part of the original language; they are an assumption. (Acts 2:44-45, Acts 4:34-35)
- The tension between these two groups, the Hebraic Jew and the Hellenist Jew, was not a “new” development;
 - Two of Satan’s favorite weapons against the church are persecution and internal dissention (which often leads to division).
- Acts 6:2 –
 - not an excuse for Elders / Pastors to take a hands off approach.
 - it should remind all of us within the church that there are bigger issues at hand.
- Acts 6:3- (1Timothy 3:7)
 - These men were to be “full of spirit and of Wisdom.”
 - The disciples did not worsen the situation by appointing the wrong men for the job.
- Acts 6:4 –
 - Intercessory prayer is a necessary component of all decision making within the Church.

¹ Doug Redford, The New Testament Church: Acts-Revelation, vol. 2, Standard Reference Library: New Testament (Cincinnati, OH: Standard Pub., 2007), 33.

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- Acts 6:5-7 –
 - Those named all had Greek names implying that they were Hellenists themselves and one of them was not even Jewish, He was a proselyte.
 - The changing power of the Holy Spirit as the solution pleased the entire gathering.
 - A formerly divided group, the Hebrews and the Hellenists now agree.

Summarizing the information:

- During the time this incident took place, the Church was primarily comprised of Jewish believers, growing rather rapidly and was in need of administration.
- There was a division within the Church, leading to dissention and had the potential to distract the disciples from preaching the word of God.
- Seven men, selected by the Church were appointed to the task.
- The Disciples confirmed the appointments by laying their hands upon them.
 - Not transference of the Holy Spirit, these men were already “full of the Spirit.”
- With the problem resolved, the Church was able to continue its growth and remain undivided.

Principals:

1. It is important to care for the needy. Care of those in need, especially within our own congregation should always remain a core principal.
2. We need to overcome division and grumbling within the body of believers. We need to look for solutions in divisive matters even if it appears no solution is possible.
3. The Church needs to maintain sufficient leadership and workers to meet the needs of the congregation. Too often, the needs of Church members are “over looked” because of insufficient leadership and workers within the church. The question is; are you doing your part?
4. We should direct our issues to those appointed for the task and not lay everything on our senior pastors. Sometimes our issues, as pressing, as they may seem to us, distract our leaders from their God given tasks and may lead to them “neglecting the word of God.”
5. Remain aware of the needs of others within the congregation; this includes the needs of our leaders; be part of the solution.

Needs are not always be visible and may remain unexpressed unless prompted; sometimes we need to reach out and offer a loving hand. Pay attention to the warning signs when you see someone is discontent, find out why. Do not avoid addressing a known issue out of fear of ending up as part of the solution. Too often, our desire to remain autonomous makes it difficult to identify the needs of others within our congregations. There is no way for you to know what blessing Christ may have in store for you if you take up the challenge. Sometimes fixing a small issue can lead to huge rewards.

- Exodus 18:17-18, Romans 12:10-13, Titus 3:14

Brothers and Sisters do not allow your life pass you by without bearing the fruitful life Christ desires for each one of us, be involved, engage and get busy.

Just as the disciples in Acts 6:1-7 heard the call for help, identified the need of the widows, and addressed the problem; we must also address the needs of those within our congregation. Otherwise, we may never reach our full potential in carrying forth message of Christ.