

The Mission of My Church: “A complaint arose.”

Focus Passage: Acts 6:1-7

Other Passages Referenced: Deuteronomy 26:12–16; Psalm 68:4–5; Mark 3:32–35; John 19:26–27; Romans 12:10; Ephesians 4:3; 5:21; Philippians 2:3;

Sermon Recap

The question is not “How do we avoid problems in the church?” or “How do we create a church without problems?” The better questions are, “How do we confront problems in the church?”, and “Why do we confront problems in the church?”

How do we confront problems in the church?—quickly (Acts 6:1–2a), collectively (Acts 6:2b–6), and with unity (Acts 6:2–5). The apostles addressed the complaint quickly rather than letting the problem fester. The Grecian Jewish believers were given guidelines of the qualifications of people to pick to address the distribution of food among the Grecian Jewish widows, however, the Grecian Jews were charged with selecting the team that would address the problem.

The apostles created a framework for the solution and gave considerable latitude to the believers to implement it. The apostles brought all the believers together—Aramaic and Greek-speaking Jewish followers of Jesus—so that everyone was able to hear their proposal. The proposal “pleased the whole gathering” and they moved forward in unity.

Remember, the gospel is good news, not good advice. The more important question is not “How do we resolve problems in the Church?” but rather, “Why did the church see it as essential that they solve this problem? It is essential to resolve conflicts in the church because the gospel makes us priests and the Gospel makes us family. The role of a priest is to represent the people before God and to represent God before the people. Jesus’ sacrifice made all other mediators unnecessary for salvation. Therefore, every believer was qualified to be a priest to represent God to others and others to God.

In addition to being priests, the gospel also makes us part of the same family—the family of God. Therefore, we are to care for widows and the needy in our Church as we would care for a family member. It is a non-optional duty (Acts 6:3) of Jesus’ family members. How are you responding to your duties as a priest and family member in Jesus’ family on Jesus’ mission?

Interpretive Notes

- The Hellenists who complained about their widows being overlooked were Greek-speaking Jews as compared to the Hebrew/Aramaic-speaking Jews. They were linguistically and culturally different which may have inadvertently led to the neglect of the Hellenist widows.

- Each of the seven men chosen had Greek names, probably indicating that all of them were also Hellenist Jews who would be familiar with the cultural and linguistic issues of the Hellenist widows.

Group Gathering

Group Check-in — Care, Celebration, Encouragement (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. Informal conversation to allow individuals to catch up with one another.
2. Ask if anyone would share how they've been hearing and obeying God's direction.

Allow the Word to Speak — Be Hearers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

READ Acts 6:1–7

1. What from the passage or sermon was most impactful to you?
2. Were you left with any questions or confusion about the passage or sermon?
3. Who chose the persons to resolve the problem of the neglected Hellenist widows?
4. Although the apostles allowed the Hellenist Jews to pick the people who would address the problem, the apostles established how many men to select and defined the required qualifications for the men to be considered. What were the requirements?

Put the Word into Practice — Be Doers of the Word (About 1/3 of meeting time)

1. In your personal life, do you generally address legitimate complaints quickly or do you tend to avoid them?
2. How do you see the collaboration between Church leaders and the larger congregation working collectively to resolve problems, following the example in Acts 6?
3. What efforts might we make as priests and family to make sure anyone in the Church with linguistic and/or cultural differences are not neglected by the more homogeneous majority?
4. What application(s) do you take away from Acts 6 and the sermon?

The Big Question: What do you sense God's Spirit saying to you and what concrete action will you take in response? Share your answer with the group or another trusted Christian and ask them to pray for you.

What We Hope Members Glean from the Passage

1. No set answer.
2. No set answer.
3. The Hellenist Jews chose the seven leaders.
4. The apostles told the people to choose seven men who were "of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom."

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