"GROWING PAINS"

(Handling Church Problems)
ACTS 6:1-7
5-17-2026

*** Our church must handle its problems (difficulties) Biblically!**

How? By remembering the three sides of difficulty in the cycle of church growth.

Remember that:

I. Spiritual Blessings Provide Occasion For Church Problems
(V. 1) **(Conflict)**

A. The Blessing Of Having Numerical Growth Brings Potential Problems

B. The Blessing Of Having Different Nationalities Brings With It Potential Problems

Ii. Church Problems Require Biblical Solutions
(V. 2-6) **(Cure)**

To Be Biblical We Must:

A. Keep Our Priorities In Line (V. 2, 4)
(God's Priorities Must Be Guarded)

B. Have A Cooperative Spirit (V. 3a, 5a)
(God's People Must Cooperate)
1. The Leadership Must Offer Biblical Solutions (V. 3a)
2. The Laity Must Accept Biblical Solutions (V. 5a)

C. Share The Load Of The Ministry (V. 3b, 5b, 6)
(God's Work Must Be Delegated)
1. We Must Delegate To Those Who Qualify (V. 3b, 5b)
2. We Must Delegate To Those Who Are Willing (V. 6)

Iii. Biblical Solutions Result In Spiritual Blessings
(V. 7) **(Consequence)**

A. Spiritual Growth (Word Increased)
(When The Work Of God Is Delegated, The Word Of God Is Propagated!)

B. Numerical Growth (Disciples Multiplied)

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INTRODUCTION:

People say: When I find the perfect church, I will join it. Reply: If you do find it, don't join it. It will no longer be perfect.

Wherever there are people, there are problems. The more people, the more problems (NYC is a living example).

In every human relationship with other humans, you have the potential for difficulties! Why? Depravity of man. Selfishness (pride). Even Christians are nothing more than forgiven sinners.

In marriage, you will have problems.
In friendships, you will have problems.
In a church, we will have problems.

Problems should not alarm us! They are not the end of the world. How we handle them is what we should be concerned about.

*** Our church must handle its problems (difficulties) Biblically!**

How? By remembering the <u>three sides</u> of difficulty in the cycle of church growth.

Remember that:

I. SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS PROVIDE OCCASION FOR CHURCH PROBLEMS (v. 1)
(<u>Conflict</u>)

Observe the cycle in book of Acts:
1) God's blessing 2) Conflict 3) More blessing

It seems that whenever God begins to bless, Satan comes right away and tries to stop it, one way or another.

God's blessing (ch. 2-3) - Holy Spirit's power
External conflict (4:1-31) - Sanhedrin threats

God's blessing (4:32-37) - Church unity
Internal conflict (5:1-10) - Ananias and Sapphira

God's blessing (5:11-16) - Multitudes saved and miracles

happening
External conflict (5:17-42) - Sanhedrin put Apostles in jail

God's blessing (5:42-6:1a) - Preaching, Disciples multiply
Internal conflict (6:1-6) - Murmuring

God's blessing (6:7-8) - Word increased, disciples multiply,
Stephen
External conflict (6:9-8:3) - Stoning of Stephen, Saul persecutes

God's blessing (8) - Revival in Samaria
External conflict (9:1-2) - Saul persecutes

God's blessing (9) - Salvation of Saul . . .etc.

A. The Blessing Of Having <u>Numerical Growth</u> Brings Potential Problems

It's a blessing to grow. But growth brings with it pains.

ILLUS: sharp pains in my chest growing up (I thought it was a heart problem). When I turned 20, it went away. It was growing pains.

Church growth brings with it increased demands (necessities).

v.1

There were no government programs to take care of the destitute in those days.

The church at Jerusalem had a general ("common") fund (Acts 2:44-45), which was placed into the hands of "the twelve" Apostles for oversight and distribution (Acts 4:35, 37; 5:2). All church members with needs were dependent on the Apostles for their necessary sustenance (Acts 4:35), and for awhile the Apostles persevered in this performance. However, "when the number of the disciples was multiplied," God allowed difficulties to arise so that He might initiate a new office--namely, the office of "deacon" (servant).

I Tim. 5:3-10, 16 - The church is to: honor widows that are widows indeed.

What is a widow indeed? She is one who:

1. Has no family to support her (v. 3-8; 16)
2. Is over 60 years old (v. 9a)
3. Has been: a faithful wife (v. 9)
   a faithful mother (v. 10a)
   faithful in hospitality (v. 10b)
   faithful in meeting others' needs (v. 10c)

B. The Blessing Of Having Different Nationalities Brings With It Potential Problems

The problem is communication:

a. A lack of communication causes problems.

Evidently the Greek (Hellenistic Jews of the dispersion) widows were not communicating their needs to the Apostles, while the Hebrews did.

They probably thought with selfishness: "They don't care about us. They only care about their own people."

This was not true! The word "neglect" simply means "to overlook."

The Apostles were busy ministering. They did not have anything against them.

b. Wrong communication causes problems.

Rather than talking with the Apostles, they murmured (grumbled).

"Murmuring" = the word always refers to sinful behavior in the Bible. It means to complain by muttering.

Jesus said: "Murmur not among yourselves" (Jn. 6:43).

Paul said: "Do all things without murmurings and complaining" (Phil. 2:14).

Cp. Jude 16.

In every church, ministries can go overlooked (especially in a larger assembly).

What we don't need is grumbling!

Ii. Church Problems Require Biblical Solutions (v. 2-6)
(Cure)

To be Biblical, we must have:
1) Priorities, 2) cooperation, and 3) delegation

To be Biblical we must:

A. KEEP OUR PRIORITIES IN LINE (v. 2, 4)
(God's Priorities must be Guarded)

While the Apostleship was a unique office, the apostles also carried out the function of pastor during this time of transition (NOTE: Peter and John's referral to themselves as "elders" - I Pet. 5:1; II Jn. 1). Therefore, this passage does show the priorities of a pastor.

Prayer and the ministry of the Word is the priority of an overseer (Peter was an overseer as an apostle; I am an overseer as a Pastor - I Pet. 5:1-4).

God's command to me is to:

I Tim. 4:16 - "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them; for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."

Acts 20:28 - "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

The Apostles were being distracted. Things (even good things) will attempt to crowd out prayer and the Word.

V. 2
I can't leave the Word of God!

Satan would love for me as the pastor to relinquish the responsibilities God has given me to become: the church janitor, carpenter, printer, secretary, treasurer, Sunday school superintendent, youth director, music director, and nursery worker.

He would love for me to do all of the soul-winning and all of the follow-up by myself.

He would love for me to give everyone who flows through our city a guided tour of South-West Florida.

Why would he like this? Because then I would do everything, and nothing right!

I'm called to be a specialist! In God's Word!
Church problems are not solved by misplacing priorities.

B. Have A Cooperative Spirit (v. 3a, 5a)
(God's People must Cooperate)

Church problems are solved by cooperation between church members.

1. The leadership must offer Biblical solutions (v. 3a)

Every spiritual decision I make as pastor must be Biblical.

I can't say: (if we have none that qualify): "Let's elect 10 deacons!" or "Let's pick anyone to teach our Spanish Sunday school class!"

As the overseer I desire to make decisions that will benefit all and please God. But you must back me up.

2. The laity must accept Biblical solutions (v. 5a)

This is a true miracle!

"The saying pleased the whole multitude"

There will usually be at least one thorn, know-it-all, filled with pride individual who refuses to agree with the rest of the congregation.

In a local church every member has input.

Everyone's involvement is essential to Biblical decision-making.

In verse 2, they summoned the multitude.
In verse 3, they were told to seek qualified men.
In verse 5, "the suggestion pleased the multitude"
"they chose"
and in verse 6, "they set [them] before the apostles..."

NOTE: A church is responsible to solve (take care of its own problems. (It's autonomous) They didn't call in headquarters. They didn't check with Rome.

They fulfilled their business themselves with a unified spirit and all things were done "decently and in order"

C. Share The Load Of The Ministry (v. 3b, 5b, 6)
(God's Work must be Delegated)

Church problems are solved by spreading out the work load to those who qualify and are willing!

EX: Jethro told Moses to delegate.

1. We must delegate to those who qualify (v. 3b, 5b)

Not all church members are qualified for official positions.

One who serves officially in a church must be:
1) a man;
2) a saved man ("brethren"); and
3) a church member (lit. "out of yourselves"); and
4) he must have a godly testimony ("report" = passive - others can testify of his character.

This testimony must evidence itself with Spirit-control (fruits) and wisdom (skillful manner of life).

NOTE: These men were not elected in order to possess a Godly testimony by having an office; but rather because they already had a continual, observable Godly testimony.
No one gets spiritual by serving! You reveal it!

NOTE: The qualifications are spiritual in nature. No where does it state that they had to be financial experts; or have accounting degrees.

Scripture is relatively brief in describing what deacons are to do, but speaks much about their qualifications (SEE also I Tim. 3:8-13).

God is more interested in what a person is than in what he does. Why? Because when he is what he should be internally, what he does externally will naturally fall in line with the Scripture.

If you are what God requires, you will function as God desires!

2. We must delegate to those who are willing (v. 6)

It's easy to point out problems, are you willing to be part of the solution?

Because these men were godly, they were willing to do this mundane, humble task.

They were willing to identify with the Gospel ministry and receive a
transferral of service (signified in v. 6 - "laying on of hands").
This is like "passing on the torch"

III. BIBLICAL SOLUTIONS RESULT IN SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS (v. 7) (Consequence)

God blesses a church that solves its problems

A. SPIRITUAL GROWTH (Word Increased)
(When the Work of God is delegated, the Word of God is propagated!)

V. 7

"The Word of God increased" = does not mean that they spent time writing more of it! But that they were able to proclaim more of it.

Delegation is the answer to church growth!

God's plan (for His church) is not for one man to do it all.

This is our ministry! We are ministers! I am to equip you for "the work of the ministry" (Eph. 5:11-12).

These men, by their service, aided the preachers to devote themselves to their ministries (priorities) (v. 2, 4); and as a result, more teaching could be done.

B. NUMERICAL GROWTH (Disciples Multiplied)

"Multiplied" = passive; God is the one who causes growth!

--When there is grumbling in a church, God will never bless!
--When priorities get misplaced God cannot bless.
--When no one is willing to share the load (get involved - be part of the solution), God cannot bless!

Will you say to God today, "Lord, I want you to bless our church...rather than my being part of the problem, I am willing to be part of the solution."

Maybe it's not to be a deacon, but all can be servants in a general sense!