

## SUNDAY BIBLE STUDY NOTES

— January 7, 2017 —

*Pastor Les Smith*

**SERIES: Preparing the Church to Leave the Building**

**SERMON: Growing Pains**

**TEXT: Acts 6:1-7**

### Central Message:

Every new and growing church experiences problems. In many instances these problems can be attributed to the fact that the new church may not have adequate staffing, adequate programming, or adequate resources. Unfortunately, the needs of some members of the congregation can be “overlooked”. That is exactly what happened to the Jerusalem church in Acts chapter 6. A complaint arose from the Hellenistic Jews that their widows were being neglected in the serving of food, and the Palestinian Jews were seen as the culprits.

Part of the problem was caused by the tension which already existed between the two groups. The church had started out as a very homogenous congregations, but as the church experienced explosive growth, it became more heterogeneous. The most instructive part of this lesson is not that problems occurred, but rather the very mature way in which the leadership moved to resolve the potential conflict. There are three lessons that we can learn from how the complaint was handled.

**Lesson #1: Growing churches will invariably have to deal with growing pains, but grumbling and complaining will only serve to divide the church further. (Acts 6:1)**

The fact that Hellenistic and Hebraic Jews had problems outside of the church

threatened to make a difficult situation more difficult. They did not get along outside the church, and they brought their prejudices inside the church. The Hellenistic Jews raised a legitimate issue. Since there was no governmental support system, the task of caring for widows and orphans fell to the church. It is unlikely, however, that the oversight had anything to do with the fact that the widows were Greek-speaking. It is more likely that the new church that was growing so rapidly just did not have the infrastructure to handle all the needs. There was another issue. People’s needs are indeed legitimate concerns for the church, but it can appear that satisfying needs becomes the reason the church exists; the church ceases to be a church at that point. The disciples understood this and chose to focus on church priorities instead of church problems.

**Lesson #2: Growing churches tend to grow because they make the teaching and preaching of God’s word their highest priority. (Acts 6:2)**

Since the problem of caring for the widows was a church-wide concern, the disciples called the whole congregation together so all the people could participate in solving the problem. The disciples made it clear that the problem needed to be addressed while simultaneously keeping the needs of the congregation and the priorities of the church in focus. Their primary mission was to make other disciples, and Jesus had left the job of proclaiming the truth about Him in the hands of the faithful 12. Consequently, they made the decision to focus on teaching and preaching, and the job of serving tables would be assigned to someone else.

**Lesson #3: Growing churches recognize the principles of gifts and calling. (Acts 6:3-7)**

The disciples suggested that the congregation choose godly men to serve tables because they felt that somehow serving was beneath them. They realized that they had been called and equipped to teach and preach. They also realized that others in the congregation had the gift of serving and should be given the privilege

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*“Knowing God and Making Him Known”*

of serving. All are called by God to be led, but not all are called to lead. When each of us is organically placed in the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, each person is given a unique gift or gifts and is expected to employ his/her gift or gifts for the edification of the body. Wise leadership understands the principles of gifting and calling, and such leadership actively works to create opportunities for all believers to use their gifts.